

Suspension from school - guidelines

Effective from 28 January 2025

Contents

1. Suspension from school summary	3
2. Scope	3
3. Guidelines	4
3.1. Whole-School approach	4
3.2. Authority to suspend.....	4
3.3. Factors to consider	4
3.4. Principal’s suspension checklist.....	5
3.5. Grounds for suspension.....	5
3.6. Understanding the cause and context	5
3.7. Alternatives to suspension	6
3.8. Student considerations	6
3.8.1. Students with disability	6
4. Proceeding with a Suspension	7
4.1. Duration of suspension.....	7
4.2. Limits to suspension periods.....	7
4.3. Conference points.....	7
4.4. Procedural fairness	8
4.4.1. Fair hearing	8
4.4.2. Decision to suspend.....	9
4.5. Safety of suspended students	9
4.6. Continuity of learning.....	9
5. Notifications, reporting and records management	10
5.1. Give notice of suspension to student and parents.....	10
5.2. Give notice of suspension to the Chief Executive.....	10
5.3. Completing the suspension conditions.....	10
5.4. Newsflash	11
5.5. Records management.....	11
6. During suspension	11
6.1. Attending school during the suspension period	11
6.2. Revoke or vary a period of suspension.....	11
6.3. Re-entry meetings.....	12
6.3.1. Participants	12
6.4. Complaints.....	13
7. Roles and responsibilities	13
8. Definitions and acronyms	15
9. Related legislation, policy and resources	17

1. Suspension from school summary

The Department of Education and Training (department) is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for every student. Our priority is to ensure that all students feel welcome, accepted and continuously engaged in learning, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, including those who may display behaviours of concern.

Principals play a crucial role in providing safe learning environments in Northern Territory (NT) Government schools. They are responsible for implementing policy and guidelines aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of both students and staff. The principal's ability to remove a student whose presence is a threat to others at the school is critical to their capacity to undertake this role.

Principal's right to suspend students is provided under Section 91 of the *Education Act 2015* (the Act) which allows suspension where the presence of the student is likely to constitute a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school. The Suspension from school guidelines align with the following national and NT strategies and principles. In particular the:

- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisation](#) through creating an environment where children and young people's safety is at the centre of our actions and placing an emphasis on genuine engagement with children
- [10-Year generational strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory](#) through upholding and respecting human rights for all members of the school community, listening to the voices of young people and families, being trauma informed and strengths based as well as respecting Aboriginal views and the diversity of our communities.

In line with the [Student wellbeing and positive behaviour policy](#), all NT Government schools are required to implement a whole school approach to wellbeing and positive behaviour that supports students and ensures equitable, inclusive, and culturally safe learning environments which recognise and respond to the needs of students.

When a principal suspends a student, they must consider whether an alternative to suspension would be a more appropriate response.

A meta-analysis on the relationship between school suspension and student outcomes Noltemeyer et al (2015)¹ shows that suspension is not an effective approach for changing a student's behaviour. It can impact on engagement by creating a disconnection between the student and school, leading to a reduction in motivation. It can also carry major long-term risks for the student's welfare, particularly where suspension is used alone without supports and interventions to address the underlying reasons for behaviour.

2. Scope

These suspension guidelines apply to:

- students enrolled in NT Government schools
- principals and school staff
- relevant department staff.

¹ https://edsourcesource.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Noltemeyer_Ward_2015_Meta-Analysis.pdf

3. Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to help ensure NT Government schools:

- are safe and supportive learning environments
and
- comply with legislative and department policy requirements when implementing suspension procedures.

3.1. Whole-School approach

All schools are required to have an active, whole-school approach to student wellbeing and positive behaviour which communicates the school's expectations for student behaviour.

Students must be treated as individuals and where a student's behaviour does not meet the school's expectations the response should be supportive, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and relevant to the student's needs.

Behaviour management approaches are to be informed by an understanding of the underlying purpose, need, and cause of the behaviour. Behaviour management methods must support the student to continue to engage in learning and may include changes to the environment, teaching approaches and other supports.

Schools needing support in the development of their whole school approaches to student wellbeing and positive behaviour can contact [Student Wellbeing, Inclusion, Programs and Services](#) (SWIPS).

3.2. Authority to suspend

Section 91(1) of the Act empowers principals to suspend a student from school where the student's presence is likely to constitute a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school.

Only the principal of a school has the power to make the decision to suspend a student from school. This power cannot be delegated to another member of staff. Acting principals must be formally appointed to the position of principal, in line with the department's [Human Resources Delegations](#), through myHR or eRecruit, to ensure that they are empowered to suspend.

3.3. Factors to consider

Suspension from school is a serious action and must only be considered if the presence of a student is likely to constitute a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school.

Before suspending a student, principals:

- must consider whether an alternative to suspension would be a more appropriate response
- should have a [personalised plan](#) in place for the student which addresses their individual behaviour supports and any reasonable adjustments needed to support their participation in education.

Where a personalised plan is not in place prior to the suspension it must be developed when the student re-enters school following the suspension. While it may not be appropriate to develop a plan for every suspended student, a personalised plan must be developed where a student is being suspended for a second or subsequent time.

3.4. Principal's suspension checklist

Principals must use a [Principal's suspension checklist](#) to document their decision-making process for every student suspended from school. There are two checklist tools available, either can be used. The checklists will help principals to comply with all legislative and policy requirements and provide a record of their decision-making. A copy of the completed checklist is provided to the Chief Executive (CE), refer section 5.2.

3.5. Grounds for suspension

The Act does not provide the power to suspend a student based on the student's disobedience or general misconduct. Suspension may be considered where a principal is satisfied the student's presence is likely to constitute a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school. There must be a link between the student's behaviour and a risk of harm to others at the school. This may include:

- acts of violence and aggression towards others including threats of violence and aggressive behaviour such as physical or verbal intimidation
- causing damage to, or destruction of property, in a manner that endangers or intimidates others
- bullying and cyber-bullying directed towards another person that threatens their physical or psychological wellbeing
- harassment of others due to their personal characteristics
- unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

It does not matter where the incident occurred; while travelling to and from school, at the shopping centre, at home online, or whether the student was in school uniform, only that it is reasonable for the principal to consider the behaviour demonstrates that the student's presence at school is likely to constitute a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school.

3.6. Understanding the cause and context

Before suspension the principal must undertake a thorough, impartial, and objective investigation of the student's conduct or the incident, to:

- understand the nature of the incident; what happened, when and where it occurred
- identify the individuals involved
- confirm the timeline of events and identify the sequence of actions and potential causes
- confirm if allegations are supported by evidence that is verified as accurate, reliable, and complete
- understand the reasons for the behaviour to help prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.

Throughout the investigation the principal and the staff members conducting the investigation, must ensure that:

- students involved in the conduct or incident have had an opportunity to be heard. This is integral for natural justice and will also encourage their engagement in the process and ownership of changes to their behaviour
- students are informed that they may have another adult; parent, staff member or support person, present during the interview to establish a supportive environment where the student's rights are protected

- any information provided by the student, or their parents is documented and considered
- students are informed of the impact of their behaviour on others at the school.

3.7. Alternatives to suspension

Principals must understand the reasons for the student's behaviour, consider whether an alternative to suspension would be a more appropriate response and seek the alternatives that more effectively address the behaviour.

When applying alternatives to suspension, principals should:

- provide targeted support and alternatives that respond to the student's needs
- adapt alternatives to meet the local and cultural context and circumstances
- adopt a trauma-informed approach
- allow time and opportunity for the alternative methods to succeed
- discuss the alternatives with the student before they are implemented.

Detailed information is available to support principals, read to the [Alternatives to suspension information sheet](#).

3.8. Student considerations

As stated in Section 90(1) of the Act, when making a decision relevant to behaviour management, principals must have regard to the student's:

- a) age and developmental stage
- b) disability, including mental health, and adverse childhood experiences or trauma
- c) physical health and wellbeing of the student
- d) relevant cultural or religious considerations
- e) home environment, including, out of home care, homelessness, or domestic violence
- f) arrangements in place for the student's care while they are suspended.

3.8.1. Students with disability

For students with disability, personalised planning must occur to address the student's individual needs and include the reasonable adjustments to be provided to support that student's participation in education. Personalised planning is most often documented through an Education Adjustment Plan or Individual Behaviour Plan.

Under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) schools have a legal responsibility to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. Before suspending a student with a disability schools should have:

- undertaken consultations with the student, their parents and other support staff in order to understand the impact of a student's disability and to determine whether any adjustments are needed to assist the student
- made reasonable adjustments to assist students with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students and recorded these in the student's personalised plan

- strategies in place to prevent harassment and victimisation of students with disability and ensure students are not being suspended inappropriately or unfairly for behaviour which is a symptom of a disability.

Principals can obtain assistance in supporting students with a disability by contacting the [SWIPS](#) team.

4. Proceeding with a Suspension

The following procedures must be observed when proposing a suspension.

4.1. Duration of suspension

When determining the duration of a proposed suspension, principals must consider the circumstances of each case, taking into account factors including, but not limited to:

- the student considerations listed in section 3.9
- the cause and context of the student's behaviour as outlined 3.6
- the severity of the student's behaviour
- the student's and family's response to the investigation and proposed suspension
- the student's level of remorse or level of understanding of the impacts of their behaviour
- the impact of suspension on the student's learning
- the impact on the student's behaviour and learning from previous periods of suspension
- the safety and wellbeing of the student and others at the school
- time required to put in place reasonable adjustments to ensure the student's safe return
- limits to suspension periods, as described below in section 4.2.

4.2. Limits to suspension periods

Principals must take reasonable measures to minimise the number of days a student is suspended during the course of a school year. Principals must not apply a suspension period that:

- exceeds the 20-day limit set in section 91(5) of the Act
- exceeds the number of days remaining in the school term, unless the student's presence at the school in the new term will constitute an ongoing risk of harm to others.

4.3. Conference points

Principals must confer with their senior director education every time:

- a suspension exceeds 5 consecutive days
- a student accumulates 3 or more periods of suspension or 10 or more days of suspension in the current school year.

While the responsibility for making the final decision to suspend rests with the principal, the conference discussions should focus on the length of the proposed suspension, its impact on the student's learning and engagement, and potential alternatives that might be engaged.

Where appropriate, principals and their senior director education should jointly review, develop, or update the behaviour supports in the student's personalised plans.

Where the conference is unable to be scheduled prior to the suspension it should occur within 2 school days of the issue of the notice to suspend to the student.

4.4. Procedural fairness

It is a requirement in common law for government administrators to adhere to the principles of natural justice. In the context of a suspension this requires principals to act fairly and without bias in the decision-making process and to ensure that students and parents are provided with the opportunity to be heard.

Before proceeding with a suspension, principals must inform the student and their parents that the student's conduct may merit a suspension and provide them with the opportunity to respond, in person or by another mutually agreed method. The information provided to students and parents to inform their response should include:

- the reasons for the proposed suspension
- the days when the proposed suspension would occur
- proposed conditions of the suspension
- a copy of the [Suspension from school information sheet for students and parents](#).

4.4.1. Fair hearing

To ensure that elements of procedural fairness are met, principals must provide details of the allegations relating to the student's conduct. Where the principal is of the view that it would not be appropriate to provide copies of individual statements, due to confidentiality or safety concerns for the individuals involved, they should ensure that enough details of the allegations are provided to allow the student and parents to respond to the claims.

Where the student or parents wish to make a representation, either in person or by other means, the matters addressed in the discussion should include:

- the basis for the proposed suspension including the conduct posing a threat of harm to others
- the reasons for the behaviour
- any explanation provided by the student and parents
- the length of the suspension
- any conditions of the proposed suspension
- the arrangements for the student's safety and care during the suspension
- the need to comply with the written Notice of suspension to avoid fines
- contact details of additional support services for the student and parents, as appropriate.

Where the student or parents do not take the opportunity to make a representation, or do not respond, or are unable to respond within a reasonable timeframe of 2 days, the decision to suspend should not be unduly delayed and principals should make their decisions based on the information available.

4.4.2. Decision to suspend

Principals may make a decision on whether, or not, to suspend the student due to their presence being a risk of physical or psychological harm to others after:

- a thorough, impartial, and objective investigation into the behaviour or incident has been conducted
- all parties have been provided with the opportunity to be heard and relevant submissions have been considered.

Principals can refer to the department's [Good decision-making guide](#) to assist in making this decision.

In some instances, urgent action is needed to restrict a student's presence at the school to ensure the physical or psychological safety of others.

Where this is the case, principals can make the decision to suspend, and then action the procedural fairness requirements described in section 4.4 noting, that the decision to suspend may need to be revoked or varied after students and parents are provided with the opportunity to be heard through the fair hearing process.

4.5. Safety of suspended students

If a student is to be suspended, and arrangements have not been previously agreed, every effort must be made to contact the parents to make appropriate arrangements for the student's safe return home and their supervision during the suspension period.

School staff owe students a duty of care to protect them from any reasonably foreseeable risk of harm. When arranging for a suspended student to go home, principals must consider the capacity of the student to travel home safely, and what arrangements are available at home for their safe supervision. For more information, read the [Duty of care owed by teachers](#).

Where there is any concern in relation to the student's safety, or where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk of harm to the student, every reasonable step must be made to keep the student at the school and under supervision until the student is able to return home safely.

The relevant director of School Operations can provide advice to principals if a student is required to leave the school immediately and there is no viable safe option for them to go home.

Where it has not been possible to reach an agreement with the parents, and the student is continuing to pose a risk to others at the school which cannot be mitigated any other way, the principal should consider calling the police to request assistance.

4.6. Continuity of learning

All students who are suspended must be provided with learning materials to support their education during the suspension period. Students and parents should also be provided with the following information:

- the activities expected to be undertaken by the student while they are away from school
- the outcomes expected
- the resources available
- the agreed role of the school in supporting learning.

Principals must take into consideration the potential impacts of suspension on a student's other educational and vocational opportunities. For example, where students are undertaking vocational education and training or workplace learning, the principal should take measures to minimise the impact of suspension on their continued participation in the program.

5. Notifications, reporting and records management

5.1. Give notice of suspension to student and parents

When proceeding with a suspension a principal must:

- provide a Notice of the suspension to the student. The notice should detail the reasons for suspension, the period of suspension, any relevant condition and include a copy of sections 91 and 94 of the Act and the Suspension from school – information sheet for students and parents
- provide a letter to a student's parents outlining the suspension that includes a copy of the Notice of suspension, sections 91 and 94 of the Act and the Suspension factsheet.

Upload these documents to SAMS when complete.

Templates for the written Notice of suspension for students and the Letter to parents are available on the [Suspension from school Policy and advisory library page](#).

In compliance with the Expulsion guidelines, where principals are considering whether a recommendation of expulsion should be made to the CE, the student and parents must be advised through the written Notice of suspension for students, and they should be provided with a copy of the Expulsion guidelines.

5.2. Give notice of suspension to the Chief Executive

Inform the CE of the suspension within 24 hours of issuing the written Notice of suspension to the student.

In accordance with section 91 (4)(a) the Act, principals must provide copies of the Notice of suspension, and the principal's suspension checklist to the CE, please email cesuspension.doe@education.nt.gov.au.

5.3. Completing the suspension conditions

A Notice of suspension to the student can include any conditions directly related to the context of the incident which the principal considers appropriate.

Details of any conditions must be clearly stated, and the student must comply with these conditions. Examples of conditions may include:

- student must not attend school grounds except for the purposes of participating in a stipulated or compulsory assessment for example NAPLAN or NT Certificate of Education and Training assessment, where that cannot occur at another time outside of the suspension period.
- student must cease all contact with a particular student, or groups of students, including on social media, during the suspension period.

Principals should take care when applying any suspension conditions to ensure that they do not become a barrier to re-entry. The only reason to delay re-entry or extend a suspension is if the student is still considered a risk of physical or psychological harm to others at the school.

Schools requiring advice on the use and suitability of suspension conditions should seek support from their director School Operations.

5.4. Newsflash

Principals should refer to the [Newsflash guidelines](#) for information about whether a newsflash is required in response to the student misconduct or incidents and ensure the relevant director School Operations has been informed.

5.5. Records management

All documentation gathered in relation to the suspension, including the investigation of the cause and context, and decision-making, must be recorded in the school's student record files. Schools must enter details of the suspension into the Student Administration Management System (SAMS) behaviour module for the department's reporting purposes within 24 hours of the suspension taking place.

For assistance in recording suspensions in SAMS, contact the Student Administration Systems team on 1800 446 961.

In accordance with NT Government record keeping requirements, School Operations will ensure copies of the written Notice of suspension for students and the Principal's suspension checklist, which were sent to the CE via cesuspension.doe@education.nt.gov.au, are correctly stored in Territory Records Manager (TRM).

Principals receiving reports of alleged unlawful or criminal behaviour by students must refer this information directly to NT Police on 131 444 and in the case of an emergency 000.

6. During suspension

6.1. Attending school during the suspension period

Suspended students are not permitted on school grounds during the suspension period except where their attendance is permitted by the conditions of the suspension. For example, to discuss the suspension with the principal, attending a re-entry meeting, collecting schoolwork at a pre-arranged time or completing an essential assessment task.

As stated in section 94 (2) of the Act, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child does not attend school during a period of suspension. Mature-age students and children living independently are similarly responsible for ensuring they do not attend school during their period of suspension.

Schools requiring assistance in managing any non-compliance by students or parents can obtain support from their director School Operations.

6.2. Revoke or vary a period of suspension

Principals may revoke or reduce a suspension if they are satisfied that the student no longer presents a risk of psychological or physical harm to others. If additional information comes to hand which demonstrates that the basis of a suspension decision was incorrect and the student no longer presents a risk of harm, the principal should revoke the suspension and adjust the student's record accordingly.

Principals may extend the length of a suspension if they are satisfied the student's presence continues to present a risk of psychological or physical harm to others. A decision to extend must be made in line with

the information in these guidelines, including the requirement to ensure a fair hearing prior to making a final decision.

When a principal decides to revoke a suspension or vary the period or conditions of the suspension, they must issue a new written Notice of suspension for students and a new Letter to parents in line with section 91(2) of the Act.

6.3. Re-entry meetings

After a student has completed their suspension, a re-entry meeting must be scheduled to support the student's return to school. Re-entry meetings are to be scheduled prior to the student's return to school.

Re-entry meetings serve as opportunities to successfully reintegrate students back into the school community to resume their academic pursuits. The main purposes of the meeting are to:

- welcome the student back to school
- provide an opportunity for the student to discuss their suspension experience and any concerns they may have about returning to school
- discuss what learning and behaviour supports will be put in place to assist the student to succeed
- explore opportunities for restorative practices
- encourage parental involvement in supporting the student's reintegration process and reinforcing positive behaviour.

A record of the agreed actions from the meeting must be provided to the student and parents and to any others who attended the meeting.

Details of the student's re-entry arrangements should also be recorded in the student's [personalised plan](#). If a student does not have a personalised plan, the principal must consider whether it would be appropriate to develop a plan to support the student to behave positively. It is mandatory to put a personalised plan in place for students who have been suspended previously.

The implementation of the actions from the re-entry meeting or personalised plan should be monitored to ensure it is supporting successful re-engagement with learning.

6.3.1. Participants

Participants at the re-entry meeting must include:

- the principal, or nominated staff member
- the student.

Other participants should include:

- a parent, or a responsible adult nominated by the student. Provide communication to the parents following the meeting to confirm or advise them of the outcomes.

Where required and appropriate, the following may also attend:

- a [School attendance officer](#), following a long-term suspension or open case
- the school's cultural advisor
- interpreters

- other relevant staff and support services such as [SWIPS staff](#), Department of Children and Families case workers, paediatricians or treatment providers, as appropriate.

While it is important to ensure that key participants attend these meetings, the availability of participants must not delay the student's re-entry or inadvertently extend the suspension period.

6.4. Complaints

If a parent or student is not satisfied with a decision made by the principal, they may arrange a meeting with the principal to discuss the issue. If the matter is not resolved they can access online information about the department's [complaint process](#).

All complaints will be managed in accordance with the department's [Complaint resolution policy](#) and [Complaint resolution in schools and corporate guidelines and procedures](#).

7. Roles and responsibilities

Principals are responsible for:

- implementing these Suspension from school guidelines
- exercising their power to suspend students whose presence is a threat of physical or psychological harm to others at the school
- ensuring their school develops and implements a whole-school approach to wellbeing and positive behaviour to meet the needs of students, families, and staff
- taking reasonable care to protect all students from any reasonably foreseeable risk of harm
- ensuring students have personalised plans in place where required
- ensuring alternatives to suspension are considered, before suspending a student
- ensuring procedural fairness in their decision making
- completing a Principal's suspension checklist to ensure suspension decisions align with policy and legislative obligations
- ensuring the investigation of the cause and context of a student's behaviour is fair and impartial
- conferring with their respective Senior Director Education when considering lengthy or frequent suspensions
- prescribing the conditions and length of a suspension
- providing the Notices of suspension to the student and letter to parents
- revoking and varying suspension decisions
- providing for continuity of learning for the student, during the period of suspension and ensuring parents are informed of these arrangements
- ensuring accurate suspension data is recorded in SAMS within 24 hours of a written Notice of suspension being issued to the student and filing all relevant documentation in the school's student record system
- emailing a copy of the written Notice of suspension and the Principal's suspension checklist to cesuspension.doe@education.nt.gov.au
- facilitating a re-entry meeting and ensuring re-entry arrangements are captured in the student's personalised plan, where there is one.

Senior Directors Education are responsible for:

- ensuring all schools have a whole-school approach to wellbeing and positive behaviour that is being implemented
- providing principals with leadership support to implement approaches to student behaviour which are fair and consistent and meet their legislative obligations and department policy
- conferring with, and providing advice to principals, prior to them issuing lengthy or frequent suspensions where appropriate
- supporting principals in the management of crisis situations and critical incidents
- supporting principals who have been directly affected by the behaviour for which the suspension is being considered
- reviewing the application of suspension practices across the region to ensure suspensions are being applied fairly and consistently, in compliance with policy and legislation, and in the best interest of students and the school community.

The Deputy Chief Executive Regional Services is responsible for:

- collaborating with Senior Directors Education to review the application of suspension practices in Northern Territory Government schools to ensure suspensions are being applied fairly and consistently, in compliance with policy and legislation, and in the best interest of students and their school communities
- providing advice to the CE on suspension practices in NT Government schools.

The Chief Executive is responsible for:

- receiving copies of the written Notice of suspension in accordance with section 91(4) of the Act.

Directors School Operations are responsible for:

- coordinating support for principals to work through complex suspension issues
- managing the suspension email inbox on behalf of the Chief Executive
- capturing copies of the Notices of suspension and the Principal's suspension checklists in TRM
- supporting principals with complaints regarding decisions to suspend
- where necessary, preparing a newsflash from the information provided by the principal.

Inclusion and Engagement Services are responsible for:

- providing support to schools to adopt a whole-school approach to wellbeing and positive behaviour
- delivering professional learning on the Suspension from school guidelines for all school leaders
- delivering universal programs to support school leaders to implement whole school approaches to wellbeing and positive behaviour and Safe Supportive De-escalation of Behaviour training
- providing support for students who are subject to longer term suspensions and at risk of dis-engaging from school by participating in re-entry meetings where required
- analysing NT wide suspension data trends that demonstrate a pattern of behaviour management issues in schools and providing reports to the Chief Executive and education leaders
- using the NT wide suspension data trends to partner with Regional Services to provide support to identified schools and their school leaders to strengthen whole school approaches to wellbeing and behaviour

- providing support upon request to principals considering suspension and alternatives for students whose behaviour may be a symptom of disability or trauma.

Parents and students are responsible for:

- ensuring students do not attend school during the suspension period, in accordance with section 94 (2) or section 94 (3) of the Act
- complying with the conditions of the suspension
- attending the re-entry meeting.

8. Definitions and acronyms

Term	Definition
Child	A person under the age of 18 years as defined at section 5 of the <i>Education Act 2015</i> .
Culturally responsive	Understanding, interacting, and communicating effectively and sensitively with people from diverse backgrounds.
Disability	<p>Refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total or partial loss of a person’s bodily or mental functions or a part of the body • the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness or organisms capable of causing disease or illness • the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of a person’s body or that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction • a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions, or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour. <p>It includes a disability that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presently exists, or previously existed but no longer exists, or may exist in the future, including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability, or is imputed to a person.
Parent	A child’s father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for a child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of a child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary lore or tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.
Parental responsibility	<p>In regard to the definition of parent - refers to a person who has:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) daily care and control of the child, or b) is entitled to exercise all the powers and rights, and has all the responsibilities, in relation to the long-term care and development of the child, or

Term	Definition
	c) has daily care and control of the child and the entitlement and responsibilities at (b) and includes a person who has been given the above responsibilities under another state or territory law.
Personalised plans	Any individualised plan schools put in place to address the student's educational, or behaviour support needs and reasonable adjustments provided to assist students with disability to participate in education.
Priority students	Priority students include, but are not limited to students with disabilities, students living in out of home care, students experiencing homelessness, students impacted by trauma, living with family violence or at-risk of disengaging.
Re-entry meeting	A meeting held prior to a suspended student's re-entry to the school to plan a successful transition.
SAMS	Student Administration and Management System is the standard student administration system used in all NT Government schools to manage student enrolment, attendance, and behaviour.
School day	A day on which instruction is provided at the school for enrolled students.
Student	A person enrolled at a school and children who attend Department of Education early childhood services and programs delivered on school premises, including children, young people, and mature age students.
Student living independently	Any student who is of or above the age of 14 years and not living with a parent or living with a parent who is unable to control the student's behaviour.
Suspension	The process of temporarily excluding a student from attending a school and receiving the standard instruction or education opportunities being provided at the school.
Trauma informed practice	Means a way of working that acknowledges the effect of trauma on cognitive and emotional development and social functioning. It strengthens teaching practice through recognition of the critical importance of relationships, perception of self and the mental and emotional states of complete engagement.
Whole school approach	Refers to unified and systemic action, for example, plans, across the school community for student wellbeing and positive behaviour that meets the needs of students, families, and staff.

Acronyms and abbreviations	Full form
Cth	Commonwealth of Australia
NT	Northern Territory

Acronyms and abbreviations	Full form
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
SAMS	Student Administration Management System
SWIPS	Student Wellbeing, Inclusion, Programs and Services
TRM	Territory Records Manager

9. Related legislation, policy and resources

Legislation

Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/ANTIDISCRIMINATION-ACT-1992>

Education Act 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/latest/text>

Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth) - <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2005L00767/latest/text>

Research

Noltemeyer, A. and Ward, R. Mcloughlin, C. (2015) *Relationship Between School Suspension and Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis*. *School Psychology Review*, Volume 44, No. 2, pp. 224 –240

Policy

Suspension from school guidelines supporting documents – internal access only - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5390>:

- Principal's suspension checklist option 1
- Principal's suspension checklist option 2
- Alternatives to suspension
- Suspension from school factsheet for students and parents
- Suspension flowchart
- Suspension Scenarios
- Notice of suspension – student letter template
- Notice of suspension – parent letter template
- Suspension from school information sheet for students and parents

Complaint resolution policy - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/conduct#complaints_management

Complaint resolution in schools and corporate guidelines and procedures - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/conduct#complaints_management

Codes of conduct for education sites and workplace participants policy - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/conduct#complaints_management

Critical incident response for Northern Territory school guidelines (internal access only) - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5406>

Delegations policy - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5340#resources15957>

Expulsion guidelines - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>

Newsflash guidelines - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/4462>

Student wellbeing and positive behaviour policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/health-safety/behaviour-and-wellbeing>

Duty of care owed by teachers - information sheet - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/conduct#duty_of_care

Education and learning complaints - <https://nt.gov.au/learning/complaints>

Good decision-making guide - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5340>

Student wellbeing and inclusion programs and services (internal access only) - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/supporting-staff/student-inclusion-and-engagement/student-wellbeing-and-inclusion-programs-and>

Student engagement programs and services (internal access only) - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/supporting-staff/student-inclusion-and-engagement/student-engagement-programs-and-services#resources10734>

Positive behaviour support (internal access only) - <https://elearn.ntschoools.net/policies/5390>

Resources

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations - <https://childsafefhumanrights.gov.au/national-principles/download-national-principles>

10 Year generational strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory - <https://rmo.nt.gov.au/home>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - <https://www.unicef.org.au/united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/united-nations-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-unrcpd>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/un-declaration-rights-indigenous-people>

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration - <https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

Document title	Suspension from school - guidelines
Contact details	Student Wellbeing, Inclusion, Program and Services
Approved by	Executive Director, Inclusion and Engagement Services
Date approved	18 November 2024
TRM number	50:D24:132067

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
2	25 November 2020	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	Minor amendment to section 5. Reasons for suspension.
3	08 February 2021	Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	<p>Amendments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 3 Roles and responsibilities: included principal using the Suspension Decision Making Tool. Section 5 Reason for Suspension: removal of requirement to consult with QSSS director when a student with disability is being considered for suspension. Section 7 Consideration for students with disability: removal of requirement of principal to consult with SWI when suspending a student with a disability. Included reference to using the Suspension Decision Making Tool. Section 14 Revoking or varying a period of suspension: removed the requirement for principal to contact QSSS when revoking or varying a suspension.
4	28 January 2025	Student Wellbeing, Inclusion Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes required to comply with the new template. Strengthened the requirement for suspension only when a student's presence is likely to constitute a threat of physical or psychological harm to others. Included advice on the relevance of conduct outside of school grounds. Additional advice included on the safe return home for suspended students. Included requirement for principals to email a copy of the written Notice of Suspension and Principal's suspension checklist to the CE, in accordance with the <i>Education Act 2015</i>. Advice on partial Suspensions have been removed. Clarified the requirements of procedural fairness as it applies to school suspension. Entering data into SAMS must be complete within 24 hours of the suspension. Included a provision for revoking and varying a suspension.

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included other suggested participants of a re-entry meeting. • Roles and Responsibilities - included amendments to reflect the structural alignment in 2022. • Changes to relevant sections to address the final recommendations of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. • Readability edits made on behalf of the OCE.