

GUIDELINES

Detention and internal suspension

Responsibility of:	School Support Services	DoE File: FILE2015/291
Effective Date:	December 2016	EDOC2017/1034
Next Review Date:	December 2019	Version Number: 2
Target Audience:	Principals, school staff, parents, students and school communities	

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Suspension guidelines](#).

1. INTRODUCTION

The department has a responsibility to its students and staff to provide a safe and supportive learning environment that enables engagement in meaningful learning experiences.

All schools must ensure that they have developed and implemented an integrated whole school positive behaviour framework that includes a continuum of procedures that both acknowledges positive behaviour, and supports behavioural needs. When student behaviour is unacceptable and consistently causes disruption to the learning opportunities of others, and/or the opportunity for teachers to teach, a period of detention or internal suspension may be issued.

Principals, teachers and senior educators have the flexibility and autonomy to apply detention as a meaningful consequence and learning opportunity for inappropriate student behaviour. Principals can decide to impose internal suspensions where required.

These guidelines outline the responsibilities for principals, teachers and senior educators when a period of detention or internal suspension is issued.

2. DEFINITIONS

Detention is a consequence to problematic behaviour where the student is required to remain in-school during recess, lunch (or a portion thereof) and/or after-school hours, in a closely supervised environment for a specified time.

Internal suspension is a response to student behaviour that occurs during normal school hours, where the risk of harm posed by the student can be mitigated by removing them from a scheduled class/es, and allowing them to reflect in a closely supervised environment that is separated from others.

Parent is a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander customary law or tradition.

Principal, for the purposes of these guidelines, also refers to acting principals who have delegation to act on the principal's behalf in their absence.

Special learning needs includes any child that:

- has a disability under the [Disability Discrimination Act](#), or
- whose educational progress, because of a special factor other than a disability, is likely to suffer unless they have access to special education arrangements.

Student Administration and Management System (SAMS G2 and SAMS Classic, hereafter referred to as SAMS) is the standard student administration system used in all Northern Territory (NT) government schools to manage student enrolment, attendance and behaviour.

Student, for the purposes of these guidelines, is defined as any student enrolled in an NT government school. These guidelines do not include students enrolled in distance education.

Student living independently is a child who is of or above the age of 14 years and not living with a parent. A child who is living with a parent is also considered to be independent if the parent is unable to control the child's behaviour in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals are responsible for:

- ensuring that their school develops and implements a whole school approach to wellbeing, engagement and behaviour, and communicating expectations to the school community
- exploring alternative options to behaviour sanctions, such as facilitating a supportive conversation with the student about behaviour expectations whilst at school, and looking at the student's individual circumstances or needs
- providing advanced notification to the student's parent when issuing an after school detention and ensuring that prior to any period of after hours detention being issued, parents provide permission, either verbally or in writing.
- making contact with the parent to advise of any period of detention that occurs during school hours (either via email, written note / letter or phone call)
- where behaviour continues, or there have been numerous incidents of detention and/or internal suspension, facilitating meetings with the student and their parent to advise of the consequences should problematic behaviour continue
- ensuring internal suspension information is entered onto the behaviour module in SAMS.

Teachers and senior educators are responsible for:

- responding to student behaviour by adopting positive strategies to manage classroom behaviour
- issuing periods of detention or making recommendations to the principal to issue internal suspensions. These recommendations should include details of the behaviour, alternative behaviour management strategies employed, and the proposed period of sanction
- providing appropriate school work to the student to complete during the course of a detention or internal suspension.

4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Behaviour management considerations

Section 90 of the [Education Act](#) requires principals to consider a range of factors prior to making any decisions relevant to the management of a student's behavior, including issuing periods of detention or internal suspension. Teachers and senior educators should also apply these principles prior to making any determinations. The factors include:

- a) the age of the student
- b) the developmental stage of the student
- c) whether the student is a child with [special learning needs](#)
- d) the mental health and wellbeing of the student
- e) the physical health and wellbeing of the student
- f) any relevant religious or cultural considerations
- g) the student's home environment and the arrangements in place for the student's care.

4.2 Reasons for detention or internal suspension

Detention is an appropriate response for a wide range of less serious classroom and school behaviour breaches.

Internal suspension may be used in situations where a student's behaviour is disruptive and where there may be a risk of harm posed by the student should they remain in the classroom environment.

Disciplinary responses to student behaviour must be proportionate to the behaviour displayed. Any period of detention or internal suspension can provide students with an opportunity to reflect on both their behaviour and strategies to avoid this from occurring in the future. Alternatives to disciplinary approaches should be taken wherever possible as detailed below.

Strategies to effectively manage classroom behaviour	
Foster Positive Relationships in the Classroom Community (Hattie, 2012)	
Establish an Inclusive Classroom Environment (APA, 2008)	
Make Data-Based Decisions to Support Positive Behaviour (APA, 2008)	
Teach, Review and Reinforce Clear Expectations (Newcomber, 2009)	
Optimise the Physical Space of the Classroom (Newcomber, 2009)	
Create Routines for Common Activities/Tasks (Newcomber, 2009)	
Provide Engaging Instruction (Kratowill, 2014; Newcomber, 2009)	
Responding to Potential Problems (Newcomber, 2009)	
Preventative	Responsive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Behaviour Plans • Referral to appropriate service providers • Mediation • Consultation with parents, students and support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation or restorative justice practices • Time-in or time-out • Service to the school community • A temporary loss of privileges (e.g. participation in extracurricular activities)

4.3 Minimum requirements for detention or internal suspension

If a period of detention or internal suspension is issued, school staff must ensure that the student is:

- appropriately supervised at all times
- able to access assistance if necessary
- be provided with an adequate amount of class work at a level appropriate and consistent with their needs
- permitted to have food and drink that they would typically have had if they had accessed recess and/or lunch, or in the case of internal suspension, be given separate supervised break times
- provided with access to toilet facilities.

As part of the detention or internal suspension the student must be provided with an opportunity to engage in a supportive discussion with a school staff member to:

- reflect on their behaviour
- explore the triggers for the inappropriate behaviour and identify strategies to avoid repeating such behaviour, and
- understand the school's behaviour expectations.

4.4 Location, purpose and timing of detention (during school hours) or internal suspension

Detention and internal suspension periods should be conducted away from other students in a closely supervised environment.

During detention teachers may instruct a student to undertake school work that has not been completed in regular classroom time as a result of the behaviour, new work, or other tasks at a level appropriate and consistent with the student's needs.

Contact should occur with the student's parents to discuss the detention or internal suspension, and the behaviour leading to this action, as soon as possible after this decision is made.

4.5 After school hours detention

After school hours detention should not exceed 30 minutes, and notice must be provided in advance to the student's parents to explain the reason and timing of the detention. Parents **must give permission** (either verbally or in writing) for their child to undertake after hours detention, prior to this commencing. An optional template parent letter is included at Attachment A, if required.

Alternative behaviour management consequences will need to be discussed and negotiated with the parents should it be indicated that the detention will cause problems with regard to transportation home, or with after-school care arrangements or engagements.

4.6 Reporting and records management

Schools must enter details of all internal suspensions into the SAMS behaviour module for departmental reporting purposes.

For assistance, contact the Student Administration Systems (SAS) Team on 1800 446 961.

5. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance – recording and reporting guidelines• Complaints policy and guidelines• Students with Disability policy and guidelines• Suspension guidelines
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Act• Disability Discrimination Act