

# Suspension:

## What Parents Need To Know

**A positive school climate and a safe learning and teaching environment are essential if students are to succeed in school.**

### Positive School Climate

A positive school climate means everyone — parents, students, staff and community members — feels welcome and respected.

### Ontario's New Approach

Ontario's new approach to making schools safer involves progressive discipline. This involves the whole school and combines discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. Students will also have more opportunities to learn from the choices they make.

Progressive discipline promotes positive student behaviour. It also enables the principal to choose the consequences that are appropriate to the student's needs and behaviour.

### The Facts On Suspension

Use this guide to find out:

- What can lead to suspension
- What factors will be considered before students are suspended
- What programs are now available to help students on long-term suspension keep learning and get back on track.

Visit [ontario.ca/safeschools](http://ontario.ca/safeschools) to learn more about Ontario's new approach to making schools safer. The website also includes information on bullying prevention and progressive discipline.

# Suspension

**Students who are suspended from school now have more opportunities to continue learning and to help them stay on track with their education.**

## What Is Suspension?

A suspension means students are removed from school temporarily for a specific period of time. Students may be suspended for a period of time ranging from one school day to 20 school days. Students who are suspended for more than five school days are considered to be on long-term suspension. Students cannot take part in school activities or events while suspended.

## Who Decides If Students Are Suspended?

Only the principal can suspend students.

## How Will Parents Hear About It?

When students are suspended, the principal will make every reasonable effort to let the student's parents or guardians know within 24 hours. This will be followed by a letter notifying them about the suspension. The letter will include important information, such as:

- Reason for the suspension
- Length of the suspension
- Information on the right to appeal the suspension
- The supervisory officer's contact information, in case parents have questions

Students on long-term suspension will receive information about the program to which they are assigned.

## What Can Lead To Suspension?

Suspension will be considered whether the incident happens at school, at a school-related activity (like a field trip), or in any other circumstances where the student's behaviour has a negative impact on the school climate. This can include activities such as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying that happens through technology, like email or a cell phone.

In some situations, the principal will consider suspension. For other, more serious incidents, the principal will automatically suspend students and consider whether to recommend expulsion. These more serious activities are listed in the expulsion section.



### 3 **Suspension:** What Parents Need to Know

The principal will consider suspension if students have engaged in any of the activities listed below. They include:

- Uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person
- Possessing alcohol or illegal drugs
- Being under the influence of alcohol
- Swearing at a teacher or at another person in a position of authority
- Committing an act of vandalism that causes extensive damage to school property at the student's school or to property on school premises
- Bullying
- Any other activities identified in school board policy.

#### **What Does A Principal Consider Before Suspending Students?**

Before suspending students, the principal must consider the individual student. This means that students involved in the same incident may not face the same consequences.

For example, one student may be suspended, while another student is not. Or, one student's suspension may be longer than another's. The principal can decide on different consequences for each student, based on mitigating and other factors.

Principals will consider the following mitigating and other factors:

- The student's age
- The student's history, (for example, disciplinary history; whether progressive discipline has already been tried; or personal history such as a recent trauma in the student's life)
- Whether the student can control his/her behaviour
- Whether the student can understand the possible consequences of his/her behaviour
- Whether the student's presence in the school creates an unacceptable risk to anyone else
- Whether the behaviour is related to harassment because of the student's race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or any other type of harassment
- How the discipline will affect the student's ongoing education.

If students have special education needs and have an Individual Education Plan, the principal will also consider:

- Whether the behaviour was a manifestation of a disability identified in the student's plan
- Whether appropriate accommodation has been provided
- Whether suspension is likely to aggravate or worsen the student's behaviour or conduct.



### Can Suspensions Be Appealed?

All suspensions can be appealed to the school board. Written notice of the request for an appeal must be sent to the supervisory officer of the board within 10 school days of the start of the suspension.

The appeal must be heard within 15 school days of the board receiving the notice of appeal, unless the parents and school board have agreed to an extension. If parents have questions about the appeal, they can contact the supervisory officer.

### What Happens When Students Are Suspended?

Students can be suspended for a period of one to 20 school days. Students who are suspended for more than five school days are considered to be on a **long-term suspension**.

- Students who are suspended for one **to five school days** are expected to receive a homework package.
- Students who are suspended for **six to 10 school days** must be offered an academic program that will help them keep learning. Students are encouraged to participate. The board will develop a program for each student's needs.
- Students who are suspended for **11 to 20 school days** must be offered an academic program, as well as supports to promote positive behaviour. For example, supports like anger management or career counselling can help engage and motivate students and encourage positive behaviour. Students are encouraged to participate in these programs. The board will develop a program based on each student's needs once the student agrees to participate.

### What Programs Are Students Offered?

Once students have been suspended for more than five school days and agree to participate in a program for suspended students, a planning meeting is held. The student, school and board staff, and parents or guardians (wherever possible) attend the meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to identify the:

- Student's needs
- Student's risk factors
- Type of supports required to help the student continue learning as part of the academic program
- The objectives of the Student Action Plan.



## 5 **Suspension:** What Parents Need to Know

Students who participate in the program will have a **Student Action Plan** developed. The plan identifies the academic component and any additional supports to promote positive behaviour the student will receive. Each student's plan will be developed to meet his or her needs. The plan will depend upon the student's needs, length of the suspension, the nature and severity of the behaviour, and any other mitigating factors.

For students suspended for **six to 10 school days**, the plan must:

- Outline objectives for the student
- Include an academic component
- Identify the student's needs and any type of supports the student might need to keep learning.

For students suspended for **11 to 20 school days**, the plan must:

- Outline objectives for the student
- Include an academic component
- Include supports to promote positive behaviour.

### **Academic Component**

This part of the program will follow the Ontario curriculum and ensure that students have the opportunity to continue their education. If students have special education needs and have an Individual Education Plan, the board must provide supports consistent with the plan.

### **Supports to promote positive behaviour**

This part of the program identifies services and supports to help students develop long-term positive attitudes and behaviours. These could include:

- Anger management
- Referral for substance-abuse counselling
- Career counselling for secondary school students to help engage and motivate them and encourage positive behaviour.



## What Happens When Students Return From A Suspension?

Suspended students must return to school after the suspension is over. While a program for suspended students must be offered, students do not have to participate in or complete a board program to return to school.

For students returning from a suspension lasting more than five school days, the principal will hold a **re-entry meeting** with the teacher, student and, where possible, the student's parent(s) to:

- Make the student's transition back to school easier
- Identify any extra academic or supports to promote positive behaviour the student may need when returning to school.

Community agencies that have been working with the student are also encouraged to attend the re-entry meeting.

### Guide to Programs for Suspended Students

Suspension	Planning Meeting	Student Action Plan		Plan for re-entry to school	Re-entry meeting
		Academic Component	Behaviour Support		
1-5 school days	Not required	Not required	Not required	Not required	Not required
6-10 school days	✓	✓	Not required	✓	✓
11-20 school days	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Learn More

Contact the school principal or the school board to find out more.

Check out your school board website.

Learn more about Ontario's new approach to making schools safer by visiting [ontario.ca/safeschools](http://ontario.ca/safeschools)

