Behaviour Policy (incorporating exclusions and sanctions)

Adopted by Utopia – for review by the Board of Directors
Adopted September 2026
For review – Annually

School Overview

Utopia is an Independent Special School for students aged 13-19 with neurodiversity, high levels of anxiety and those experiencing emotional barriers to school attendance. We are a small setting providing intensive and personalised support for those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who benefit from a nurturing environment.

Our Vision
A learning experience where students feel happy, safe, and create lasting memories, surrounded by people who appreciate their uniqueness, support their success, and foster their personal growth.

Our Mission
We balance the academic and personal development outcomes of students based on their individual needs and aspirations. Utilising parental engagement to ensure that each student is appropriately prepared for adulthood.

Our Ethos
Our school ethos of being accessible, approachable, and aspirational empowers staff to go above and beyond in supporting students' development, fostering strong relationships that drive exceptional progress.

Values
Respect, resilience, responsibility and kindness are the core principles woven throughout our curriculum to ensure students are prepared to meet the demands of life in modern Britain.

Essential Skills
Adaptability, communication, independence, motivation, problem solving and teamwork are fundamental skills we believe every student should embody to thrive both in school and in the wider world.

Introduction

At Utopia, we recognise that every student is unique, and many of our young people face complex emotional, social, and sensory challenges that impact their ability to engage with school life in a typical way. This behaviour policy is rooted in our belief that behaviour is a form of communication. Our approach is not about managing behaviour, but about understanding it, responding with empathy, and building trusting relationships that support every student to thrive. We are a small, nurturing community built on the core values of **resilience, respect, responsibility**, and **kindness**. This policy outlines a consistent, relational approach that supports positive behaviour, emotional regulation, and the development of lifelong personal and social skills. We work collaboratively with families, therapists, and outside agencies to ensure every student receives the support they need to succeed.

Aims

- To create a safe, predictable, and nurturing environment for all students
- To promote positive relationships and emotional wellbeing
- To respond to behaviour in a way that supports regulation, repair, and reflection
- To recognise the impact of trauma, anxiety, and neurodiversity on behaviour
- To work collaboratively with families and professionals to support student's needs

Objectives

- To implement consistent classroom routines and behaviour expectations across the school
- To monitor learning environments to ensure they remain inclusive, calm, and supportive

- To schedule regular opportunities for staff to build positive connections with students
- To collect student feedback on relationships and wellbeing and adapt practice accordingly
- To ensure staff use a consistent approach to behaviour that is recorded accurately within the school behaviour system
- To ensure staff respond appropriately to the needs of our students by providing opportunities to reflect that enhance their practice
- To ensure behaviour is communicated accurately to parents and strategies are put in place to support students who need it

Legislation and statutory requirements

This policy is based on advice from the Department for Education (DfE) on:

- Behaviour and discipline in schools
- Searching, screening and confiscation at school
- The Equality Act 2010
- Use of reasonable force in schools
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school

It is also based on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice. In addition, this policy is based on Schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; paragraph 7 outlines a school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, paragraph 9 requires the school to have a written behaviour policy and paragraph 10 requires the school to have an anti-bullying strategy.

Roles and responsibilities

SLT are responsible for:

- Supporting staff with training, resources and reflective supervision
- Leading on policy implementation and review
- Ensuring a safe environment for students and staff
- Modelling the school's core values at all times

Staff are responsible for:

- Implementing the behaviour policy consistently and recording incidents accurately
- Modelling the school's core values at all times
- Understanding the individual needs of the students they work with
- Being supportive and proactive to reduce incidents of dysregulation and distress

Parents are expected to:

- Support their child in adhering to the school's expectations
- Inform Utopia of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child's behaviour
- Discuss any behavioural concerns with staff promptly enabling school to put appropriate support in place

Students are supported to:

- Understand their emotions and needs over time
- Develop their own toolkit for self-regulation
- Build positive relationships with peers and staff
- Meet the schools' expectations for behaviour

Our Approach

Our students struggle with communication, emotional regulation, sensory processing, and anxiety. We understand that:

- Behaviour is a form of expression and not always a matter of choice
- Dysregulation is often a sign of unmet need, not defiance
- Co-regulation with trusted adults is a key step toward self-regulation
- Consistency, routine, and emotional safety are essential

We promote positive behaviour through:

- Consistent relationships built on trust, understanding and clear expectations
- Personalised approaches that consider individual sensory, emotional, and communication needs
- Visual supports, safe spaces, and calming strategies
- Teaching emotional literacy, self-regulation, and problem-solving
- Living our core values and developing our 6 essential skills for life
- Staff modelling
- Clear and effective consequences that are proportionate and timebound
- Celebrating progress, effort, and personal growth – no matter how small

Quality First Teaching

- Having a clear lesson structure that is adhered to by staff across the school
- Providing classroom equipment that supports regulation in all lessons
- Providing regular brain and movement breaks
- Providing adapted resources that engage students and motivate them to learn

Targeted Intervention

- Group social skills sessions
- 1:1 social skills
- 1:1 mentoring sessions
- 1:1 counselling
- Lego therapy
- Comic strip conversations
- Parental contact and involvement

Responses to behaviour

Staff responses to behaviour are relational, consistent, and tailored to the individual. Our approach includes:

- **De-escalation and Co-Regulation:** Quiet presence, limited language, sensory supports, offering space or proximity as appropriate
- **Restorative Conversations:** When a student is regulated and ready, we explore what happened, how it felt, and how to repair relationships
- **Support Plans:** We develop individualised regulation or behaviour support plans with input from staff, families, and external professionals
- **Team Debriefs:** Staff reflect after incidents to review what worked, what could be improved, and how to adjust our approach
- **Natural Consequences:** Where appropriate and understood by the student, we explore logical, respectful consequences that support learning and accountability

How we Implement this policy

We want our students to:

- Show **resilience** in building strength to overcome challenges, adapt, grow, and persevere confidently.
- Show **respect** by treating everyone with dignity, fairness, courtesy and valuing diverse perspectives.
- Show **responsibility** by being - accountable, reliable and take ownership of their actions, choices, and learning.
- Be **kind** by promoting empathy, compassion, and positive, inclusive behaviour for all

How we promote these values:

- Through policy, staff CPD and general school life and behaviour
- Teaching of the 6 Essential Skills for life
- A whole school approach to Personal Development that incorporates SMSC, British Values and Protected Characteristics
- Curriculum planning and implementation
- Extra-Curricular activities and whole school initiatives

Our priority development areas for 26/27 are:

Objective	Success Criteria	Evidence	Frequency	Responsible Person
Implement consistent classroom routines and behaviour expectations across the school	Staff apply consistent routines and expectations in line with behaviour policy	Lesson observations, learning walks, student voice, staff meeting minutes	Termly	Class Teachers monitored by SLT
Ensure staff use a consistent approach to behaviour that is recorded accurately within the school behaviour system	Behaviour incidents are recorded accurately and on time	Trackit Lights data, half termly behaviour analysis	Daily/ Half termly	All staff monitored by Deputy Headteacher
Ensure staff understand the link between planning and early intervention and effective behaviour management	Lessons are well prepared, appropriately chunked, visual timetables are used and classroom environments are resourced appropriately for learning	Lesson observations, learning walks	Termly	Deputy Headteacher

Monitoring Progress

The school behaviour monitoring system is Compass and forms the basis of a traffic light system. The purpose of Trackit Lights is to monitor and reinforce student progress towards the 6 essential skills. These are:

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Independence
- Motivation
- Problem solving
- Teamwork

Students will be tracked lesson by lesson and awarded up to 3 positive points per lesson for exhibiting one or more of the 6 essential skills.

Green moments- These are our 6 essential skills

Amber moments- These are lower level off track behaviours

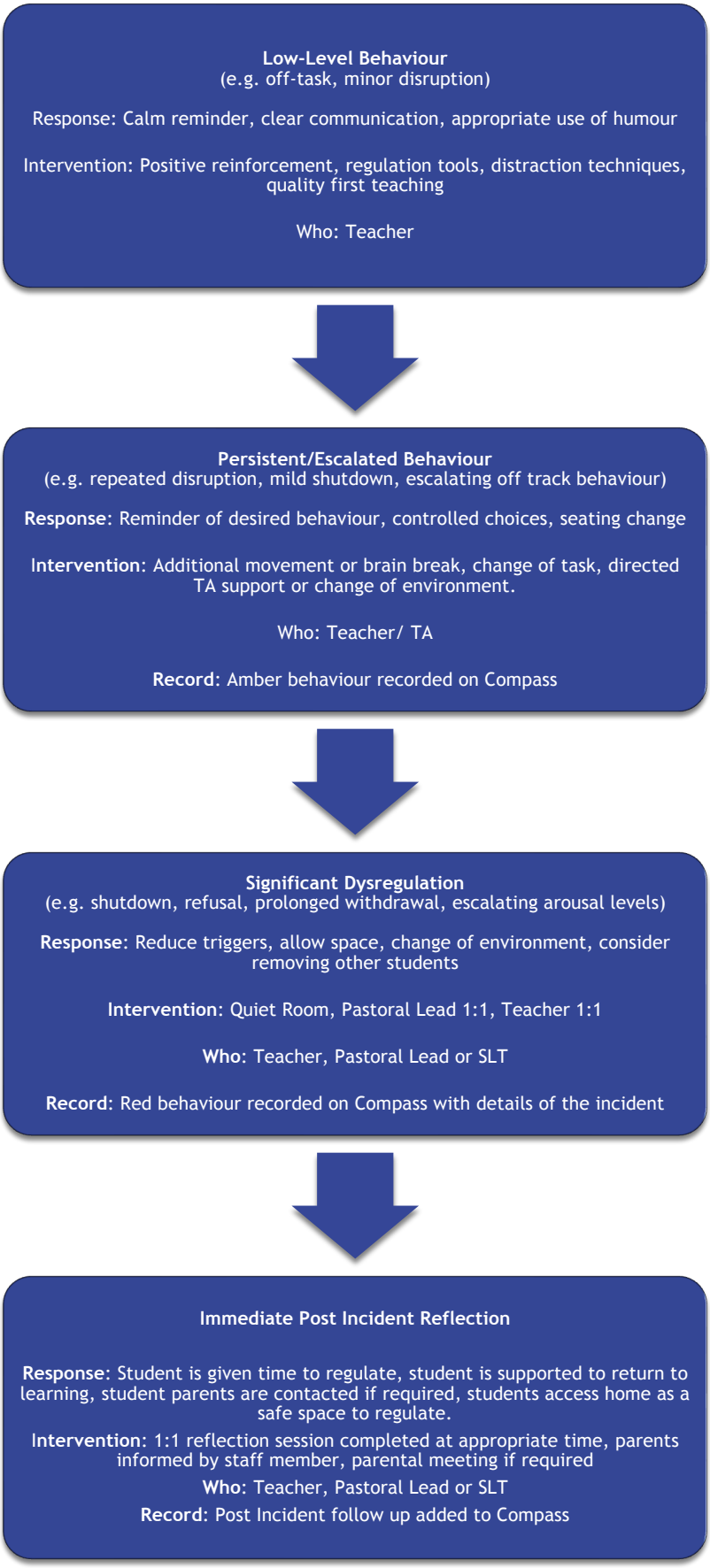
Red moments- These are behaviours of more severe dysregulation

The purpose of recording amber and red moments is not punitive, this will enable staff to recognise patterns and to support staff and students where intervention is needed. Examples of support that may be put in place include

- Support from our onsite counsellor
- Intervention from support staff or SLT
- Additional support in lessons
- Meetings with parents
- Support from external agencies and other professionals

Reporting and Escalation

Staff should follow the following process when addressing behaviour and recording on Compass.



Celebrating Achievements

Consistent use of Compass allows SLT to accurately track progress across the school and reward success. We celebrate achievements weekly by awarding certificates for:

Student of the week- The student with the most positive behaviour points at the end of each week will receive a merit certificate

Half Termly Themes- Each half term we place a specific focus on one of our 6 essential skills. The student with the most positive points towards our selected theme on a weekly basis will receive a merit certificate.

Weekly Certificates- Weekly certificates are awarded to students who reflect our school values in an outstanding way.

Wider success across the curriculum is celebrated in the form of:

- Subject certificates
- Prizes and rewards
- Emails to parents
- Phone calls home
- Parents evening
- Annual review meetings
- Whole school celebration events

Student Voice

The School Council plays a vital role in promoting positive behaviour and contributing to a safe, respectful, and inclusive school culture. By providing students with a voice in decision-making, the School Council ensures that expectations around behaviour are fair, consistent, and understood by all.

Through regular meetings and consultation, the School Council:

- Represents the views and experiences of the wider students
- Provides feedback on the impact of behaviour policies and routines in daily school life
- Suggests practical strategies for improving relationships, respect, and inclusion across the school
- Helps to design and promote initiatives that celebrate positive behaviour and support wellbeing

Involving the School Council in shaping and reviewing the Behaviour Policy strengthens student ownership and responsibility. It ensures that behaviour expectations are not simply imposed but are co-constructed, making them more meaningful, relevant, and effective.

By embedding student voice in our approach to behaviour, we reinforce the principle that every member of the school community has a role to play in creating a safe, supportive, and respectful environment for all.

Expectations of Students

Utopia staff set high expectations of all students. We believe doing this encourages students to have respect for themselves and others around them. We therefore require all students to conduct themselves appropriately. Our expectations are:

- That students are respectful towards people, property and places

- That students behave safely
- That students try their best
- That students work with the staff to access the support

School Uniform

We want all students to feel as comfortable as possible in attending school and as such we do not have a formal uniform. However, it is important that students understand the importance of appropriate clothing and the wider context this has for later life, college and employment. We therefore expect all students to avoid the following:

- See-through clothing, for example see-through tops or leggings
- Strapless or 'string-strapped' tops
- Clothing which is revealing, for example, exposing bare midriffs or cleavage
- Clothing which reveals underwear
- Flip-flops and sliders for general day to day wear due to health and safety issues
- Clothing with offensive logos or text (e.g. swear words)

Where possible we will encourage hoods to be removed during the school day. This will be to prepare students for when they are engaging in environments where hoods may be inappropriate.

Bullying

Bullying is defined as the repetitive, intentional harming of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying is, therefore:

- Deliberately hurtful
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult to defend against

Utopia will in all instances of bullying seek to come to a positive outcome whereby all people affected, including the organisation itself can learn from the incident. Forms of Bullying include physical, verbal, written, emotional, cyber and sexual. Research has shown that the negative effects of bullying can include:

- Low self esteem
- Truancy/poor attendance
- Physical injury
- Avoiding social or group situations
- Negative impact on mental health
- Negative impact on attainment

The social communication needs of our students necessitate consistent and regular intervention to support social interaction between peers across the school. This helps students navigate social situations and learn appropriate ways to respond that are in line with our school values. Our school response to bullying is outlined in more detail in the Anti Bullying Policy which can be located on the school website.

Smoking and use of E Cigarettes

We are a No Smoking School and follow Wirral Borough Council Drug and Alcohol Policy. Students are not permitted to smoke or vape during the school day. No-one is permitted to smoke or vape on school Premises. It is illegal to smoke on any premises in England and as such any person found smoking or vaping in school will be required to attend a meeting with parents. Utopia does not condone or encourage smoking or the use of e- cigarettes. Where possible Utopia will

provide support, advice, guidance and referrals to support students to quit smoking. Utopia will encourage all students to make positive, informed life choices, without passing judgement. Any student smoking, using e-cigarettes or in possession of either will be asked to hand these in to a member of staff. Failure to adhere to these instructions will result in contact with parents and appropriate consequences.

Drugs and Alcohol

The school operates a zero-tolerance policy on drugs and alcohol. In the event of the following:

- A student being under the influence, or suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- A student being in possession of, or suspected of being in possession of drugs or alcohol

The following procedure will be followed.

- Contact made with parents or carers to inform them of suspicions
- Student removed from school for the day
- Contact with parents/carers to agree mechanisms of students departure from Utopia. (This may include being collected by parents, being dropped off at home or other such arrangements as specified and agreed with parents)

A reintegration meeting will take place as soon as possible to discuss the issues and ensure that the incident is not repeated. Continued issues regarding use of drugs or alcohol may trigger the exclusion process highlighted in this document.

Confiscation and Searching

Any prohibited items found in students' possession will be confiscated. These items will not be returned to pupils. We may also confiscate any item which is harmful or detrimental to school discipline. These items will be returned to pupils after discussion with senior leaders and parents, if appropriate. Searching and screening pupils is conducted in line with the DfE's latest guidance on searching, screening and confiscation.

Guidance for Carrying Out a Search What the law says:

- The person conducting the search may not require the student to remove any clothing other than outer clothing
- 'Outer clothing' means clothing that is not worn next to the skin or immediately over a garment that is being worn as underwear but 'outer clothing' includes hats, shoes, boots, gloves and scarves
- 'Possessions' means any goods over which the student has or appears to have control – this includes desks, lockers and bags
- A student's possessions can only be searched in the presence of the student and another member of staff, except where there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if the search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff

Also note: The power to search without consent enables a personal search, involving removal of outer clothing and searching of pockets; but not an intimate search going further than that, which only a person with more extensive powers (e.g. a police officer) can do.

Dealing with Electronic Devices (statutory guidance)

- Where the person conducting the search finds an electronic device they may examine any data or files on the device if they think there is a good reason to do so. Following an examination, if the person has decided to return the device to the owner, or to retain or

dispose of it, they may erase any data or files, if they think there is a good reason to do so.
- The member of staff must have regard to the following guidance issued by the Secretary of State when determining what is a "good reason" for examining or erasing the contents of an electronic device:
- In determining a 'good reason' to examine or erase the data or files the staff member must reasonably suspect that the data or file on the device in question has been, or could be, used to cause harm, to disrupt teaching or to go against the expectation in the school's Behaviour Policy.
- If inappropriate material is found on the device it is up to the teacher to decide whether they should delete that material, retain it as evidence (of a criminal offence or a breach of school discipline) or whether the material is of such seriousness that it requires the involvement of the police.

Confidentiality (To be read in conjunction with Safeguarding Policy)

Utopia places a significant emphasis on personal development and as such some sensitive information is likely to be shared by students to its staff. Utopia staff want our students to feel comfortable in sharing information that may be troubling or concerning them. Therefore, the school will only share information to parents/ carers or other relevant agencies when there is a risk associated with not doing so. Examples of this risk may include but are not limited to

- Safeguarding referrals
- Threats of violence towards others
- Criminal investigations

If a member of staff is required to break a student's confidence for any reason school staff will endeavour to inform and explain the process of doing so to the young person prior. Throughout the referral process staff will communicate any relevant information to the student unless prevented from doing so by law.

Physical Intervention and Use of Reasonable Force

The school ethos is to encourage all students to make positive choices and take responsibility for their own behaviour. It is our belief that physical intervention takes away the choice young people have in effectively managing their own behaviour, therefore physical intervention will not be routinely used as part of Utopia's ongoing behaviour management strategy. Instead, staff will be trained in the use of de-escalation strategies and use these to support students to regulate their own behaviour.

However, we recognise the nature of the students who attend school may result in incidents where staff are required to intervene. In the case of fights between students' staff will always take reasonable and proportionate steps to ensure the safety of all young people, which in exceptional cases may require physical intervention. It is important to note that this will always be regarded as a last resort, once all other behaviour management options have been explored and it is felt that there is a real danger of the students involved in the incident becoming at risk of harm. Staff have a duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that they do not take any action, or make any omission, that creates a risk, or increases an existing risk, to the health or safety of themselves, or other persons.

Post Physical Intervention Procedures
As soon as possible after an incident staff should complete an incident log on CPOMS.
The following procedures need to take place:

- A debrief for staff involved and their welfare checked;
- When the staff member and student are both calm, a debrief should take place between them

● Time to reflect with the individual student as to strategies that could be useful in the future to help reduce the challenging behaviour
● Support plans reviewed and any amendments to be agreed with SLT and parents;
● Any serious incidents that result in injury to students or staff MUST be entered into the accident book located in the office. If necessary a first aider should see the individual and if a head injury is caused a letter will be sent home.

Minor incidents

Following minor incidents staff are advised to meet and evaluate what has happened. The staff should ensure other members of staff are aware of the incident and what happened after. The staff are advised to reflect why the incident occurred, what preventative measures could be put into place and how the incident was dealt with. It is important that staff members feel confident about decisions made.

Minor incidents are recorded and monitored so that a pattern of behaviour can be established. Minor incidents such as timeouts or concern logs are recorded using the Trackit Lights behaviour system.

Serious Incidents

Following a serious incident involving injury or prolonged physical intervention a break from the classroom environment is advised. Staff are encouraged to have time away to 'recover' from the stress or emotional experience and to receive support and guidance. It is important that staff do not return to class until they have had sufficient time to compose themselves and feel confident about working with the individual again without prejudice. Serious incidents must be logged on the relevant Behaviour Log. If a physical intervention or restraint has been carried out then this MUST be logged on CPOMS.

Addressing Persistent Negative Behaviour

In the event of sustained periods of inappropriate or unhelpful behaviour the following procedure will be followed

- Isolated issues where student has been unable to respond to advice and feedback given to them by staff- SLT or behaviour intervention support sessions
- Persistent issues where interventions and support are proving ineffective- Meeting arranged with parents/carers to discuss strategies for support, behaviour contract considered.
- Persistent issues still proving problematic- Final warning and reiteration of behaviour contract- Consider adapting timetable into more manageable provision if appropriate.
- Persistent issues still proving problematic- Fixed term exclusion

Fixed Penalty Exclusion and Permanent Exclusions: Utopia will apply its behaviour policies in a consistent, rigorous and non-discriminatory way and all areas of application of these policies will be monitored routinely. Ultimate sanctions at Utopia are: Fixed Penalty Exclusion or Permanent Exclusion. Neither sanction is used lightly. The power to suspend or exclude a student can only be exercised by the Headteacher. If the Headteacher excludes a student, the parents are informed immediately, giving reasons for the exclusion. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors to monitor the rate of exclusions, and to ensure that the school policy is administered fairly and consistently. Every student has a right to confidentiality – it will be kept in the strictest confidence and only disclosed to those who need to know. We appreciate that such sensitive matters must be dealt with in confidence. If Utopia decides (after completing the investigation or as a result of new evidence and further investigation) that it is necessary to extend a fixed period temporary exclusion or to convert it into a permanent exclusion, the

Headteacher will write again to the parent with the reasons for this decision. Students returning to school after exclusion will be subject to a reintegration meeting organised by the Headteacher. This will normally involve the parents.

Utopia may consider it appropriate to exclude a student who:

- Threatens or commits violence against other students or staff
- Swears directly at a staff member
- Sells illegal drugs or consistently attends under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Steals from the school or a fellow student
- Displays one off or persistent malicious, aggressive, disruptive or inappropriate behaviour in school or online
- Engages in sustained bullying of other students

Appeals: An appeal panel will be established to consider the appeal. This appeal panel will consist of three members including an independent person to act as Chair of the panel. The appeal panel will normally convene within three weeks of the receipt of the letter requesting the appeal. The parents or guardian may bring a representative to the meeting. All letters and documents relied on by the Headteacher shall be made available to the parents or guardian prior to the hearing. The parents or guardian or their representative may ask questions of the Headteacher or may raise any relevant matter for the consideration of the panel. The panel may call for any further information it requires. No evidence or argument shall be presented to the panel in the absence either of the parents or guardian or their representative, or in the absence of the Headteacher. At the conclusion of the hearing, the panel shall retire to consider what recommendation it may make. The panel may recommend:

- The exclusion is confirmed
- The exclusion is rescinded
- The exclusion be rescinded and replaced with an alternative sanction

The recommendation shall be communicated to the parents or guardian and the Headteacher. Every student has a right to confidentiality – it will be kept in the strictest confidence and only disclosed to those who need to know. We appreciate that such sensitive matters must be dealt with in confidence. If Utopia decides (after completing the investigation or as a result of new evidence and further investigation) that it is necessary to extend a fixed period temporary exclusion or to convert it into a permanent exclusion, the Headteacher will write again to the parent with the reasons for this decision.