**Protocols for Welcome Back Meetings**

**Overview:**

There is no legal requirement for schools to offer reintegration meetings following a suspension, however the Department for Education says that it is good practice to offer these.

At MVLA we often offer a meeting following a suspension. This is a strategy to ensure that a student has a positive return to education. This meeting should be seen as a positive event rather than part of the punitive process. It is our therefore our policy to refer to these meetings as ‘welcome back meetings’.

The welcome back meeting should serve the following functions:

* To welcome students on their return to school and to help them to understand that this is a fresh start
* To identify any potential barriers to their **future** success (e.g. problems that they are facing with aspects of the educational provision) and to discuss strategies to address these
* Where appropriate, to allow the student, parent (and the referring school if in attendance) to set **positive** targets for future behaviour
* To reassure the parent, child (and where appropriate the referring school) that the sanction has now been served and that this will not affect their right to receive a positive education at our organisation.

**Procedure for setting up welcome back meetings**

1. The date of the welcome back meeting should be set at the time of suspension where possible. This allows parents/carers time to make arrangements to attend.
2. The date and time of the welcome back meeting should be confirmed on the suspension paperwork which is sent out to parents/carers and a copy sent to the referring school.
3. The referring school will be invited to the meeting only in extreme situations. This must be agreed by the Headteacher/ Proprietor and will be led by the Headteacher/ Proprietor
4. The Headteacher or Proprietor has responsibility for setting up and carrying out welcome back meetings. In some circumstances, the Headteacher/Proprietor will request that another member of staff leads the meeting. These should be carried out in line with the protocols set out in this document.
5. A full record should be kept of the welcome back meeting and a copy of this uploaded to CPOMS within 2 working days of the meeting.
6. All students will return to school immediately after a welcome back meeting, unless new information has come to light to suggest that the student is a risk to the safety or wellbeing of others.

**General principles for carrying out welcome back meetings**

The welcome back meeting is not part of a punitive process, and the student and family should not be made to feel as such. The sanction for poor behaviour was the initial suspension, which will have now been completed. The welcome back meeting marks a new start.

The welcome back meeting should not be used as an opportunity for staff to solicit a personal apology from a student (or parent/carer). If an apology is offered the member of staff should acknowledge that this is a positive step and indicates the student’s willingness to take responsibility for their actions. However, an apology should not normally be a condition for a student’s return.

If the designated member of staff does not feel able to carry out the welcome back meeting in line with this protocol (for example if there are unresolved issues about an incident and they do not feel that they would be able to carry out the meeting as expected), then they should alert the Proprietor or Headteacher. Another member of staff will be nominated to carry out the meeting and the designated member of staff will be offered the opportunity to discuss their concerns with a senior leader.

A parent’s inability or unwillingness to attend a meeting should not delay a student’s return to education unless there are specific safety implications. In the event of a parent’s failure to agree to attend the meeting, the designated member of staff should report this to the Proprietor/Headteacher who will determine appropriate action. This could include a home visit or a telephone discussion.

In most circumstances, discussion about the incident that resulted in the suspension should be kept to a minimum. This is in line with the school’s ‘fresh start’ ethos. However, there will be some instances where this will need to be discussed in detail – for example if the student could potentially pose an ongoing risk to the safety and/or wellbeing of others. In these instances, the Headteacher/Proprietor will attend the meeting and lead this discussion.

In some situations, the school might make a decision that it would be more beneficial to the student to let them return to school without a welcome back meeting. This decision would usually be taken if the school feels that the meeting will cause a re-escalation or cause unnecessary distress to the student. In situations where this decision is taken the student will be closely monitored and any remaining issues will be addressed through a separate intervention session which will be carried out soon after the pupil returning to school.