

Independent Review Panel Members Needed - Exclusions

Do you want to make a real difference in your community? We are seeking volunteers to serve as panel members on Independent Review Panels (IRPs) that consider permanent school exclusions across North Yorkshire and beyond. The role of the IRP is to assess whether a pupil's exclusion has been lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair and suggest what further action might need to be taken by the school.

What does the role involve?

- Listening to cases presented by parents, schools, SEN experts, Local Authority Officers and more.
- Considering whether a school's decision to permanently exclude a pupil was lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair.
- Reviewing evidence impartially and determining whether to uphold the exclusion decision, recommend reconsideration, or direct reconsideration.
- Working in line with statutory guidance: the [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance, August 2024](#) and relevant DfE guidance.

What skills do you need?

- Strong listening and communication skills.
- Ability to assess evidence objectively and fairly.
- A commitment to confidentiality, impartiality, and the best interests of children and young people.
- Confidence in decision making as part of a panel.

Eligibility

The panel must constitute of either three or five members (as decided by the local, authority/academy trust) representing each of the three categories below. A five-member panel must be constituted with two members from each of the categories of school governors and headteachers. These must be:

- Headteachers or individuals who have been a headteacher within the last five years.
- A lay member to chair the panel who has not worked in any school in a paid capacity, disregarding any experience as a school governor or volunteer.
- Current or former school governors (of a maintained school, members of a PRU management committees and directors of academy trusts) who have served as a governor for at least 12 consecutive months in the last five years, provided they have not been teachers or headteachers during that time.

Background

As of January 2026, we have only seven current Headteacher members available to sit on IRPs. In a county of over 400 schools, there is a large group of potential candidates we could bring on board. Permanent exclusion numbers rose from 54 in the 2021-22 academic year to 112 in 2024-25, we are in ever greater need of members.

Hear from some of our current Headteacher members:

Being an IRP member exposes you to a wide range of Exclusions. This gives you detailed knowledge of how these decisions were made by Governing bodies and the circumstances that led to the Exclusion. This then teaches you the positives and the pitfalls of Exclusion to then apply in your own school. For example, I've sat on some panels that have involved a high level of SEND. It promotes your thinking, and you ask yourself - are we doing enough for these children at risk of PEX in my own school? I now treat every suspension like it could be appealed! Do get in touch with me, if you want to hear more about my experience and how the IRP process works.

Garry Johnson, Executive Headteacher - Gladstone Road Primary School and Braeburn Primary & Nursery Academy - [Home - Gladstone Road Primary School](#)

Although I am very new to the process, I have found completing the training and being part of an IRP Panel to be a very useful and insightful opportunity. As a Headteacher who sits on an Independent Review Panel (IRP), our role is to provide an educational perspective and ensure that the panel understands the complexities of school management, behaviour policies, and the challenges faced by school leaders. It's also been a great learning process as a Headteacher to help inform my own practice.

Claire Roberts, Executive Headteacher – Settle and Malhamdale Federation - [Settle CE Primary School | North Yorkshire](#)

Training and Support

Full training is provided, including legal and procedural guidance.
Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

Time Commitment

IRPs are held during the day, Monday to Friday, throughout the year.

Why volunteer?

- Play a vital role in ensuring fairness for pupils, families, and schools.
- Gain valuable experience in decision making, governance, and statutory procedures.
- Contribute meaningfully to your local community.
- Meet likeminded individuals committed to justice, inclusion, and education.

Interested? To find out more or apply, please contact:

 appeals@northyorks.gov.uk

 **01609 533385**

