

11 September 2017

Management of school exclusions

Report of Margaret Whellans, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee with information on the extent of exclusions in County Durham in the academic year 2016-17.
2. This report follows an earlier report (January 2017) that provided information on this topic, and responds to requests from members of the OSC for a further report to be included in the committee's 2017/18 work programme.

Background

3. Exclusion remains a significant concern for the local authority, and is a national priority. Through actions taken in partnership between the local authority and schools - predominantly the work of the behaviour panels covered in the earlier report - exclusions have been managed in 2016-17, although the overall figure has risen. The application of 'Progress 8' as an outcome measure at GCSE may have contributed to this as it may have encouraged some schools to exclude pupils in order to avoid a negative impact on whole-school results when pupils fail to make sufficient progress.
4. The local authority will continue to work with the behaviour panels to challenge schools that seek to exclude pupils without having first fully explored and applied every alternative.

Exclusions

5. There were 78 permanent exclusions recorded up to end July 2017. All were from secondary schools, with no primaries or special schools making permanent exclusions. Of those pupils excluded, 62 were boys and 16 were girls.
6. Of the total number, 45 exclusions were from academies (58%) and 3 were from the UTC (University Technology Centre) in Newton Aycliffe. This does not indicate that academies exclude more readily than maintained schools, as there are more secondary academies than secondary maintained schools in County Durham.

7. 78 permanent exclusions represents an increase from 58 in the previous year (2015-16), of which 53% were exclusions from academies.
8. The pressure on schools to post positive examination results, described in paragraph 3, must be partly responsible for the rise as the total exclusions taking place in Years 10 and 11 rose from 20 in 2015-16 to 31, and this matches a national increase in Key Stage 4 exclusions.
9. However, in Durham there have been marked increases in the numbers of pupils excluded in Year 7 (5 in 2015-16, rising to 11 in 2016-17) and Year 8 (12 rising to 22).
10. The main reason for permanent exclusion remains persistent disruptive behaviour, accounting for 44 of the 78 cases. 17 cases were due to verbal or physical threats made to adults. Only 1 permanent exclusion was due to a drug or alcohol related cause.

Managed moves and other intervention

11. Managed moves continue to be successful in reducing the number of young people being permanently excluded. In 2016-17, 140 managed moves in secondary led to just 15 pupils being permanently excluded. 12 managed moves in primary led to no permanent exclusions.
12. The local authority's 'Early Intervention and Crisis Response Team' which provides one-to-one or small group support to address issues of behaviour, supported 13 pupils in secondary and 72 pupils in primary schools, none of which went on to be permanently excluded.
13. Work will continue to be done to extend the range and quality of alternative education provision in County Durham which extends the options available to the Behaviour Panels when seeking alternatives to exclusion.
14. Professional development aimed to build the capacity of staff to support behaviour needs of young people in schools will continue in 2017-18.
15. To address the emerging issue of increased exclusions in Years 7 and 8, work is to be undertaken to support transition from primary to secondary, enabling schools to identify pupils' needs early and put support in place at the appropriate time to reduce the number reaching crisis point and requiring specialist services or placements.
16. A Primary/Secondary Head Teachers' Working Group has been established to develop protocols and to share models of good practice that will lead to a more transparent working relationship between phases and will help to ensure young people's needs are identified at the earliest stage.

Recommendation

17. Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to read and note the content of this report.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

Staffing - None

Risk - None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – Schools failing to comply with local and national statutory guidance will be in breach of equality and diversity legislation.

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications – None