

Report of the Strategic Director
for Children's Services

USE OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH
TO REDUCING EXCLUSIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2015-17

1 Purpose of Report

To report to the Schools Forum on the impact of the additional £1m funding previously approved to promote a collaborative approach among secondary schools to further promote pro-active inclusive approaches and, as a consequence, try and reduce the level of exclusions.

2 Information and Analysis

It is the vision of Derbyshire County Council to achieve a position of zero permanent exclusions. In order to support this vision the above additional funding was provided to school via each Learning Community Area Inclusion group, allocated as shown:

	Pupils	Deprivation	LCHI	Total	
Peak 11	£39,564	£46,840	£10,679	£97,082	19.4%
Chesterfield AIS	£58,443	£106,376	£16,649	£181,469	36.3%
BAmber	£26,750	£39,569	£7,522	£73,841	14.8%
South	£18,451	£25,760	£5,557	£49,768	10.0%
SAVE	£31,792	£56,455	£9,593	£97,841	19.6%
	£175,000	£275,000	£50,000	£500,000	

Each Learning Community was required to produce an action plan for the use of this funding, demonstrating how they would work collaboratively to provide or commission alternative provision in order to prevent exclusion. These plans were moderated and approved by the Inclusion Strategy Group. Progress with these plans has also been monitored through this group with representatives from each Learning Community group reporting back. Learning Communities submitted an interim review at the start of this calendar year, with a further review required at the end of the academic year.

Impact

Thus far the work has not resulted in the global reduction in permanent exclusions that we are seeking, as it is anticipated that there will be further exclusions before the end of the year. Impact varies according to the Learning Community. Whether a school is maintained by the Local Authority or has Academy status also appears to have a significant impact.

Table 1: Permanent Exclusions by Learning Community

Learning Community	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Av per school 2015-16	2016-17 (so far)
Peak 11 (11)	12	7	13	1.18	2
Ch'field & NE Derbys AIS (13)	28	15	36	2.7	7
BAmber (9)	20	20	26	2.8	6
South (4)	1	7	4	1	1
SAVE (8)	31	23	22	2.75	8
Totals	92	72	101	2.24	24

() = number of schools within the Learning Community.

Factors that appear to impact on rates of exclusion

- **Whether the school is an Academy or maintained** - there are currently 20 academies which have excluded 50 students in 2015-16 – an average of 2.5 per academy. There are 25 maintained schools which have excluded 51 students - an average of 2.04 per school. Of the four highest excluding schools, three are academies and one is maintained. This picture becomes more stark when looking solely at sponsored academies. The 5 sponsored academies account for 30 permanent exclusions at an average of 6 per academy.
- **A school's context in relation to external pressures** – for example those schools who could potentially be designated as Coasting by the DfE. Amongst the schools which could potentially be designated as coasting the average number of permanent exclusions increases to 2.8 per school/academy. The increase in scrutiny on the 2016 outcomes for these schools could well be a factor and the perception of schools that the disruptive behaviour of one young person impacts negatively on the learning of others.
- **The increased narrowing of the curriculum.** Over the last two years the range of alternative courses to GCSE has reduced significantly. Many students who previously would have been engaged in off-site provision, at FE College or Training providers, are now in school undertaking a curriculum that may not be as appropriate for them. This has been driven by changes to the national performance measures, such as the promotion of the EBacc, and the changes driven by the Wolfe Report. The implementation of Progress 8 as the key performance measure is likely to exacerbate this, as many of the courses and qualifications used for alternative provision do not count within a Progress 8 calculation.
- **Overall Funding** - the access to alternative provision has also been affected by the real terms reductions in school budgets, which this funding only partially offsets. The financial challenges facing our secondary schools cannot be under estimated. Many have seen approximately an 8% reduction in their budgets over the last two years. Therefore funding intended to add

capacity to the system has in many ways been used to try and ameliorate a worsening budget position.

- **Collaboration** - where schools have committed fully to close collaboration using a well-developed alternative provision, managed by the schools themselves, they have managed to achieve reductions. The South is a good example of this. It has to be said that in many cases schools are clearly not helping one another as the data suggest clearly that students who move schools in the two years prior to their GCSEs i.e. in Y10 and Y11 perform less well in their examinations.
- National exclusion data generally has a time lag attached. Therefore the most recent comparative data we have is for 2014-15. A comparison with other East Midlands authorities is shown below.

	Number of permanent exclusions
Derby	30
Derbyshire	72
Leicester	8
Leicestershire	9
Lincolnshire	144
Northamptonshire	97
Nottingham	43
Nottinghamshire	35
Rutland	6

There are clearly significant variations in the numbers of students being permanently excluded. Our nearest shire neighbours, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, exclude far fewer secondary school students than Derbyshire schools.

3 Financial Considerations

The cost of the Alternative Provision Pilot (£1m) was funded from previous years' DSG underspends and its use approved by the Schools Forum. The pilot was intended to give schools greater control over the resources used to commission provision for excluded pupils.

More recently, the DfE White Paper Education Excellence Everywhere proposed that schools have a greater role in future for excluded pupils. Paras 6.76/6.77 state that schools "*will retain accountability for their educational outcomes and will take a lead role in commissioning their provision, including when they have permanently excluded the pupil but the pupil has not subsequently enrolled at a different mainstream school. Mainstream schools will support AP providers to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum and high quality teaching by sharing subject specialists and facilities that smaller alternative providers would otherwise find hard to access.*

Schools will be responsible for the budgets from which AP is funded. As they

will also be responsible for commissioning and accountable for educational outcomes, they will have stronger incentives to take preventative approaches and to achieve value for money when identifying the best and most suitable alternative provision for any child that needs it.”

The decision of the post- Brexit government to effectively abandon the white paper has added a degree of uncertainty to this. It is likely that the role of the LA will increasingly be focused on ensuring that there are sufficient AP places in the system. The practical implications of this change in the direction of travel have still to be clarified.

The Authority may still have to consult schools and the Schools Forum regarding revised cost recovery arrangements for pupils permanently excluded from school, particularly if the pressures on the High Needs Block of the DSG continue to grow.

4 Human Resources Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of human resources has been considered.

5 Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: - Legal and Human Rights, equality of opportunity, health, environmental, transport, property and crime and disorder considerations.

6 Background Papers

None

7. Strategic Director’s Recommendations

That the Forum:

- (i) notes the report;
- (ii) offers its views on the information provided;
- (iii) agrees to receive further reports on the impact of the additional funding in summer 2017; and
- (iv) Note the potential for a formal consultation with schools in relation to a model for cost recovery

Derbyshire County Council Exclusions Research Project

Executive Summary (*and update*)

Educational Psychology Service, August 2016

Schools Forum 12 December 2016

'It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.' Henry David Thoreau

It is the hope that staff in schools and support service professionals reading this report will see many ways of developing their practice in reducing the chances of students¹ becoming excluded from schools.

This research was conducted in collaboration with 23 participating Derbyshire schools that were identified as being amongst the highest or the lowest excluding schools in the county. The work involved: questionnaires to school teaching and support staff and students, interviews with groups of key staff, interviews with a sample of students at risk of exclusion and analysis of school behaviour policies.

Looking at published **school behaviour policies**, there were very few differences in the layout, accessibility and content of the policies, except that reference to the term 'parents' occurs far more frequently in the policies of low excluding schools (almost 50% more) and the term 'learning' occurs more frequently in the policies of high excluding schools.

There were highly statistically significant differences between the **questionnaire responses** given by staff and students when comparing the total mean scores from low excluding schools with high excluding schools in relation to the categories² investigated: order and safety, social relationships, teaching and learning and attitudes to exclusion.

The greatest differences were found with staff and/or students in low excluding schools being more likely to give higher ratings to the following statements:

All teachers use the same system to manage behaviour

Adults in school treat all students the same

All students in this school are valued

Staff really seem to care about the students

It's okay to say when you don't understand something in lessons

If students are struggling in a subject they get extra support

Students behave well because they don't want to get excluded

¹ The term 'student' is used throughout this report to represent a child, young person or pupil of any age.

² The term 'categories', refers to a group of statements that represent an area of investigation. These also form the dependent variables that were used for statistical analysis to compare differences in perceptions between staff in low vs staff in high excluding schools, students in low vs students in high excluding schools and differences between staff and students irrespective of whether they attended low or high excluding schools.

It was also found that, overall, staff were significantly more positive and optimistic than students in rating most questionnaire responses and this applied to both sets of schools although students were more likely to show positive attitudes towards statements relating to exclusion. For example, students were more likely than staff to think that *students behave well because they don't want to get excluded*. Whereas staff in both high and low excluding schools, were significantly more likely than students to feel that: *some students need to be excluded because they stop other students from learning* and that *some students would be better off in another school*.

Analysis of **staff interviews** from both low and high excluding schools raised important common master themes³ relating to: belonging, relationships, family involvement, peer support and positive agency collaboration. However, staff in low excluding schools gave a far greater emphasis (50% or more) to:

- Taking a flexible, graduated approach to meeting student needs
- Maintaining a positive emphasis and expectations
- Communication and respect
- Developing whole school vision and commitment
- Staff skills and development
- Supporting staff well-being
- Having a nurture emphasis

In contrast, staff in high excluding schools gave more emphasis to the common master theme: Positive agency collaboration.

The master themes below featured only in low excluding school staff interviews:

- School partnerships and managed moves
- Teamwork focus
- Consistent approach

The master themes below featured only in high excluding school staff interviews:

- Behaviour policy and procedure focus
- Problem discourse - removal of student
- Perceived LA/agency shortfalls

³ A master theme denotes the heading given to a similar group of subthemes that arose from the analysis of interview transcripts when subthemes were compared *across* all individual interviews. A subtheme in an individual interview is created when initial (emerging) themes showing points arising from the interview are grouped together because they relate to a similar idea. A common master theme is the term referred to in this report to indicate master themes that were identified across interviews in both low and high excluding schools.

Interviews with students in high excluding schools placed most emphasis on talking about rules, whereas students in low excluding schools referred most to having supportive relationships with staff, especially talking to adults (eg feeling listened to and being able to tell their story).

Looking at similar master themes arising from both **student and staff interviews**, having positive relationships was identified as important across both groups of schools. However, in low excluding school interviews, respectful communication was a very strong master theme, whereas in high excluding school interviews, following procedures/rules was most strongly emphasised.

Staff and students were invited to reflect on **practices to reduce exclusions** with staff interviews in both high and low excluding schools showing that LA support was valued. However, staff in both groups of schools expressed concerns about:

- Zero exclusion expectations in the light of being able to access provision when needed
- LA bureaucracy in terms of time and paperwork
- Issues relating to transition e.g. relating to evidence to request support

In low excluding schools, staff stressed the importance of:

- A positive ethos and team work
- Partnership work with other schools and
- Investing time in staff development, so they become more self-sufficient from the LA
- More preventative work from the LA

Staff in high excluding schools said that they:

- Valued Multi-Element Plans (MEPs) in helping them to meet students' needs
- Worried about the curriculum pressures
- Were concerned about younger, more challenging students and the lack of provision for them

Student interviews in both groups of schools referred to the importance of play and relaxed opportunities to be with adults, the need for more interventions and quieter, less distracting places to work.

Section five of this report details key outcomes and recommendations for schools with good practice examples. Areas for LA consideration are also proposed.

Since the report was completed the following actions have been undertaken:

- The findings have been presented at the secondary head teacher forum
- The findings have been presented at school governor briefings across the County
- Two high excluding secondary schools and one high excluding junior school have agreed to engage in an action research project, in collaboration with the Educational Psychology Service research team, to trial outcomes from the research towards reducing exclusions in these schools
- Dates have been agreed to present and discuss the findings at all primary head teacher forums across the County in March
- The findings have been presented to: Children's Services SMT, the Schools and Learning briefing, the Access and Inclusion Group and the Inclusion Strategy Group; LA services for schools have been asked to read and reflect on the report by December. The outcome of this will be to formulate proposed actions for the LA
- The project team have begun discussions about the report findings with the Locality Heads of the Multi-Agency Teams (MATs)
- A further piece of research is scheduled for 2017 undertaken by the Educational Psychology Service and Behaviour Support Service to investigate the rise in school exclusion amongst very young children (Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1) in the County
- A paper is being prepared for publication and intended presentation at the International School Psychology Association (ISPA) Conference, 2017
- A conference for school staff and services will be planned for March 2018 and will include proposed workshops from schools participating in the original study and schools who are now engaging in the action research phase.

The full report is available from Dr Kathryn Pomerantz, Deputy Principal Educational Psychologist. A full technical appendix showing tables and graphs detailing the statistical analysis can also be made available on request.

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