

Timpson Review of School Exclusions

Introduction and background

In March 2018 the Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced government plans to improve the experiences of children in alternative provision (AP). These plans included an externally led review of school exclusions, carried out by former Children's Minister Edward Timpson. The aim of the review was to explore how headteachers use exclusion and which pupils are more likely to be excluded from school. The review received almost 1,000 submissions of evidence. Seventy per cent of the submissions made were from parents and carers of pupils who had experienced exclusion. Members of the review panel also made over 100 visits including visits to schools and local authorities (LAs) known to have innovative or exemplary practice.

Two other pieces of work have been published alongside this review: an analysis of existing exclusions data and a literature review of the academic evidence base.

Key points

Current practice and use of exclusion

- There is considerable variation across schools and LAs in the use of exclusion. In 2016-17, 54 per cent of the total number of permanent exclusions were in the quarter of highest excluding LAs, and only 6 per cent in the quarter that excluded the fewest.
- Over 17,000 mainstream schools (85% of all mainstream schools in England) issued no permanent exclusions in 2016-17. Ninety-four per cent of all state-funded primary schools and 43 per cent of all state-funded secondary schools did not issue any permanent exclusions, but 0.2 per cent of schools (47 schools, all of which are secondary schools) issued more than 10 in the same year.
- Rates of fixed period exclusion also vary across LAs, ranging from zero to 21.42 per cent. At a school level, 43 per cent of mainstream schools used none, while 38 schools issued over 500 each in a single year.
- This range of practice points not only to differences in when exclusion is used, but to differences in how effectively it is used. This means that in some cases children are being excluded when they could and should remain in mainstream school with the right support, and in other cases children are remaining in school when exclusion would be appropriate.
- Exclusion rates are not exceptionally high by historic standards – the rate and number of permanent exclusions is lower than in 2006-07 and has not reached the levels reported in the late 1990s and early-mid 2000s.

Outcomes of excluded children

- There is clear evidence that children who have been excluded have worse educational outcomes. In 2016-17, over one third of children who completed key stage 4 in AP went on to become NEET (not in education, employment or training).

- In 2014, 23 per cent of young offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in custody had been permanently excluded.
- In 2016-17, just 4.5 per cent of pupils educated in AP achieved a good pass in English and maths GCSE.

Variation between different groups

- Exclusion rates vary between pupils with different characteristics. Bangladeshi and Indian children are around half as likely to be excluded as White British children. Children from other ethnic groups are more likely to experience exclusion, in particular Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils.
- When linking ethnicity to exclusion rates, a range of other factors must be considered; when this is done the picture changes. For example, the approximate chances of permanent exclusion for Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children compared with their White British peers – once controls are applied for poverty, special educational need (SEN), absence and other factors – drops from 5.2 to 0.8.
- The analysis produced for this review shows that 78 per cent of permanent exclusions issued in 2016-17 were to pupils who either had SEN, were classified as in need or were eligible for free school meals. Eleven per cent of all permanent exclusions were to pupils who had all 3 characteristics.
- Children with identified SEN accounted for 46.7 per cent of all permanent exclusions and 44.9 per cent of fixed period exclusions. It is notable that permanent exclusion rates for children with education, health and care (EHC) plans are around half those of children with SEN support, but they are 2.8 times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion compared with all children.
- Children with a Children in Need Plan have the highest likelihood of being excluded. After controlling for other factors, they remain around four times more likely to be

permanently excluded compared to those with no social care classification. This is followed by children who have a Child Protection Plan, who are around 3.5 times more likely to be permanently excluded, and also children who are looked after, who are around 2.3 times more likely to be permanently excluded than children who have not been supported by social care.

- Latest statistics show that children eligible for free school meals (FSM) – an indicator used for economic disadvantage – are around 4 times more likely to be excluded permanently or for a fixed period than children who are not eligible for FSM.
- Rates of exclusion are rising among very young children. The rate of permanent exclusion for 5-year-olds, whilst it remains rare, has doubled in the last three years and there were 5,286 pupils aged between 5 and 10 receiving some or all of their education in AP in January 2018.
- The latest statistics for 2016-17 show that the permanent exclusion rate for boys (0.15%) was over three times higher than that for girls (0.04%), and the fixed period exclusion rate was almost three times higher. This trend has persisted for many years.

The practice of off-rolling

The review heard evidence that a small number of schools are off-rolling children for their own interests. This practice involves children being told or made to leave their school without the proper process being followed. As well as reports from Ofsted and the Chief Schools Adjudicator, parents and carers who spoke to the review cited examples of schools applying pressure on them to move their child to another school or to home educate, under the threat of permanent exclusion.

Key recommendations

- DfE should update statutory guidance on exclusion to provide more clarity on its use. DfE should also ensure that all relevant, overlapping guidance (e.g. guidance on behaviour and mental health) is clear and consistent.
- DfE should use best practice on managed moves gathered by this review and elsewhere to enable it to consult and issue clear guidance on how they should be conducted.
- LAs should work with schools and should become advocates for vulnerable children by hosting forums for all schools to help ensure early prevention for children at risk of exclusion. The forums should also provide opportunities for sharing best practice.
- While not directly dedicated to driving down exclusion rates, the £10 million which the government has invested in supporting behaviour practice should help to develop and embed a good understanding of how underlying needs can drive behaviour. It should also facilitate peer support, where school leaders have the opportunity to learn from high-performing leaders who have a track record in this area.
- DfE should extend funding to equality and diversity hubs beyond the current spending review period and at a level that widens their reach and impact.
- DfE should ensure that accessible, meaningful and substantive training on behaviour is a mandatory part of initial teacher training and is embedded in the Early Career Framework. The training and support available to SENCOs should be reviewed, and guidance strengthened so that in-school units are effective.
- Schools should take greater control of the funding and commissioning of AP. They should be required to submit information about their use of AP through the school census.

- The best AP institutions should be recognised as teaching schools so that they are well placed to share best practice.
- DfE should take steps to ensure that working in AP is an attractive career choice; for example, it should consider ways to boost interest in and exposure to AP through new teacher training placement opportunities.
- Alongside measures to improve the quality of AP, pupil referral units (PRUs) should be renamed to reflect their role as both schools and places to support children to overcome barriers to engaging in their education.
- DfE should invest in significantly improving and expanding buildings and facilities for pupils who need AP. As a priority, DfE should carefully consider the right level of capital funding to achieve this, for the next spending review.
- DfE should make schools responsible for the children they exclude and accountable for their educational outcomes. At the same time, schools should have greater control over the funding for AP.
- DfE should look carefully at the timing and amounts of any adjustments to schools' funding following exclusion, to make sure that funding arrangements neither act as an incentive for schools to permanently exclude a pupil at particular times, nor discourage a school from admitting a child who has been permanently excluded from elsewhere.
- DfE should publish the number and rate of exclusion of previously looked after children who have left local authority care via adoption, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order.
- DfE should consult on options to address children with multiple exclusions being left without access to education. This should include considering placing a revised limit on the total number of days a pupil can be excluded for or revisiting the requirements to arrange AP in these periods.
- DfE should consider any possible unintended consequences of exclusion and mitigate the risk that schools seek to remove children from their roll in other ways. It should consider introducing a 'right to return' period where children could return from home education to their previous school.
- Relevant regulations and guidance should be changed so that social workers must be notified when a Child in Need is moved out of their school, whether through a managed move, direction off-site into AP or to home education. They should also be involved in any processes for challenging, reconsidering or reviewing decisions to exclude.
- The government's £200 million Youth Endowment Fund, which is testing interventions designed to prevent children from becoming involved in a life of crime and violence, should be open to schools, including AP.
- Real-time data on exclusion and other moves out of education should be routinely shared with Local Safeguarding Children Boards and their successors, Safeguarding Partners, so they can assess and address any safeguarding concerns such as involvement in crime.
- DfE should review the range of reasons that schools provide for exclusion when submitting data and make any necessary changes, so that the reasons that lie behind exclusions are more accurately captured.
- DfE should publish the number and rate of exclusion of previously looked after children who have left local authority care via adoption, Special Guardianship Order or Child Arrangement Order.
- Ofsted should consistently recognise schools which succeed in supporting all children under the leadership and management category. Schools found to be off-rolling should be given an inadequate rating for leadership and management in all but exceptional cases.

The full document can be downloaded from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799979/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion.pdf