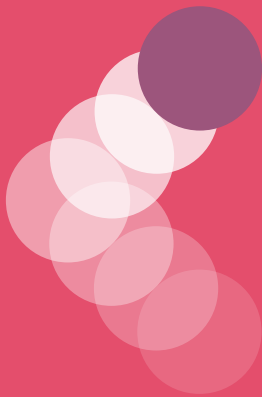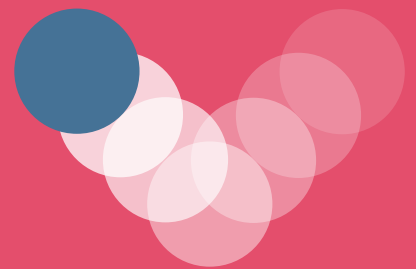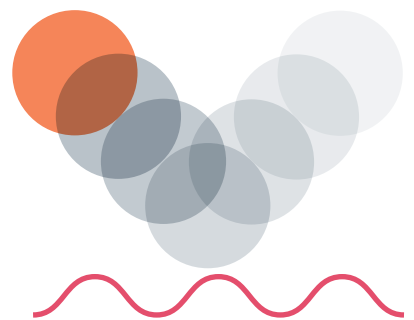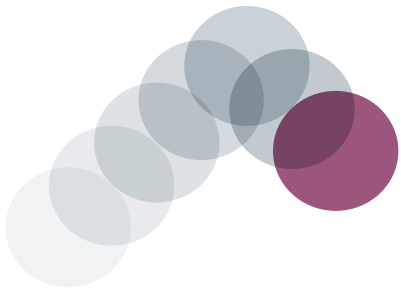# Pinball Kids

Preventing school exclusions

Laura Partridge, Fran Landreth Strong,
Eli Lobley and Danni Mason
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RSA

Contents

Introduction

In the last five years, there has been a 60 percent increase in the number of pupils permanently excluded from England's schools. By 2017/18, the last school year for which data is available, there were – on average – 42 pupils expelled each school day. In that same academic year, pupils were suspended from school over 410,000 times, missing – on average – two school days at a time. Pupils are most commonly expelled or suspended for 'persistent disruptive behaviour' suggesting that there are a group of pupils who consistently bounce up against the boundaries of their school's rules, norms and expectations. It is this group that former head teacher Tom Sherrington was describing when he used the term "pinball kids".[1]

It is the growing number of children being suspended and expelled that has recently grabbed national headlines, but the school exclusions issue is not just one of total numbers; it's a question of social justice. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those from poorer backgrounds and certain ethnic minority groups, and those who have been in care are disproportionally represented in exclusions statistics. Children who the system should hold on to are being let go and let down. The educational and life outcomes for pupils who have been excluded are undeniably shocking and are costly to the public purse. Exclusions are estimated to cost £370,000 per young person affected in lifetime education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs.[2] In the first chapter of this report, we examine how exclusion rates have changed and who has been affected.

The RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) are not alone in caring deeply about improving the educational lot of the pupils most at risk of exclusion. The Children's Commissioner, Barnardo's, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), the Centre for Social Justice, the Education Policy Institute (EPI), the Education Select Committee and others have shed light on this issue and proposed solutions. Youth research and advocacy groups such as Take Back The Power have explored how exclusions affect young people who are excluded. The government too commissioned a review of school exclusions, led by Edward Timpson, which reported last year.[3] And yet the system persists in excluding its most vulnerable children despite the concern of so many prominent actors. So, what can we do to reduce unnecessary exclusions?

In Chapter 2 of this report, we begin by looking at the system-led causes of rising exclusions, which we believe fall into three distinct categories:

- *Wider societal factors*, beyond the education system, that affect children's wellbeing and capacity to cope in school. Examples include growing poverty, rising incidence of mental health and special educational needs. It is not down to schools and colleges alone to solve fundamental societal issues.

1. Sherrington, T. (2016) *No Excuses and the Pinball Kids*. Teacherhead. [Online] Available at: https://teacherhead.com/2016/11/20/no-excuses-and-the-pinball-kids/

2. Gill, K. (2017) *Making the Difference: breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion*. IPPR. [online] Available at: www.ippr.org/files/2017-10/making-the-difference-report-october-2017.pdfn [Accessed 12 Dec. 2020].

3. Department for Education (2019) *Timpson Review of School Exclusion*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf

3. Department for Education (2014) *School exclusion trial evaluation*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331795/RR364_-_School_Exclusion_Trial_Final_Report.pdf
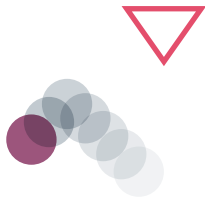
Although it must be noted that schools can – and indeed often do – work hard to mitigate the effects of these on the pupils they serve.

- *Direct consequences* of deliberate policymaking. Examples include the decision to introduce a more 'rigorous' curriculum and accompanying exams, or to reduce funding to local authorities, schools and other public services that work with children. Here, we need leadership from those who make the decisions in and about schools. They must make a commitment to change if these policies are to stop negatively affecting some pupils.

- *Unintended consequences* of policy and practice decisions, where decision makers set out to do what is in the best interests of children, but the by-products of these policies negatively affect some groups. For example, the desire to improve standards in the education system through accountability mechanisms; to give autonomy to school leaders through the introduction of new school models; or to make the job of teaching easier by advocating for stricter behaviour management approaches. Here, we need to shed light on the unintended side effects of policymaking for some disadvantaged pupils. We must ask difficult questions about how the system can be better structured to meet the needs of every child.

We believe that the last of these might be the most fruitful avenue for change in the short to medium term because these policies and practices occur within the bounds of the education system, and they often require only policy adjustments rather than wholesale policy reform.

Looking at the issue through a causal lens, and in the context of the current system, as described above, is essential. But there is a risk that it forces us to think only within existing structures. We therefore decided to look at the problem from a second perspective, asking practitioners, young people and their families to identify the necessary conditions for change. This uncovers conditions that we could create in the system that would be beneficial for the children most at risk of exclusion and would, in fact, be good for all pupils.

Therefore, in Chapter 3, instead of looking down from the level of the whole system, we look out from the perspective of the pinball kids to understand the conditions that need to be created if they are to stay and be successful in mainstream school. Using this approach, we identified the following conditions necessary for change:

- Every child has a strong relationship with a trusted adult in school
- Every child's parents/carers are engaged as partners in their education
- Every child attends a school with an inclusive ethos
- Every child is assessed for learning and other needs throughout their school career and there is capacity to provide appropriate support
- We know where every child is in the system to ensure they can benefit from the four conditions above.

We spoke to staff in schools and local authorities where these conditions have been intentionally created, who believe they are fundamental to achieving their low or even zero exclusion rates. We believe that if these conditions could be present in every child's life, we could prevent the most vulnerable children from being unnecessarily excluded and enhance the educational experience of all children.

A recurring theme throughout Chapter 3 is the importance of strong relationships. Exclusions are one of the clearest manifestations of the breakdown in relationship between a child and the other members of their school community. This may be triggered by the challenges presented by relationships in that child's homelife. And the lack of preventative support available before the child reaches the point of exclusion is

symptomatic of the lack of capacity for schools and other public services such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to work collaboratively. We need to set about rebuilding these relationships from the ground up if we are to change the fate of the pinball kids.

This report summarises the findings of our two different analyses (the system-level analysis, and the 'conditions for change' analysis), drawing on new polling and freedom of information data, case studies and interviews, and the findings of other organisations working on this topic. We present examples of best practice from mainstream schools and local authorities that are committed to reducing exclusions. We also highlight innovative practice from alternative provision schools that mainstream schools could learn from. And we recommend action to address the systemic causes of rising exclusions (explored in Chapter 2) and to create the conditions (explored in Chapter 3) for every school in the country to hold on to its pinball kids.

We recognise that policy change can take time, so in addition to recommending action by government (page 6), we also offer considerations to school leaders who wish to take action now (page 7). Furthermore, the RSA is committed to working with forward-thinking partners to bring about the change that can happen while we await wider system reform. The most exciting practice around preventing exclusions highlighted in this report comes from those invested in building trusting relationships between various influential actors working with children. Those actors have the power to change the fortunes of the pinball kids by bridging the siloes that accountability and funding pressures in the system have created between different schools in a locality, and also by connecting those schools with public sector partners that could be a vital source of support for the pinball kids.

The report features local authorities such as Leeds, Lincolnshire and Newcastle that sought to build relational capacity in their jurisdiction by giving schools the time and support to develop and implement a shared vision for all local children. These efforts have the power to fundamentally shift responsibility for the pinball kids from individual head teachers, who hold the legal right to exclude, to a collective of local school leaders driven by a shared purpose. Some of these initiatives also proactively include other public services, bridging the gap that can often exist between the various professionals in children's lives. The RSA is looking for partners who wish to invest time in developing the connective tissue between schools and public services who together, united by a common purpose, can rewrite the story of the pinball kids.

Summary of recommendations

In order to reduce unnecessary exclusions, we need to address the systemic causes of rising exclusions (explored in Chapter 2) and to create conditions within schools which allow them to hold on to their at-risk children (explored in Chapter 3). We recommend the following actions to help achieve that goal. We have focused on actions that we believe will be both feasible and effective, and we are committed to working with partners in schools, local authorities, the Department for Education (DfE), and Ofsted, to deliver these changes.

- *Government should invest in multi-agency teams to support preventative work by head teachers.* Area-based teams of mental health, social care, youth work and criminal justice professionals should work together to help head teachers support pupils at risk of exclusion. These should be fully funded

through increases to the 'high needs block' to meet regularly and deliver interventions.

▪ *Government should create a 'what works' fund to assess the impact of promising approaches to reduce exclusions.* This would build more evidence on the impact of approaches like restorative practice, trauma-informed teacher training, and deployment of teaching assistants in pastoral roles. This will help schools to effectively invest resources in developing stronger pupil-teacher relationships. Joint proposals from schools and other public services such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) should be encouraged.

▪ *The Department for Education should ensure that progression routes for school staff recognise the importance of pastoral work.* For example:
  ▪ The Higher Level Teaching Assistants qualification should require skills in supporting social, emotional and behavioral needs.
  ▪ The Teaching and Learning Responsibility guidance should strongly recommend protected time for heads of year to do pastoral work.
  ▪ Pastoral leadership should be embedded within the framework for the National Professional Qualification for Headship.
  ▪ All teacher trainees should take a short placement in an alternative provision or special school.

▪ *The Department for Education should issue clear fair access guidance* that ensures all schools and agencies engage with fair access processes and removes academies' right of refusal over pupils placed via fair access under quota systems. Guidance should also be available for parents to guide them through the exclusion appeal process and finding an alternative educational placement for their child if an exclusion goes ahead.

▪ *The Department for Education should ensure we know where every child and young person is in the education system* by mandating that the date of and reason for all managed moves and transitions to home education are recorded on school information systems before pupils can be removed from the school roll.

▪ *Ofsted should ensure inclusion carries explicit weight in inspection gradings.* It should consider re-introducing an element of the inspection framework from the early 2000s in which the first criterion for assessing the 'overall effectiveness of the school' was 'how inclusive the school is'.

Considerations for school leaders

School leaders interviewed for this project and schools we visited have highlighted interesting approaches to preventing exclusions from school. If your school is looking to do the same, you might wish to consider:

▪ *How can you strengthen pastoral structures?* You could consider making pastoral experts including non-teachers part of your senior leadership team (see Reach Academy case study on page 50) or introducing a new professional development pathway for non-teachers as welfare managers – a role to work alongside your head of year (see Towers School case study on page 56). You may also consider reducing the size of tutor groups by deploying non-teaching staff as 'coaches' (see Carr Manor Community School case study on page 43).

- *Can you employ primary-trained specialists in your secondary school?* They could aid the transition from primary to secondary school by supporting struggling pupils. Literacy and numeracy catch-up support could enable them to successfully access the whole curriculum (see Passmores Academy case study on page 55).

- *How can you engage other professionals to support your core staff team?* Research for this project demonstrated that teachers want support from other professionals to reduce the number of times they internally exclude pupils.[4] You may consider co-locating mental health, social care, speech and language or other professionals on site at school to bring their support closer to your staff and pupils (see Hope School and Reach Academy case studies on pages pages 65 and 50 respectively).

- *Do you engage families as partners in education?* Proven methods include regular positive communications about a child's progress and by inviting them to learn with staff, for example during inset days and twilights on topics like attachment and behaviour management (see Pears Family School and Surrey Square Primary School case studies on pages 48 and 49 respectively).

- *Do you actively promote diversity within your school?* Research shows the importance of collecting and reviewing data on diversity within your workforce, reviewing personal specifications to ensure that language does not discourage applicants with certain characteristics and offering perspective-taking training (exploring scenarios to understand what it might be like for other people facing prejudice or disadvantage).[5] There is funding available for schools to run their own diversity projects and there are organisations including peer support networks who can provide a valuable network to Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), LGBT+ and female teachers.[6]

- *Have you reviewed your behaviour policy with inclusion in mind?* You should ensure that your behaviour policy does not discriminate against pupils on the grounds of race, gender, SEND or sexual orientation.[7] You may wish to make clear that exclusion is an option available to the school rather than stating that it is a sanction for a pre-specified list of behaviours. You could also focus your policy on maintaining good relationships and repairing them when broken (see Carr Manor Community School case study on page 43 and/or read their inclusion and behaviour policy).[8]

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4. More than half of the 1,500 teachers surveyed wanted to be able to refer pupils to an in-school mental health practitioner.

5. CIPD (2019) *Diversity management that works: An evidence-based review* [PDF]. Available at: www.cipd.co.uk/Images/7926-diversity-and-inclusion-report-revised_tcm18-65334.pdf [Accessed 20 February 2020]

6. Peer support networks include BAMEed: www.bameednetwork.com/about-us/; LGBTEd: http://lgbted.uk/; Women Leading in Education regional networks: www.gov.uk/guidance/women-leading-in-education-regional-networks. You can also apply to your equality and diversity fund regional hub for support: www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-and-diversity-funding-for-school-led-projects#lead-schools

7. External organisations such as EqualiTeach can provide support: www.equaliteach.co.uk/ [Accessed 12 February 2020]

8. Carrmanor.org.uk. (2020). *Inclusion and behaviour policy*. [online] Available at: www.carrmanor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Behaviour-Policy-20171.pdf [Accessed 1 February 2020].

Terminology

The following key terms appear throughout the report. This is how the RSA uses each of them.

Alternative provision: this covers all educational provision outside mainstream and special needs schools, including pupil referral units (PRUs) maintained by local authorities, alternative provision academies and free schools and independent alternative provision.

Children known to social services: if there are short- or long-term risks to a child's wellbeing and development, they may be referred to a social worker by their family or a health visitor, teacher or other professional.[9] There are three specific groups of children with social workers that we refer to in this report:

> *Looked after children:* these are children who have been in the care of the local authority for over 24 hours, for example with a foster family or in a children's home.[10]

> *Children in need:* these are children who have been assessed by social workers as needing help and protection as a result of risks to their development or health, or who are disabled.[11]

> Children with a child protection plan: this plan is developed if a local authority determines that a child is at serious risk of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. It details the steps that will be taken to ensure the child is safe and their needs are met.[12]

Elective home education: this refers to a choice by a parent or guardian to educate their child at home rather than send them to school. The child will not be registered on a school roll. Reasons for home education include explicit choices, for example related to religious beliefs and ideological views. Other reasons might not be experienced as a 'choice', for example being unable to find a school that meets the child's needs.

Fair access protocol (FAP): each local authority is required to have a fair access protocol, which directs how they handle admissions outside of the normal admissions rounds. The protocol must be agreed by a majority of schools and are binding for all schools within the local authority area. It is intended to ensure that children, particularly the most vulnerable, are offered a school place quickly. This includes pupils who have been excluded from school. Local authorities often coordinate the placement of pupils in partnership with local schools through a regular meeting, commonly referred to as a 'fair access panel'. This aims to ensure that each pupil receives the most appropriate placement for their needs and that no school receives a disproportionate number of pupils with additional needs.

9.   The British Association of Social Workers (2018) *The context, roles and tasks of the child and family social worker.* [PDF] Available at: www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/BASW%20England%20-%20Children%20and%20Families%20Practice%20Policy%20and%20Education%20Group%20role%20of%20a%20child%20and%20family%20social%20worker.pdf

10.   NSPCC (2019) *Looked After Children.* [online] Available at: www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/children-and-families-at-risk/looked-after-children/ [Accessed 24 January 2020].

11.   Gov.uk (2019) *Children in Need of Help and Protection data and analysis.* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in-need-of-help-and-protection-data-and-analysis [Accessed 24 January 2020].

12.   Gov.uk. (2020). *Working together to safeguard children.* Department for Education [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf [Accessed 8 February 2020].
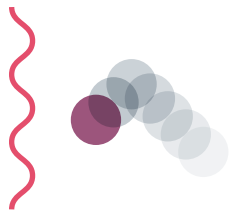
Free school meals (FSM): pupils are eligible to have a free meal at school if their parents/carers receive income-related benefits.[13] Eligibility for free school meals is often used as a proxy measure of disadvantage. These pupils attract additional funding to their schools. Primary schools receive £1,320 additional 'pupil premium' funding for each pupil who has been eligible for free school meals in the last six years (Ever 6 FSM), and secondary schools receive £935 per pupil recorded as Ever 6 FSM.[14]

Inclusive education: an approach to education that considers and supports the needs of all students, providing a sense of belonging and opportunities for success. Human rights doctrine protects the right to an inclusive education that offers "flexible curricula, teaching and learning methods adapted to different strengths, requirements and learning styles". Crucially, this definition emphasises that teachers must be suitably supported to work in this way.[15]

High needs funding: this is government funding to support children with SEND and those in alternative provision. High needs funding is allocated to local authorities by central government according to a national formula that considers the circumstances of the local area. Local authorities distribute this funding to schools and other educational settings according to need. It is also referred to as the 'high needs block' as it forms one 'block' of the total dedicated schools grant (DSG) distributed by central government to local authorities; the other 'blocks' of funding correspond to schools, early years provision, and local authority central services.

Managed moves: this allows a young person to move from one school to another, including alternative provision academies and PRUs. These should take place with the full agreement of the young person, their parents/carers, and both schools involved. These are often used as a 'fresh start' which avoids a permanent exclusion from the student's original school.

Official exclusions: only a head teacher can exclude a child, and they must inform the parents/carers of the exclusion. They must notify the local authority and the school's governing body of all permanent exclusions and any fixed-term exclusions of longer than five days. Official exclusions are recorded by the school and local authority and can take two forms:

> *Fixed-term exclusion:* this refers to a pupil being suspended from school for part of a day, a whole day or several days. A pupil cannot legally be fixed-term excluded for more than 45 days in an academic year.

> *Permanent exclusion:* this refers to a pupil being permanently expelled from a school. A permanent exclusion is the most serious sanction a school can give to a pupil: government guidance states that permanent exclusions should only be used as a "last resort".[16] The pupil can no longer attend the school and is formally removed from the school's roll. It is the responsibility of the local authority to find the pupil another school place no later than the sixth day following the exclusion.

13. Gov.uk. (2020). *Free School Meals Guidance*. Department for Education [online] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/700139/Free_school_meals_guidance_Apr18.pdf [Accessed 5 February 2020].

14. Gov.uk (2019) *Pupil premium 2018 to 2019: conditions of grant* [online] (updated March 2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-conditions-of-grant-2018-to-2019/pupil-premium-2018-to-2019-conditions-of-grant [Accessed 20 February 2020]

15. UN Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2016) *Convention on the rights of people with disabilities.* [online] Available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/GC/RighttoEducation/CRPD-C-GC-4.doc [Accessed 24 January 2020].

16. Gov.uk (2017) *Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England* [PDF]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/641418/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf [Accessed February 2020]

Off-rolling: this is when the pupil is removed from a school's roll without following the process of an official exclusion, or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school. It is distinct from other types of pupil move because it does not involve identifying a new educational placement for the child.

Progress 8: this is a measure of the 'progress' pupils make during their time at secondary school, used in England and Wales. It compares their attainment in examinations taken at the end of secondary school (GCSEs) with the results of pupils nationally who got similar results in exams taken at the end of primary school (SATs). These are averaged to give an overall Progress 8 score for the school. A score of zero means pupils on average made similar progress to pupils nationwide. A score above zero means that pupils made more progress on average than pupils in other schools. A score below zero means pupils at the school made less progress on average than pupils in other schools.[17]

Pupil referral unit (PRU): these are local authority-maintained schools serving pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools, have medical needs that prevent them from accessing mainstream education or are awaiting placement in a mainstream school.

School types: in this report we refer to various different types of school including local authority-maintained schools, academies, free schools and grammar schools.[18]

> *Local authority-maintained schools/maintained schools:* schools that are overseen by the local authority. They follow the national curriculum, admissions regulations, and teacher pay and conditions. There are different types of maintained schools: community schools, foundation and trust schools, voluntary aided schools and voluntary controlled schools.

> *Academies:* schools that are not overseen by the local authority and have more freedom over curriculum and policies around admissions and teacher pay and conditions. There are two main types of academy: converter academies that were able to convert to academy status based on good performance; and sponsored academies that were underperforming schools forced to become academies (run by sponsors).

> *Free schools:* schools that are set up by groups outside of local authority – e.g. parents, universities, charities – and do not have to follow the national curriculum. They must be entirely new and cannot take over an existing school.

> *Grammar schools:* selective maintained or academy schools. Students must perform well on a test at age 11 in order to be eligible for admission.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): this refers to having a learning need and/or disability which requires additional support to access education. When formally recognised, this additional support can take two forms:

> *SEN support:* support which is provided in schools, usually organised by the SEN coordinator (SENCO).

> *Education, health and care plan (EHCP):* a document which sets out provision and support for children and young people with **SEND** up to 25 years old. These are decided upon after an assessment which demonstrates that more support is required than that available through SEN support. An EHCP also triggers additional funding for the provision agreed upon in the plan.[19]

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17. Department for Education (2019) *Secondary Accountability Measures.* [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840275/Secondary_accountability_measures_guidance_-_October_2019_final_with_ref.pdf

18. Gov.uk (unknown) *Types of School.* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/types-of-school [Accessed 24 January 2020].

19. Gov.uk (2020) *Children with special needs and disabilities (SEND).* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help [Accessed 24 January 2020].
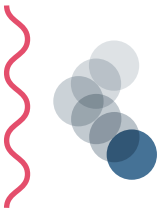
Methodology

In 2018, we embarked on a research project to explore the following questions:

- What are the current trends in school exclusions?
- Who is affected by exclusion and how?
- What are the systemic causes of rising exclusions?
- What conditions would need to be in place to prevent exclusions?
- What system-wide changes could create these conditions?
- What innovative practice by individuals and organisations could be developed to create these conditions?

In order to answer these questions, we undertook the following research activities:

Literature review – a review of existing research and policy literature focusing on the following themes and how they might relate to rising levels of exclusion:

- Changing approaches to behaviour management
- Curriculum reform
- Perverse incentives created by the accountability regime
- Rising numbers of pupils with SEND and mental health diagnoses
- Rising levels of poverty
- Atomisation of the school system

Analysis of existing government data – including trends in school exclusions and alternative provision, and on public funding to support groups of pupils at risk of or following exclusion.

A freedom of information request to all local authorities in England – we asked for information including:

- The number of pupils enrolled at PRUs
- The number of PRU places funded by the local authority
- The academic term in which pupils are admitted to PRUs
- The number of cases considered by Fair Access Panels
- Total expenditure by the local authority on alternative provision.

Requests were sent in July 2018 and responses were collated between August 2018 and January 2019. All information requested related to the academic year 2016-17. We received responses from 331 of 354 local authorities contacted, including those who responded to confirm that they do not hold data on exclusions. 23 local authorities provided no response. Results of the request were reported in March 2019.[20]

Teacher survey – an online survey of teachers and school leaders as part of the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey. Questions were designed to understand teachers' views on the use of permanent, fixed-term and internal exclusions and which types of support would be most valuable to help them support young people at risk of exclusion.

The survey was completed by 1,570 practising teachers from 1,357 state schools in England between 21 and 26 June 2019. Of these respondents, 811 (52 percent) were teaching in primary schools and 760 (48 percent) were teaching in secondary schools. 1,118 respondents were classroom teachers and 445 were school leaders. There were good levels of representation across key school-level factors including school type,

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20. Partridge, L. (2019) *Is pressure to achieve exam results contributing to school exclusions? Yes, new RSA data indicates.* [blog] 11 March 2019. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2019/03/exclusions-exams [Accessed 12 December 2019].
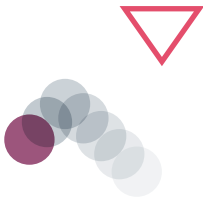
performance and local authority type. Samples were weighted to ensure results were representative of national free school meals eligibility. Results of the survey were reported in a working paper released in September 2019.[21]

Stakeholder interviews – we conducted 46 semi-structured interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups, including policymakers, local authority services, school leaders, researchers and academics, excluded young people and their families, youth workers, teacher training providers, child psychologists, and third sector organisations. Interviewees were found through outreach within our own networks and open calls in blogs posted on the RSA website. Interviewees then referred us to other key stakeholders. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 hour and took place either in person or by telephone. They explored the interviewee's experience of exclusions, their perspective on the underlying causes of exclusions and potential solutions.

Research visits to schools – we undertook day-long research visits to 10 schools identified as having an innovative approach to reducing exclusions. We received initial recommendations of over 60 schools from project advisors and interviewed stakeholders. Following substantial desk research and telephone interviews with senior leaders, 10 schools were shortlisted for visits, conducted between January 2019 and October 2019. Of the 10 schools visited, seven were mainstream (one primary, one all-through, and five secondary schools), two were alternative provision (one primary and one secondary school) and one was a special school for 5 to 13-year olds.

During each visit we interviewed senior leaders and key staff members responsible for inclusion, staff involved with delivering interventions for students, observed lessons and interventions and took a tour of the school. We also spoke to over 40 students across the schools visited (as well as parents and carers in some schools), using a combination of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations.

System change workshops – we convened half-day workshops in partnership with two local authorities, Tower Hamlets Borough Council and Leeds City Council, in September and October 2019 respectively. These workshops brought together key stakeholders from mainstream schools, alternative provision, local authority services for children, family and education, and others involved in supporting young people who have been excluded or those at risk of exclusion.

Through workshop activities, participants helped us to understand the ecosystem that exists around school exclusions in each locality. Participants also spent time considering what improved outcomes for young people who are excluded or at risk of exclusion might look like, the conditions that need to be in place in order to make this possible, and the barriers and opportunities to doing so that currently exist in each context.

Analysis of qualitative data – we carried out a thematic analysis of transcriptions and observational notes from each of these research activities, coding data using NVivo data analysis software.[22]

21. For our analysis of the teacher survey results, see Partridge, L., Mason, D., Webster, H. & Landreth Strong, F. (2019) *School exclusions: the teachers' perspective*. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/globalassets/projects/cld/pinball-kids/rsa-school-exclusions-the-teachers-perspective.pdf [Accessed 20 February 2020]

22. QRS International (2020) *What is NVivo?* [online] Available at: www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/what-is-nvivo [Accessed 30 January 2020].

01

Background – what do we know about school exclusions?
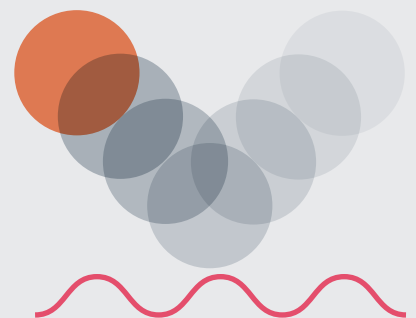
Official exclusions[23]

The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions of pupils from England's schools has been rising consistently since 2013/14. In the last academic year for which we have data (2017/18), on average 42 pupils were expelled each school day. The most common reason for exclusion is 'persistent disruptive behaviour'.

Number of permanent exclusions in England

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
5,080	5,170	4,630	4,949	5,795	6,684	7,719	7,905
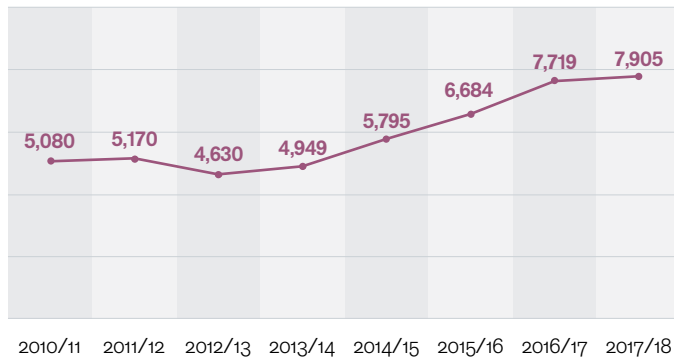
Number of fixed-term exclusions in England

2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
324,110	304,370	267,520	269,475	302,975	339,362	381,864	410,753
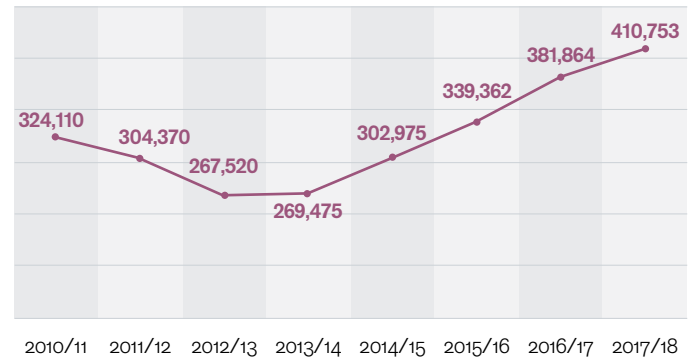
Particularly concerning is the fact that young people from disadvantaged groups are disproportionately excluded from school. Pupils with SEND are around six times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their peers without SEND. Pupils eligible for free school meals were four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their non-eligible peers.

There are also racial disparities in exclusion rates, with Black Caribbean pupils being excluded at a rate of nearly three times their White British peers. The patterns are similar for these groups when it comes to fixed-term exclusions. Looked after children (see 'Terminology' section for a definition) are also significantly more likely to face fixed-term exclusion from school than their peers.

Rate of permanent exclusions

SEN support	Non-SEN support	FSM	Non-FSM	Black Caribbean	White British	All children
0.34	0.06	0.28	0.07	0.28	0.10	0.10

Rate of fixed-term exclusions

SEN support	Non-SEN support	FSM	Non-FSM	Black Caribbean	White British	Looked After Children	All children
15.10	3.36	13.65	3.73	10.46	5.70	11.83	5.08
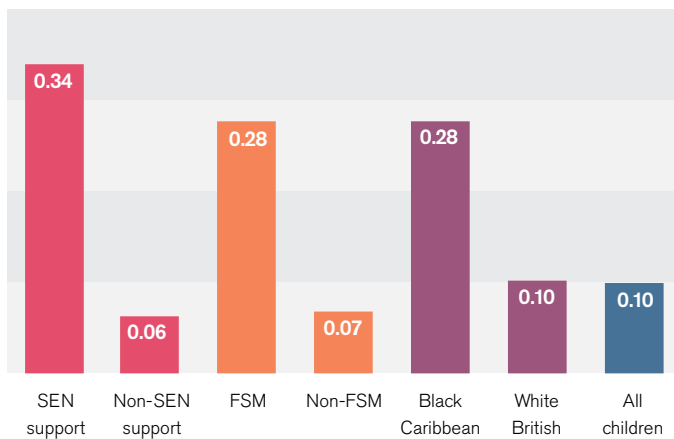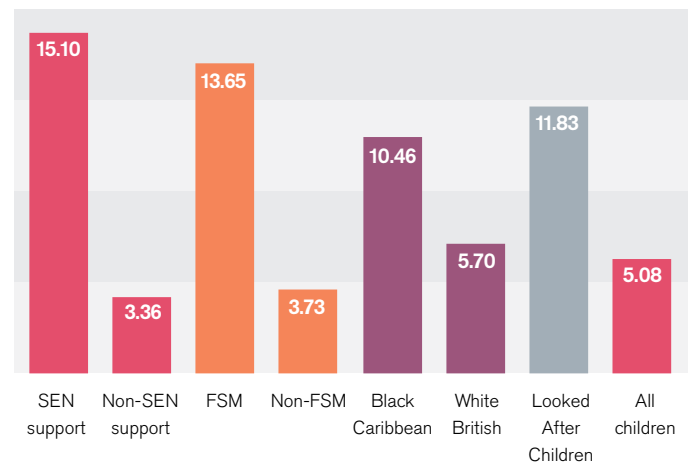
There is also a significant difference in exclusion rates between boys and girls, with boys being permanently excluded three times more frequently than girls.

Rate of permanent exclusions

Boys	0.15
Girls	0.05

Rate of fixed-term exclusions

Boys	7.23
Girls	2.83
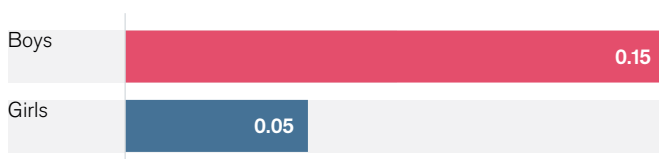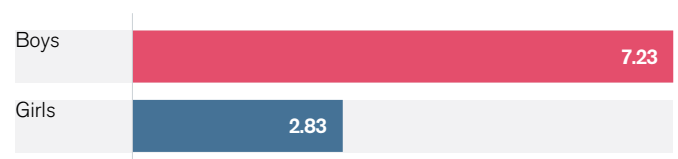
23. Gov.uk (2013) Statistics: exclusions [online] (updated 25 July 2019) Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-exclusions [Accessed 20 February 2020]

Unexplained pupil exits

While the government statistics are revealing, they do not show the whole picture. There is good reason to believe that a greater number of pupils than the figures suggest are leaving a school never to return: pupils who have not gone through an official exclusion process and are therefore not captured in the statistics, but have effectively been 'removed' from school. They may have moved to another mainstream school, into alternative provision, to an independent school, a special school or into home education.[24]

It is difficult to know how many pupils are in this situation or how many of these moves are against the best interests of the pupil and the will of the parents/carers. However, according to the Education Policy Institute's analysis of the 603,705 pupils sitting GCSEs in 2017, an estimated 24,000 had exited to an unknown location, not to return to a state-funded school, between Year 7 and Year 11.[25]

Unexplained exits in 2017 GCSE cohort

4%

96%

- Estimated students who exited to an unknown destination and did not return to a state-funded school by Year 11
- Remaining cohort

Pupils educated outside mainstream schools

At the time of the January 2019 school census, 16,134 pupils were being educated in state-supported alternative provision (PRUs, and alternative provision academies and free schools).[26] The latest analysis from FFT Education Datalab (based on 2017 data) suggests that 45 percent of pupils educated in these settings were permanently excluded – the remainder may have "managed moved" or moved into an alternative provision school via an unofficial exclusion.[27]

Pupils may also end up in independent alternative provision. Data collected from local authorities as part of the January 2019 alternative provision census indicates that 26,128 pupils were being educated in alternative provision settings such as independent schools and further education colleges offering pre-16 provision.[28] Again, these figures may underestimate the size of the issue: independent providers of alternative provision do not have to register as a school – and therefore provide data – if they offer part-time education or they provide full-time education to fewer than five pupils.

As pupils move through education, their likelihood of returning to a mainstream school diminishes; only 46 percent of pupils who spend time in alternative provision in Year 11 return to a mainstream setting.[29]

Rate of fixed-term exclusions

Primary	Key Stage 3	Year 10	Year 11
65%	64%	58%	46%
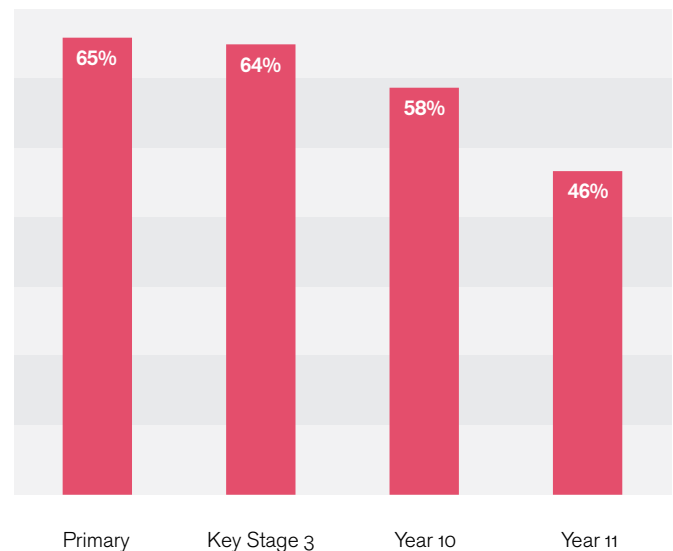
24. Hutchinson, J. & Crenna-Jennings, W. (2019) *Unexplained pupil exits from schools: Further analysis and data by multi-academy trust and local authority*. [PDF] Education Policy Institute. Available at: https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Unexplained-pupil-moves_LAs-MATs_EPI-2019.pdf

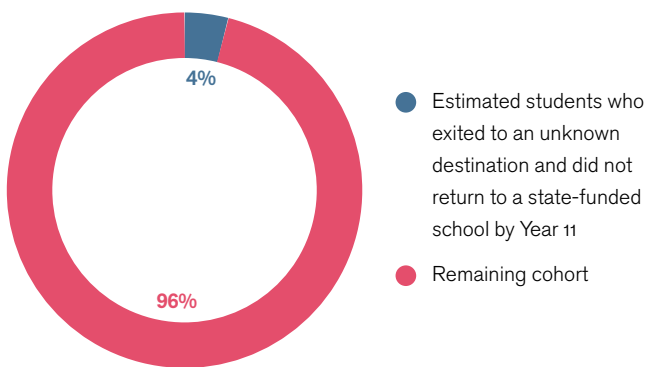25. Department for Education and Isos Partnership (2018) *Alternative provision market analysis*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752548/Alternative_Provision_Market_Analysis.pdf

26. Gov.uk (2013) *Statistics: school and pupil numbers*. [online] (updated June 2019) Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-school-and-pupil-numbers [Accessed February 2020]

27. FFT Education Data Lab (2019) *Timpson Review reflections, part one: Not all pupils who end up in alternative provision have been permanently excluded*. [online] https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2019/05/timpson-review-reflections-part-one-not-all-pupils-who-end-up-in-alternative-provision-have-been-permanently-excluded/ [Accessed 20 February 2020]

28. Gov.uk. (2019). Underlying data: Schools, pupils and their characteristics 2019. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019

29. Department for Education and Isos Partnership (2018) *Alternative provision market analysis*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752548/Alternative_Provision_Market_Analysis.pdf

Educational outcomes

There are concerns over the educational and life outcomes of pupils who leave mainstream school. Only 1 percent of students who complete their GCSEs in alternative provision achieve five 'good' GCSEs including English and maths, compared to the national average of 64.5 percent.[30]

This has a knock-on effect on life outcomes: 35 percent for excluded students who finish education in alternative provision (PRUs, alternative provision academies, alternative provision free schools and hospital schools) go on to become NEET (not in education, employment or training), compared with only 5 percent of students leaving mainstream schools.[31]

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) estimates that the cost of exclusion is around £370,000 per young person in lifetime education, benefits, healthcare and criminal justice costs.[32]

KS4 Destination of permanently excluded Pupils (2014-18 average)

AP schools	Mainstream schools	Other provision	Lost	Special schools
52.6%	21.0%	13.5%	7.7%	5.2%
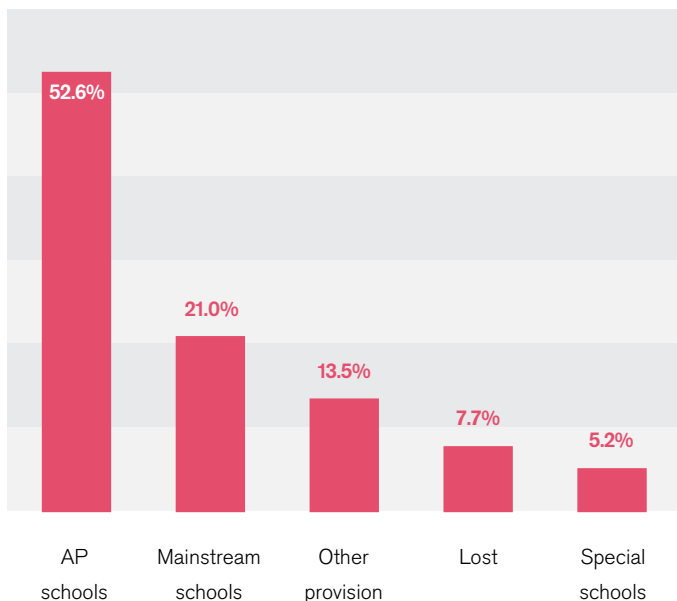
% of pupils not in 'sustained' employment, education or training after leaving school by school type

Alternative provision	Special schools	Mainstream schools
35%	9%	5%
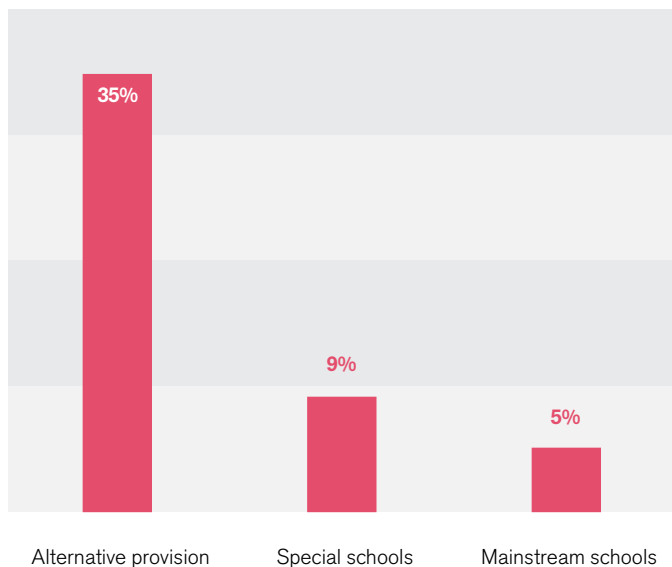
Case study: the cost of exclusions

The mother of a child permanently excluded from a school in Greater Manchester found that the lack of available places at local PRUs meant that her 12-year-old had to make do with no more than a few hours a day of online English and maths material. This child missed out on their right to a full curriculum, the opportunity to socialise with peers and the support of professional educators.

For this working mother, in addition to the stress caused by the uncertainty of their child's educational future, there was the added dilemma of whether it was appropriate to leave her child unsupervised, with little to do for the greater part of the day.

For parents/carers in this situation, giving up work or cutting back on hours may seem like the only option, even if it risks financial instability for the whole family. Children who have grown up in poverty are disproportionately excluded from schools in England. This example demonstrates how exclusion could further exacerbate financial instability for those families.

30. IPPR (2017) *Making the Difference*. [PDF] Available at: www.ippr.org/files/2017-10/making-the-difference-report-october-2017.pdf

31. Department for Education (2020). *Destinations of KS4 and 16 to 18 (KS5) students: 2018*. London: Gov.uk. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-16-to-18-ks5-students-2018

32. IPPR (2017) op cit.
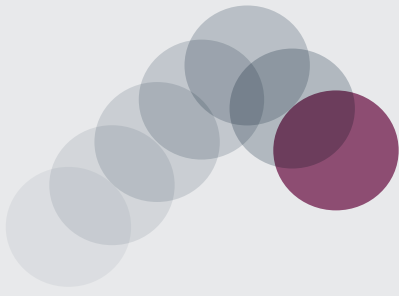
02

The systemic causes
of rising exclusions
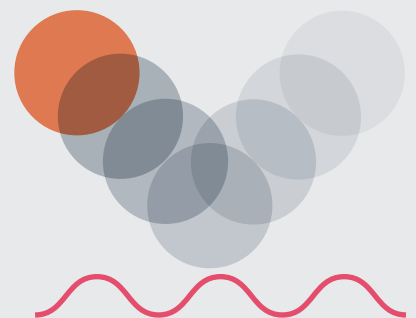
Being excluded from school has negative consequences for the rest of a child's life, with the most vulnerable children at most risk of exclusion. This means we have a duty to ensure that no child is unnecessarily excluded. But to understand how we might curb school exclusions, we first must understand why they have risen over recent years.

Our research revealed a complex web of factors within the education system and beyond that create a perfect storm for rising exclusions. Some of these are to do with the education system: the 32,000 schools across the country, those who work in them, the policymakers whose policies govern them and the many organisations and groups that support them. Others are far beyond the control of those who would say they work in education (policy or practice) in England.

Key factors include:

- **Wider societal factors**, beyond the education system, that affect children's wellbeing and capacity to cope in school, including:
  - Rising poverty
  - Increasing diagnosis of mental ill-health
  - Increasing numbers of children with a social worker

- **Direct consequences** of deliberate policymaking where the negative consequences for some groups were inevitable, including:
  - Curriculum reform making learning harder to access for some pupils
  - Real-terms cuts to school funding
  - Reductions to funding for local authorities and other services that work with children and young people

- **By-products** of policy and practice decisions, where decision makers set out to do what is in the best interests of children but their choices have unintended consequences, including:
  - Perverse incentives caused by the accountability regime
  - Fragmentation of the education system
  - A shift in behaviour management

In this chapter, we take each of these factors in turn, exploring how it contributes to rising school exclusions.

Wider societal factors

Throughout our research, we heard reports of young people facing increasingly complex challenges in their lives. Representatives from schools, local authority children's services and third sector organisations highlighted factors in a young person's home life that can act as triggers for changes in behaviour that lead to exclusion from school. These include loss of parental income due to insecure employment or benefit system reform, housing insecurity, domestic violence, a change in foster care placement and mental ill-health of a family member.

The professional experiences of these participants echo wider research, which shows that certain groups of young people are more at risk of exclusion: those growing up in poverty, children with a social worker, and those with mental health problems.[33] Research reveals that levels of need are rising in each of these areas and intersecting in complex ways, which may be contributing to increasing rates of exclusion.[34]
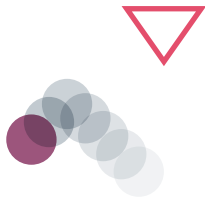
Poverty

One explanation for the rising levels of school exclusion in recent years is the increase in the number of children living in poverty, who are disproportionately excluded from schools. Research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlights that while the past two decades have seen periods in which poverty has declined, such as in the early 2000s, this progress has "begun to unravel" and poverty levels have stagnated at around 21 percent of the total population.[35]

For children, poverty levels are even higher, having seen a year on year increase between 2012/13 and 2016/17, at the same time that exclusions rates have risen. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reports that approximately 30 percent of children in England are living in poverty.[36]

The risk of poverty is greatest for children living in larger households; 60 percent of families with four or more children are in poverty. It also shows that, although work is a protective factor against poverty, levels of in-work poverty are high; seven in ten children in poverty are in a working family.[37] Levels of child poverty are projected to continue to increase across all areas of the country in coming years, with a particularly sharp rise expected in the North East, East Midlands and Wales.[38]

Studies into the impact of poverty on a young person's experience of school find that around a third of poorer children report falling behind as a result of not having

33. Gill, K. (2017) 'Making The Difference: Breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion'. [PDF] Institute for Public Policy Research. Available at: www.ippr.org/files/2017-10/making-the-difference-report-october-2017.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

34. Ibid.

35. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020) 'UK Poverty 2019/20: the leading independent report'. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York. [PDF] Available at: www.jrf.org.uk/file/53876/download?token=azqCkRcQ&filetype=full-report [Accessed 7 February 2020].

36. Kelly, E., Lee, T., Sibieta, L. and Waters, T. (2018) 'Public Spending on Children in England: 2000 to 2020'. [PDF] Institute for Fiscal Studies. Available at: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Public-Spending-on-Children-in-England-CCO-JUNE-2018.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

37. Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2020) op cit.

38. Hood, A. and Waters, T. (2017) 'Living standards, poverty and inequality in the UK: 2017–18 to 2021–22'. [PDF] Institute for Fiscal Studies. Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/comms/R136.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

the necessary books and internet facilities to study at home.[39] This may lead to disengagement from school, which itself could be a precursor to exclusion. A more direct link between poverty and exclusion is made in research from The Children's Society. Their exclusions review reports that poorer students may face sanctions for not having the correct uniform or equipment, making "them feel unjustly treated, and in some cases caus[ing] them to resist punishments", in turn escalating to more serious sanctions including exclusion.[40]

Research by the Sutton Trust finds a disparity between parents of different socioeconomic backgrounds in navigating the education system, for instance, in securing a new school place, with working-class parents less likely to access sources of information in their search than middle-class parents.[41] Insights from our interviews suggest that this imbalance in parental power also applies in the event of exclusions, which may require the navigation of complex admissions and appeals processes.

Several interviewees reported that, as a result of their child's exclusion, one parent or carer had given up work in order to look after them until a suitable school place was secured. In the case of one parent we spoke to, sustaining full-time work had not been possible for almost a year while they home educated their child. But in households already struggling to make ends meet, this is unlikely to be an option.

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Children with a social worker

There could be a link between the growing number of children being referred to a social worker and rising school exclusions given that pupils with a social worker (and those who have had a social worker in the past) are significantly more likely to be excluded from school than their peers. The rate of fixed-term exclusions for looked after children – those with foster parents, in a residential care home or secure care home – is five times that of their peers.[42] Children with a social worker are also more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers even when other factors that predict exclusion, such as deprivation and special educational needs, are controlled for.[43]

The number of children with a social worker has been increasing in recent years. The number of looked after children in England has continued to rise steadily since 2008, reaching 78,150 at the end of March 2019.[44] Local authorities have struggled

39.   The Children's Society (2014) 'At what cost? Exposing the impact of poverty on school life Executive summary'. [PDF] Available at: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/At_What_Cost_Exposing_the_impact_of_poverty_on_schoo_life-report_%20summary.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

40.   The Children's Society (2018) 'Exclusions review: Call for evidence Written evidence from The Children's Society'. [PDF] Available at: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/dofe.school.exclusion.consultation.response.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

41.   Sutton Trust (2018) *Parent Power*. [online] Available at: www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/parent-power-2018-schools/ [Accessed 18 December 2019].

42.   Department for Education (2019) *Children in need outcomes national tables: 2018*. [excel document] (updated April 11 2019) Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793995/2018_Outcomes_National_Tables.xlsx

43.   Department for Education. (2019b) *Children in Need Review*. [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/809108/CIN_review_final_analysis_publication.pdf

44.   Department for Education (2019c) *Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2019* [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/850306/Children_looked_after_in_England_2019_Text.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

to meet this rising need, with children's social care experiencing the highest levels of overspending of any local authority area in recent years.[45]

The government's Children in Need review, published in 2019, emphasises the importance of consistent and trusting relationships between adults and this group of young people.[46] It highlights the important role that schools play in this: "where children may lack consistency, clear boundaries and a place free from harm in their home lives, schools can offer much-needed stability and security".[47] But this is challenging for schools to achieve given that children with a social worker are twice as likely to join a school at an unusual time of year, three times as likely to be persistently absent from school, and experience more school moves than their peers.[48] These factors, combined with decreasing numbers of support and pastoral staff, discussed below, may make it harder for schools to offer that trusting relationship.

Mental health

Research shows that a child having a psychiatric disorder is a strong predictor for them being excluded from school.[49] Indeed, 17 percent of children with a diagnosed social, emotional or mental health condition were fixed-term excluded from school during the last academic year for which data is available.[50] Therefore it is possible that rising levels of mental ill-health are contributing to rising school exclusions.

We heard time and again throughout our research that levels of mental ill-health are high, and rising, among young people, and this concern is reflected in national data. A 2017 NHS study reveals that the number of 5 to 15-year-olds with a mental disorder is rising gradually, from 9.7 percent in 1999, to 10.1 percent in 2004, to 11.2 percent in 2017.[51]

At secondary school, girls are more likely than boys to be affected by emotional disorders (10.9 percent compared to 7.1 percent), while boys are more likely than girls to experience behavioural disorders (7.4 percent compared to 5 percent) and hyperactivity disorders (3.2 percent compared to 0.7 percent).[52] A report from IPPR links this trend to the much higher rate of exclusion of boys – whose "externalising symptoms" are more likely to present as aggression – than girls, who are more likely to experience "internalising behaviours, such as being withdrawn and self-harming".[53]

The link between mental ill-health and exclusions may be further exacerbated by the inability of mental health services to meet rising demand. Around one in five young people

45. Office for Budget Responsibility (2018) *Economic and fiscal outlook*. [PDF] Available at: https://cdn. obr.uk/EFO_October-2018.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

46. Department for Education (2019b) op cit.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ford, TJ; Paget, A; Parker, C; et al. 'Which children and young people are excluded from school? Findings from a large British birth cohort study, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)'. *Child: Care, Health and Development*. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10871/29521 [Accessed 5 February 2020]

50. Department for Education (2019) *Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017 to 2018* [online] (updated August 2019) Available at:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2017-to-2018

51. NHS Digital (2018) *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017* [online] Available at: https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2017/2017 [Accessed 20 January 2020].

52. Sadler, K. et al (2018) *Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017: Summary of key findings*. [PDF] NHS Digital. Available at: www.files.digital.nhs.uk/A6/EA7D58/ MHCYP%202017%20 Summary.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

53. IPPR (2017) op cit.

are reportedly waiting more than six months to see a mental health specialist. [54] In the meantime, families and school staff try best to support the children, but they can do little to prevent the manifestation of symptoms that may result in an exclusion from school.

Direct consequences of deliberate policymaking

The wider societal trends impacting on the most vulnerable young people are sometimes exacerbated by policymaking. Examples include the decision in the early 2010s to introduce a more 'rigorous' curriculum and accompanying exams, which make education less accessible for some children; or decisions to reduce funding to local authorities, schools and other public services that carry out work designed to support vulnerable children.

Here, we need leadership from those who make the decisions in and about schools. They must make a commitment to reform if these policies are to stop negatively impacting vulnerable pupils.
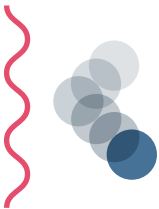
Curriculum reform making learning harder to access for some pupils

Interviewees cited reforms to vocational qualifications (practical qualifications relating to a particular career), the narrowing of the secondary curriculum, and fewer extra-curricular opportunities as contributing factors to rising school exclusions.

Fewer opportunities to study vocational qualifications

Research shows that young people studying vocational courses are less likely to be excluded from school, but there are fewer opportunities to study vocational qualifications than in the past, which could be contributing to rising exclusions.

Analysis from the Department for Education (DfE) suggests that sitting vocational qualifications is a protective factor for exclusion from school. [55] It shows that for pupils aged 14-16 sitting Technical Award qualifications, fixed-term exclusions are 10 percent lower, and permanent exclusions 62 percent lower, than their for peers sitting GCSEs. [56] This is surprising given that pupils from groups most at risk of exclusion are more likely to take these qualifications in secondary schools. For example, 53 percent of entries to Technical Awards in 2018 were pupils with special educational needs, despite making up only 15 percent of the total cohort. [57]

However, opportunities for pupils to sit vocational qualifications are diminishing. From 2014, the coalition government pledged to 'simplify' the vocational education system,

54. Sadler, K. et al (2018) op cit.
55. Department for Education (2019) *Non-GCSE qualifications in England: key stage 4 entries and absence and exclusions outcomes*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786775/Non-GCSE_qualifications_in_England_key_stage_4_entries_and_absence_and_exclusions_outcomes.pdf
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.

with only 'high value' qualifications counting towards school performance tables.[58] The effect of these reforms has been for schools to offer a smaller range of vocational qualifications. Today, fewer pupils aged 14-16 are sitting vocational qualifications: only five percent of total qualification entries in 2018 were for Technical Awards, a reduction year on year since 2015 when these represented seven percent of total entries.[59] Several interviewees used the analogy of 'fitting square pegs in round holes' to describe the effect of expecting all students to sit the same qualifications.

A more 'rigorous' curriculum

Since the early 2010s, there have been moves to make the GCSE curriculum more 'rigorous'.[60] Many interviewees noted that the difficulties some pupils had in accessing the GCSE curriculum led to a sense of not being able achieve at school, resulting in disengagement which increases the risk of exclusion. Specifically, they noted that the scrapping of modular courses and the shift from assessment by coursework to assessment through summative exams makes sitting GCSEs more difficult for pupils who struggle to concentrate in silence and those with literacy difficulties – interviewees for this project noted that the reading age for exam papers was often significantly higher than some pupils' reading ability. For those pupils who now feel unable to 'succeed', the risk of disengagement and, ultimately, exclusion may increase.

A narrowing curriculum

The Education Select Committee's review of exclusions suggested that curriculum narrowing may be contributing to rising school exclusions.[61] Respondents to their consultation noted that the focus on exam preparation often comes at the cost of a 'broad and balanced curriculum', a concern that has also been expressed by Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman.[62]

One example is the persistent decline in the number of specialist arts teachers and the number of hours spent teaching the arts in England's state schools since 2010.[63] As discussed in previous RSA research, real-terms cuts to school budgets, difficulties in recruiting and retaining arts teachers, and the de-prioritising of the arts within accountability measures may explain this trend.[64] This may have an impact on pupil engagement: some studies show that young people report greater engagement with school as a result of arts participation.[65] This was echoed in our interviews. For

58.   Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2014) *Getting the Job Done: The Government's Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/286749/bis-14-577-vocational-qualification-reform-plan.pdf

59.   Department for Education (2019) *Non-GCSE qualifications in England: key stage 4 entries and absence and exclusions outcomes*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786775/Non-GCSE_qualifications_in_England_key_stage_4_entries_and_absence_and_exclusions_outcomes.pdf

60.   Department for Education (2016) *DfE Strategy 2015-2020*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508421/DfE-strategy-narrative.pdf

61.   House of Commons (2018). *Forgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions*. Report of the Education Select Committee. 25 July 2018. [PDF] Available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/342.pdf [Accessed 18 December 2019].

62.   Ofsted and Spielman, A. (2017) *HMCI's commentary: recent primary and secondary curriculum research*. [Article] Gov.uk. 11 October 2017 www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017 [Accessed 29 January 2020].

63.   Department for Education (2019) *School Workforce in England: November 2018*. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018 [Accessed 18 December 2019].

64.   Cairns, S. et al. (2020). *Arts-rich schools*. The RSA [online]. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/arts-cultural-schools

65.   Education Endowment Foundation (2018) *Arts participation*. [PDF] Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/generate/?u=https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/pdf/toolkit/?id=128&t=Teaching%20and%20Learning%20Toolkit&e=128&s=

example, teachers in a PRU noted that art and design was a subject in which their students performed strongly, giving them a sense of achievement and making them more engaged with school as a whole.

Young people interviewed for this project also told us the benefits of this project for factors linked to exclusion such as pupil wellbeing. For instance, one interviewee reflected that studying drama "acts like a stress relief", while others commented that the arts had helped them to develop their confidence, make friends and gain a sense of belonging at their school. The links between arts participation and wellbeing are widely reported in research on the impact of the arts.[66]

Access to extra-curricular opportunities

Young people interviewed also suggested that limited extra-curricular opportunities further compounds pupils' disengagement from learning. One described the importance of having a wide variety of after school clubs available to students. He told us that basketball had been crucial for his engagement at school, that it helped him stay engaged with school by offering something that he could look forward to each day: "it helped me through, I completed school, I got my GCSEs." Others reported that removing access to extra-curricular activities had been used as a form of discipline, for example, being banned from sports matches for answering back in class. This negatively impacted their relationship with school.

There may be wider impacts of lack of extra-curricular opportunities. The Sutton Trust has reported that analysis of Millennium Cohort Study data shows that "after-school clubs, sports and physical activities were positively associated with both attainment and social, emotional and behavioural outcomes at age 11".[67] This suggests that there is a social cost to decreasing provision.

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Funding and resource constraints faced by schools

Throughout our research, school leaders repeatedly described that funding and resource constraints are making it increasingly challenging to meet the needs of students. The growing number of pupils in our schools with unmet needs may, in part, explain rising school exclusions.

Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has found that per pupil funding in England fell by around 8 percent in real terms from £6,539 in 2009/10 to £5,994 in 2018/19.[68] Interviewees explained that immense pressure on resources has forced them to make "trade-offs" in order to balance the books. As one former head teacher put it:

"when funding goes, there's no way to do it all"

For many, this has manifested in employing fewer support staff, such as teaching assistants (TAs). As one head teacher explained, 10 years ago there were far more "additional adults" on hand in schools. While the number of TAs in primary schools has increased, at secondary level the overall number of TAs has been in decline for

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66. Ibid.

67. Cullinane, C. and Montacute, R. (2017) 'Life lessons: Improving essential life skills for young people'. London: Sutton Trust. [PDF] Available at: www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Life-Lessons-Report_FINAL.pdf [Accessed 20 January 2020].

68. Farquharson, C. and Sibieta, L. (2019) '2019 annual report on education spending in England: schools'. [PDF] Institute for Fiscal Studies. Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R162-Annual-report-on-education-spending-in-england-schools.pdf [Accessed 6 January 2020].

many years, falling from almost 53,000 in 2011 to fewer than 46,000 in 2018.[69] In a study commissioned by the DfE, school leaders who have made cuts to their support staff over the past three years cited reduced funding as the main reason for doing so.[70] Many interviewees expressed concern that it is students with SEND and mental health issues, groups known to be disproportionately at risk of exclusion, who are most affected by the loss of such support.

Insights from our interviews reflect much wider concerns about the increasing difficulty of meeting the needs of the most vulnerable students. In a 2018 survey conducted by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), 94 percent of head teachers reported that they found it harder to resource the support required to meet the needs of pupils with SEND than they did two years ago.[71]

Providing this support may be yet more challenging given that the number of young people with SEND has been gradually rising in recent years. In 2016, 14.4 percent of the school population had SEND compared with 14.9 percent by the time of the 2019 school census.[72] Of the total pupil population, 11.9 percent receive SEN support, targeted support provided "within as part of the school's usual curriculum" for pupils with, for instance, speech, language and communications needs and learning difficulties.[73] Meanwhile, 3.1 percent have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), a document resulting from a formal assessment process which outlines a pupil's needs and the additional support they should receive to meet them. The proportion of children with a plan has risen since 2017, having previously been stable for a decade at 2.8 percent.[74] Pupils with an EHCP tend to require higher levels of support, for conditions such as autistic spectrum disorder, and schools are required to provide the first £6,000 to do so.

It is difficult to know whether SEND has become more prevalent among young people or whether we have simply become better at identifying and diagnosing these needs. Regardless, many have raised concerns about whether, with such squeezed budgets, mainstream schools will have the capacity to meet the needs of a growing pupil population with rising levels of SEND.[75]

Meanwhile, the high needs block is also under pressure. This funds provision for young people with SEND and alternative provision for those who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, cannot receive their education in mainstream schools (see terminology for more details). This is explored further in the following section of this report.
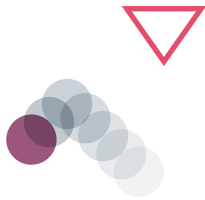
69.   Department for Education (2019) 'School Workforce in England: November 2018' [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811622/SWFC_MainText.pdf [Accessed 7 January 2020].

70.   Skipp, A. and Hopwood, V. (2019) 'Deployment of Teaching Assistants in schools: Research report' [PDF] ASK Research. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812507/Deployment_of_teaching_assistants_report.pdf [Accessed 7 January 2020].

71.   National Association for Head Teachers (2018) 'Empty Promises: The crisis of supporting children with SEND'. [PDF] Available at: www.naht.org.uk/_resources/assets/attachment/full/0/83670.pdf

72.   Department for Education (2019a) 'Special educational needs in England: January 2019'. [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/814244/SEN_2019_Text.docx.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2020].

73.   Ibid.

74.   Ibid.

75.   Thomson, D. (2019) 'Where have the pupils in mainstream schools with education, health and care plans gone?' [blog] 27 February 2019. FFT Education Datalab. Available at: www.ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2019/02/where-have-the-pupils-in-mainstream-schools-with-education-health-and-care-plans-gone/ [Accessed 8 January 2020].

Funding and resource constraints faced by agencies that support vulnerable children

Local authority representatives conveyed a clear message during this research: austerity and rising need are leaving them struggling. Across the education sector and children's services, many local authorities are finding that funding is not sufficient to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children: those with SEND, with a social worker and growing up in poverty. Part of the reason that these pupils' risk of being excluded from school is so great could be the lack of opportunities to resolve the underlying issues that lead to them struggling in school.

Council funding for education is calculated and distributed as part of the dedicated schools grant (DSG). This takes into account factors such as historic spending and population and is provided to local authorities as four 'blocks' of ringfenced funding: schools, early years, high needs, and local authority central services (for example, admissions processes). In 2019/20, 22 councils received approval to move funds from their school's block to top-up high needs. This is an increase from the 13 councils who had to do so the year before, suggesting that resources which provide additional support are increasingly strained.[76] As part of the high needs funding supports students with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), questions have been raised over how health and social care funding should work with the high needs block to avoid having to draw on the schools budget.[77]

However, this is not an easy solution, as these areas – particularly children's social care services – are also experiences rising levels of need. Making tough choices, for example, reducing spending on transport and adult social services, has offered some protection to budgets for children's services, but not enough to meet increasing demand. Between 2009-10 and 2017-18, safeguarding inquiries have risen by 120 percent.[78] The impact of this is visible in the budget: since 2015-16, councils have overspent by an average of 8 percent on children's services each year.[79] Funding pressures are greater in the most deprived areas: while spending cuts in the least deprived decile were on average 16 percent (£134) per person, this increases to 31 percent (£432) in the most deprived areas.[80] This is likely because there is higher demand for services and many are unable to supplement their income to the same extent through council tax owing to the cheaper housing stock in these areas.

Many council-run/supported services are feeling the effects of tighter budgets and rising demand, such as child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), which is jointly overseen by NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and the local authority. Within this complex governance structure, there appear to be difficulties

76.   Staufenberg, J. (2019) 'Revealed: The 22 councils given permission to top up high needs funding from the schools block', *Schools Week*. [online] 29 March. Available at: www.schoolsweek.co.uk/revealed-the-22-councils-given-permission-to-top-up-high-needs-funding-from-the-schools-block/ [Accessed 7 January 2020].

77.   NASUWT (2020) *Advice and Guidance on Special and Additional Needs Funding*. [online] Available at: www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/in-the-classroom/special-educational-needs/advice-and-guidance-on-saanf.htmls [Accessed 17 January 2020].

78.   'Safeguarding enquiries' refers to Section 47 enquiries which are for cases where there are concerns a child may be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm; IFS (2019) *English local government funding: trends and challenges in 2019 and beyond*. [PDF] Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/English-local-government-funding-trends-and-challenges-in-2019-and-beyond-IFS-Report-166.pdf

79.   IFS (2019) *English local government funding: trends and challenges in 2019 and beyond*. [PDF] Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/English-local-government-funding-trends-and-challenges-in-2019-and-beyond-IFS-Report-166.pdf

80.   Ibid.

ensuring additional funding is effectively directed towards CAMHS.[81] Through Freedom of Information requests, Young Minds found that 43 percent of CCGs had increased their CAMHS budget by less than the additional funding they had been allocated for children's mental health; it appears that some of the funding was spent on other priorities. However, in other areas, CCGs have increased their budgets by more than the extra investment.[82] This lack of a unified approach could form part of the 'postcode lottery' that mental health provision is often described as.[83] The waiting lists for CAMHS were mentioned repeatedly to us both by schools and by parents/carers who were struggling to access their services, describing that a child must be "in crisis" to be seen. Research by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) revealed that 26 percent of referrals to specialist children's mental health services were rejected in 2018/19; this amounts to approximately 133,000 young people, rejected for reasons such as not meeting the threshold for treatment or 'not suitable' for treatment by CAMHS.[84]

The EPI's report also raised concerns that these young people did not have access to alternative services, as many had been decommissioned over the past decade. The Care Quality Commission has found that in areas where this is the case, young people end up re-referred to CAMHS when their condition has deteriorated.[85] This has a knock-on effect in schools, with teachers trying to cope with needs they haven't been trained to meet. One head teacher described to us that schools must "prop up" other public services that are under strain. In an RSA-commissioned survey, 45 percent of teachers and school leaders thought that being able to access more frequent support from CAMHS and early help services would be one of the most helpful routes to reduce the frequency of children being sent out of class.[86] The IFS found a 57 percent reduction in spending per pupil by local authorities for services such as educational psychology, and SEN support and assessment.[87] Furthermore, adult mental health services are also strained; as poor parental mental health has an association with exclusions, this could place additional pressure on students who support their parents in this way.[88]

The local authority is also responsible for commissioning and funding the majority of alternative provision places from the high needs budget. However, rising exclusions have meant that some local authorities are struggling to provide alternative provision for students; meaning that more costly interim measures, such as online education services, have to be provided.[89] Furthermore, changes to pupil numbers and short-term

81.   Young Minds (2018) *Children's Mental Health Funding: Where is it Going?* [online] 30 October. Available at: https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/childrens-mental-health-funding-where-is-it-going/ [Accessed 14 January 2020].

82.   Ibid.

83.   Lough, C. (2020) 'Revealed: Pupils 'appalling' Camhs postcode lottery', *Tes*. [online] 10 January. Available at: www.tes.com/news/revealed-pupils-appalling-camhs-postcode-lottery [Accessed 6 February 2020].

84.   EPI (2020) *Access to child and adolescent mental health services in 2019*. [PDF] Available at: www.epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Access-to-CAMHS-in-2019_EPI.pdf

85.   Care Quality Commission (2018) *Are we listening? Review of Children and Young People's Mental Health Services*. [PDF] Available at: www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/20180308b_arewelistening_report.pdf

86.   The RSA (2019) *School exclusions: the teachers' perspective*. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/teacher-survey

87.   IFS (2019a) *2019 annual report on education spending in England*. [PDF] Available at: www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/R162-Education-spending-in-England-2019.pdf

88.   NHS Providers (2019) *Addressing the Care Deficit*. Available at: www.nhsproviders.org/mental-health-services-addressing-the-care-deficit/the-demand-challenge [Accessed 17 January 2020]; Ford, T., Parker, C., Salim, J., Goodman, R., Logan, S. and Henley, W. (2017) 'The relationship between exclusion from school and mental health: a secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys 2004 and 2007', *Psychological Medicine*. [e-journal] Available through Cambridge Core: www.doi.org/10.1017/S003329171700215X [Accessed 13 January 2020].

89.   Partridge, L. (2019) 'Pinball Kids', *Medium RSA Journal*. [online] 1 March. Available at: https://medium.com/rsa-journal/pinball-kids-fae8e62d894c [Accessed 14 January 2020].

planning can pose financial instability to alternative provision.[90] This can mean that the local authority has to step in; in 2017/18, £529,000 was spent by LAs across England on supporting alternative provision schools 'in financial difficulty', outside of general and 'top up' funding.[91] One head teacher related the pressures on public services to the "vicious cycle" that a student enters; they miss out on early intervention, so the situation escalates, and they are excluded. They are then distanced from their support network of peers, and often miss out on education for a period, meaning that they fall behind and their situation further worsens.

Case study: lack of mental health support

One mother found her son struggled with keeping up at school; his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder made it more difficult to concentrate and he was self-conscious about falling behind. His impulsivity also meant some low-level incidents escalated as he shouted back when he felt 'shouted at'. This led to missed lessons and fixed-term exclusions. Her son became increasingly anxious; although he'd been referred to child and adolescent mental health services aged six, he only received treatment when he eventually had a psychotic episode. When school staff said that they "couldn't cope" with him, his mother took the decision to remove him and look for somewhere else. However, much of the alternative provision they visited was full and she felt like the local authority had been able to do little but 'ask' schools to take him. She looked for advice and support, both for herself and her son, and found little as all services were at full stretch. Finally, after two years out of education, she found him a place at an independent specialist provision in another borough. She is aware that it must be very expensive for their home local authority and believes that "earlier support around the sides of the school" could help stop young people "disappearing out of the system".
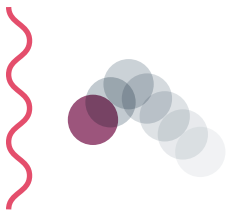
Unintended consequences of policy making

The final type of causes of rising school exclusions we look at here are the unintended consequences of policy and practice decisions. Decision makers set out to do what is in the best interests of children but their choices have unintended consequences. For example, the desire to improve standards in the education system through accountability mechanisms; to give autonomy to school leaders through the introduction of new school models; or to make the job of teaching easier by advocating for stricter behaviour management approaches. In this section, we aim to shed light on the consequences of these policy choices for some vulnerable pupils.

Perverse incentives caused by the accountability regime

Throughout our research, senior leaders and teachers reported that increasing scrutiny on schools in the last five years, including the introduction of Progress 8, incentivises schools to exclude pupils who are unlikely to perform well academically or who may

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90.   ASCL (2018) *Education Committee: Call for Evidence – Alternative Provision*. [PDF] Available at: www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Our%20view/Consultation%20responses/2018/Alternative-Provision.pdf

91.   Department for Education (2018) *LA and School Expenditure 2017 to 2018*. [excel] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2017-to-2018-financial-year

disrupt learning for other pupils thereby negatively impacting their performance.[92] The 2017 State of Education report found that 91 percent of surveyed school leaders felt the level of pressure on schools created by performance measures had increased in the previous two years.[93] While it is crucial to have quality markers to ensure all children are receiving a good education, and mechanisms to hold schools to account when they are not, interviewees frequently described how the pressure to perform well results in decisions to exclude, or 'off-roll', students who are seen as a risk to a school's performance. As one head teacher explained to us, it can be "tempting to take routes to get Progress 8 scores".

The Progress 8 measure, introduced from 2015, compares pupils' attainment aged 16 with the results of pupils nationally who got similar results aged 11.[94] It is intended to be a fairer judgement of secondary schools' performance because it takes into account a pupil's starting point. However, it has also been shown that excluding pupils can improve a school's overall Progress 8 score. Analysis from FFT Education Data Lab reveals that if Progress 8 data was reweighted to make schools accountable for students' results, proportional to the amount of time they spent on its roll, the scores of many schools and multi-academy trusts (MATs) would not appear so high.[95] This well-intentioned policy has inadvertently created an incentive for schools to exclude.

A student's exam results are attributed to the school at which they are enrolled at the time of the annual January pupil census. Many, including those offering evidence to the Education Select Committee's inquiry into rising exclusions, have argued that this incentivises schools to remove low-achieving or disruptive students before this point.[96] Data that the RSA collected through a freedom of information request supports these concerns. Our analysis found a spike in admissions to PRUs in the first term of Year 11 in 2016-17, the last point before a student's exam results count towards a school's performance.[97]

92. Astle, J. (2017) *The Ideal Schools Exhibition*. RSA: London. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/rsa-the-ideal-school-exhibition.pdf [Accessed 18 December 2019].

93. The Key and IPSOS Mori (2017) *State of Education SURVEY REPORT 2017 - Rising to the challenge: Examining the pressures on schools and how they are responding.* [online] Available at: www.view.joomag.com/state-of-education-report-2017/0676372001494577623 [Accessed 30 November 2018].

94. Department for Education (2019) *Secondary Accountability Measures*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840275/Secondary_accountability_measures_guidance__-_October_2019_final_with_ref.pdf

95. Nye, P. and Thomson, D. (2018) 'Who's Left 2018, part two: What impact would reweighting school league tables have for multi-academy trusts?' [online] FFT Education Datalab. Available at: https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2018/06/whos-left-2018-part-two-what-impact-would-reweighting-school-league-tables-have-for-multi-academy-trusts/ [Accessed 18 December 2019].

96. House of Commons (2018) F*orgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions*. Report of the Education Select Committee. 25 July 2018. [PDF] Available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/342.pdf [Accessed 18 December 2019].

97. For further analysis of our Freedom of Information data, see Partridge, L. (2019) 'Is pressure to achieve exam results contributing to school exclusions? Yes, new RSA data indicates'. [blog] 11 March 2019. RSA: London. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2019/03/exclusions-exams [Accessed 18 December 2019].

Admissions to pupil referral units by year and term
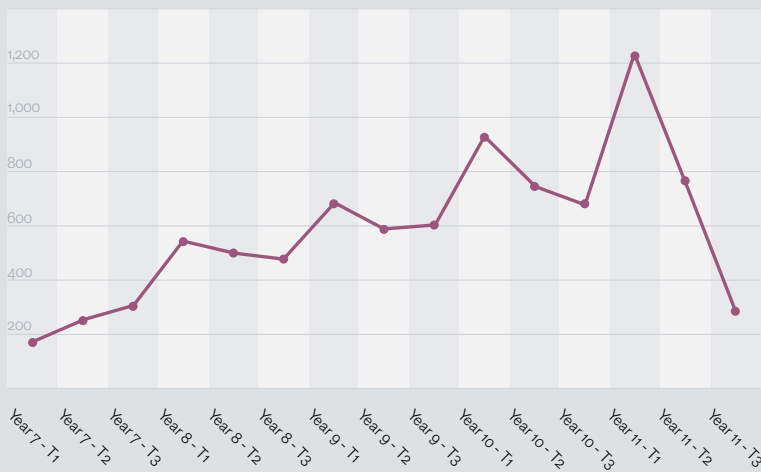
It is worth noting that exclusions are higher in the first term of each academic year than in the second and third terms. This may be because this is the longest term and therefore there are simply more opportunities for an exclusion-triggering incident to occur. However, the peak is highest in Year 11 and the numbers drop off definitively from the second term onwards, supporting the notion that pupils are moved from mainstream schools into alternative provision before their exam results count towards the school's performance scores. It also follows that there would be little point, from a 'gaming' perspective, in removing a child from a school's roll after the January census as their results will count towards the school's performance anyway, so it would be risky to entrust another school with the pupil's attainment.

In addition, we frequently heard from interviewees that school inspections might have unintended consequences. As one teacher explained, "you do the things that are judged", so outcomes not explicitly recognised by Ofsted, such as building relationships with students' families, are deprioritised. What is more, some interviewees described the incentive to exclude students whose behaviour might negatively impact upon a school's judgement: one former head teacher described how, amid pressure to bring their school out of Special Measures, "it was so tempting sometimes to make children disappear". Students, too, commented on the perverse incentives that schools face. One alternative provision pupil explained: "I don't think a lot of mainstream schools are particularly tolerant and there's a push on academic standards and Ofsted".

"it was so tempting sometimes to make children disappear"

This concern is echoed in national data. The 2019 Teacher Workload Survey found that 78 percent of secondary teachers and middle leaders reported that they spend "too much" time on general administrative work.[98] 35 percent felt that changes to school data tracking policies had increased their workload, compared to just 15 percent who felt these changes had reduced their workload.[99] The survey also highlighted the areas that secondary teachers wanted to spend more time working on: 34 percent reported wanting to spend more time on "team work and dialogue with colleagues" and 26 percent on "pupil counselling".[100] This suggests that teachers are not finding enough time to build relationships with colleagues and students in the current system.

Some schools featured as case studies in this report have risked their performance outcomes in order to pursue an inclusive vision. As Vic Goddard, co-principal of Passmores Academy explained, "by making the decisions we make, we make our job harder. And I have to trust the system that it's going to recognise that".

98.   Department for Education (2019) *Teacher workload survey 2019*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets. publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/855933/teacher_ workload_survey_2019_main_report_amended.pdf
99.   Ibid.
100. Ibid.

Many have expressed concerns that the current accountability system fails to reward schools' work towards inclusion, something that Ofsted have committed to addressing.[101]

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Fragmentation of the education system

Interviewees for this project frequently suggested that the rapid increase in the number of academy schools has led to decreasing cooperation between schools. Collaboration across schools in an area could limit exclusions in a number of ways, including by ensuring that pupils have opportunities for a fresh start in another school before they reach the point of permanent exclusion, and giving mainstream schools the best chance to provide for pupils' needs by sharing those with additional needs evenly between local schools.

The academies programme was introduced under the 1997-2010 Labour government. It aimed to rejuvenate failing secondary schools in disadvantaged areas, by pairing them with a new sponsor.[102] By the end of Labour's time in office, 203 academies were in operation.[103] The successive Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and Conservative governments have overseen rapid academisation; by 2015, there were 2,075 academies, representing 61 percent of all schools.[104] As well as the 'sponsored' academies introduced by their predecessors (now including primary schools and not focused only in areas of disadvantage) 'converter' academies have been introduced. Whereas the former are under-performing schools required to become academies by the government, the latter are schools recognised as successful that would benefit from increased autonomy in the academy system. In October 2019, 33.4 percent of all state-funded primary schools and 68.5 percent of secondary schools in England were academies.[105] Of the total 8,394 academies, the majority (6,051) are converter academies and the remaining 2,343 schools are sponsored academies.[106] The current academy programme aims to increase autonomy and flexibility for schools by allowing them to operate independently of local authority control.[107] Freedoms granted to academies include setting its own pay and staff conditions, curriculum and term structure.[108]
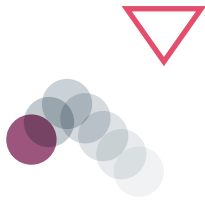
101.   House of Commons (2018). F*orgotten children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions*. Report of the Education Select Committee. 25 July 2018. [PDF] Available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/342.pdf [Accessed 18 December 2019]; Staufenberg, J. (2017) 'Ofsted inspectors urged to crack down on schools 'off-rolling' pupils'. [online] Schools Week. 2 March 2017. Available at: www.schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-inspectors-urged-to-crack-down-on-schools-off-rolling-pupils/ [Accessed 18 December 2019].

102.   Machin, S. and Sandi, M. (2018) Autonomous Schools and Strategic Pupil Exclusion. CEP Discussion Paper. [PDF] London: Centre for Economic Performance. Available at: www.cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1527.pdf [Accessed 20 December 2019].

103.   West, A. and Wolfe, D. (2018) 'Academies, the School System in England and a Vision for the Future'. London: London School of Economics and Political Science. [PDF] Available at: www.lse.ac.uk/social-policy/Assets/Documents/PDF/Research-reports/Academies-Vision-Report.pdf [Accessed 16 January 2010].

104.   Eyles, A., Hupkau, C., Machin, S. (2016) 'Academies, charter and free schools: do new school types deliver better outcomes?' *Economic Policy* [online] Available at: https://academic.oup.com/economicpolicy/article/31/87/453/2918412#56386799 [Accessed 20 February 2020]

105.   Gov.uk (2019) *Open academies, free schools, studio schools, UTCs and academy projects in development: Oct-19*. [Excel document] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844409/Open_academies__free_schools__studio_schools_and_UTCs_and_academy_projects_awaiting_approval_October_2019.xlsx [Accessed 20 December 2019].

106.   Ibid.

107.   Gov.uk (2019) 'Types of School'. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies [Accessed 19 December 2019].

108.   Ibid.

Critics have raised concerns about the impact of academies' autonomy on rising levels of exclusion. But comparing exclusion rates of different types of school reveals a more complex story. DfE data for secondary schools shows that sponsored academies are 1.5 times more likely to permanently exclude than maintained schools, but converter academies are less likely to permanently exclude than both their sponsored academy and maintained counterparts.[109] This suggests that simply being an academy does not make a school more likely to exclude, but that pressure to turn an underperforming school around might.

However, insights from our research reveals that the fragmentation of the system into distinct school types is creating the conditions for exclusions to rise. In a foreword to the 2010/2011 DfE review of the academies programme, the then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove MP argued that increased freedoms for academies allow them "to work together, and with their local communities, to do what is best for their children".[110] But many interviewees reported that the opposite is true, describing how an increasingly "business-like" model of school incentivises competition, rather than collaboration, between schools. As one head teacher reflected, "collaboration across the town has struggled since [the introduction of academies]".

Collaboration between schools is formalised through fair access protocols (FAP) in every local authority, which require leaders of all schools to meet regularly to agree the best placement for every excluded child.[111] Although FAPs apply to all schools in an area, many interviewees highlighted that, because academies are not accountable to the local authority, academy leaders are less likely to participate in fair access meetings than their peers. We frequently heard reports that even a single academy opting out of local exclusion processes can "destabilise the entire system", with many head teachers feeling that excluded children, who often have complex support needs, are not distributed fairly between schools. This reflects wider concerns about the diminishing role of local authorities, who cannot direct an academy to admit an excluded child onto its roll or intervene in admissions appeals. As Maggie Atkinson, former Children's Commissioner, highlighted to the RSA, local authorities "have a duty, but minimal powers of enforcement".

Fragmentation of the education system isn't only related to academies. Interviewees in parts of the country with a high proportion of selective schools, namely grammar schools, noted that this also fractures the system, adding an "extra layer of complexity to exclusions". While there is weak correlation between higher proportions of selective schools in a local authority and rates of permanent exclusions, DfE data shows that selective secondary schools serve fewer than the average number of students known to be most at risk of exclusion.[112] In 2017/18, selective schools had an average of 6.7 percent of disadvantaged pupils (compared to the national average of 26.3 percent)

109. Partridge, L. (2019) *School exclusions are a social justice issue, new data shows*. [blog] 6 August 2019. Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2019/08/exclusions [Accessed 12 December 2019].

110. Department for Education (2012) *Academies Annual Report*. [PDF] The Stationery Office: London. Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/175360/academies_annual_report_2010-11.pdf [Accessed 20 December 2019].

111. Department for Education (2012) *Fair Access Protocols: Principles and Process, Departmental Advice*. [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275580/fair_access_protocols_departmental_advice.pdf [Accessed 20 December 2019].

112. Based on analysis of Department for Education data: *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: LA tables* (2018) and *Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017 to 2018* (2019). Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2018 and www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2017-to-2018 [Accessed 17 January 2020].

and 6.1 percent of pupils with recognised special educational needs (compared to 12.3 percent) on roll at the end of Key Stage 4.[113]

A former head teacher of a comprehensive secondary school explained that being in an area with grammar schools, which admit many of the highest achieving pupils, meant that their school and other non-selective schools locally were admitted "more than our fair share" of students with lower prior attainment and additional support needs. National data reflects this, revealing that non-selective schools in highly selective areas have an average of 12.3 percent of pupils with SEN Support, compared a 10.5 percent average for secondary schools nationally.[114]

Case study schools featured in this report, as well as the RSA's own family of academies, demonstrate that many are working hard to foster collaboration across increasingly fragmented local education ecosystems. Workshops conducted by the RSA and partnering two local authorities found pockets of innovative practice in academies and maintained schools alike. But these instances are dependent on the commitment of individuals to taking approaches that resist the prevailing culture created by fragmentation.

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A shift in behaviour management

Parents/carers, teachers and young people interviewed for this project frequently suggested that rising exclusions were, in part, the result of shift to stricter and more inflexible approaches to behaviour management in schools. Their argument was that internal exclusion, fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion were being handed out for much less serious misdemeanours than in the past. This was also highlighted by the House of Commons Education Committee in its recent review on school exclusions:

"the rise in so called 'zero tolerance' behaviour policies is creating school environments where pupils are punished and ultimately excluded for incidents that could and should be managed within the mainstream school environment".[115]

Zero tolerance

The term 'zero tolerance' seems to have been coined in the US to reflect that schools would not tolerate a pupil bringing a weapon to school; indeed, they would permanently exclude any young person who did so. Under the Gun-Free Schools Act, introduced in 1994, American states had to introduce a law requiring schools to expel any student who brings a weapon to school for at least one year in order to access

113. The Department for Education define 'disadvantaged' pupils as children who are looked after or adopted and those eligible for free school meals. Department for Education (2018) *Key stage 4 and multi-academy trust performance 2018 (revised): Characteristics national tables.* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-and-multi-academy-trust-performance-2018-revised [Accessed 17 January 2020].

114. The Department for Education consider an area 'highly selective' if 25 percent or more of state-funded secondary places are in state-funded selective schools. Defined in Department for Education (2019) *Key stage 4 and multi-academy trust performance 2018 (revised): National tables.* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-and-multi-academy-trust-performance-2018-revised [Accessed 17 January 2020]; Department for Education (2019) *Key stage 4 and multi-academy trust performance 2018 (revised): National tables.* [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-and-multi-academy-trust-performance-2018-revised [Accessed 17 January 2020].

115. House of Commons Education Committee (2018) *Forgotten Children: alternative provision and the scandal of ever increasing exclusions.* [PDF] Available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/342/342.pdf

federal funding.[116] Research in 1997 found that 94 percent of schools had adopted zero tolerance policies for weapons or firearms, 87 percent for alcohol and 79 percent for violence.[117] Data from 2014 shows that only 5 percent of exclusions in the US were for possession of a weapon, while 43 percent were for insubordination.[118]

There is not such a clear history of zero tolerance in England, but academisation has heralded more specific requirements on schools to state the sanctions pupils receive for misdemeanours. The education act covering local authority-maintained schools sets out the requirement for schools to have a behaviour policy "with a view to promoting, among pupils, self-discipline and proper regard for authority", it is not prescriptive about the content of the policy.[119] By contrast, the legislation for academies and free schools requires that "a written behaviour policy is drawn up that, amongst other matters, sets out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour".[120] This is broadly in line with the US National Center for Education Statistics' definition of zero tolerance as "school or district policy mandating predetermined consequences or punishments for specified offenses [sic]".[121] Furthermore, the government's exclusion guidance makes clear that, while it is a head teacher's choice whether they excluded, they can do so for a pupil "repeatedly disobeying academic instructions".[122]

Of course, few would disagree that consistency in behaviour management is crucial to enable a secure learning environment. But concerns have been raised that in the strictest systems, students can build up behaviour points for low-level behaviour such as shouting out in class or being late, eventually triggering a detention, fixed-term exclusion or even a permanent exclusion. These systems are sometimes referred to as 'consequence ladders' and could be considered part of a zero tolerance or 'no excuses' approach to behaviour. These policies have gained support as a strategy to reduce disruptive behaviours that can interrupt learning and affect staff retention.[123] Proponents argue that consistency in sanctions supports a safe and calm environment, and the approach has received political support for its apparent ability

Case study: suspended from school

A 16-year-old boy who attended a secondary academy in London with a strict behaviour points system found himself accumulating up to eight points per lesson for failing to sit still and getting distracted. It wasn't long before he hit 20 points in a week, which led to an automatic three-day suspension from school. This happened on multiple occasions. Each time, his mum came into school to ask for work for him to do at home. They promised to send materials in the post, but he received very little. He was searching for something to occupy his time and he fell in with the wrong crowd.

"For the whole time I was in school, I was quite safe, like I said I wasn't involved with any gangs, I wasn't involved with trouble, but as soon as the very week that I got kicked out… it was one of the lowest times of my life and that's when I got stuck, got myself into the cycle of gangs and drug dealing and stuff like that."

116. www.vera.org/downloads/Publications/a-generation-later-what-weve-learned-about-zero-tolerance-in-schools/legacy_downloads/zero-tolerance-in-schools-policy-brief.pdf

117. Heaviside, S., Rowand, C., Williams, C., & Farris, E. (1998). Violence and disctpline problems in U.S. public schools: 1996-97. (NCES 98-030). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/98030.pdf [Accessed 05 February 2020]

118. Ibid.

119. Legislation.gov.uk (2006) *Education and Inspections Act 2006*. [online] Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/89 [Accessed 7 February 2020].

120. Appears in the 2003, 2010 and 2014 versions of the Education (Independent Schools) Standards www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule/made

121. Heaviside, S., Rowand, C., Williams, C., & Farris, E. (1998). Violence and disctpline problems in U.S. public schools: 1996-97. (NCES 98-030). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/98030.pdf [Accessed 05 February 2020]

122. Department for Education (2017) *Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England*. [PDF] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion

123. Williams, J. (2018) *"It Just Grinds You Down": Persistent disruptive behaviour in schools and what can be done about it*. Policy Exchange. [PDF] Available at: www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/It-Just-Grinds-You-Down-Joanna-Williams-Policy-Exchange-December-2018.pdf

to 'turn schools around' including in the 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto.[124] We do not know precisely how influential this narrative has been in schools, but research from Policy Exchange suggests that there is "growing support for 'zero tolerance' behaviour policies among teachers, parents and pupils".[125] And rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusion for persistent disruptive behaviour have increased by 66 percent and 80 percent, respectively, over the last five years for which data is available.[126]

The role of multi-academy trusts

Interviewees for this project reported that the introduction of multi-academy trusts (MATs) might have sped up the proliferation of strict behaviour approaches. They cited cases where a local multi-academy trust had taken a stricter behaviour approach across its family of schools, including specifying exclusions (internal, fixed-term and permanent) as sanctions for specific behaviours. Indeed, research from Ofsted revealed that in some MATs, schools' behaviour policies are based on a central template.[127] Almost half (44 percent) of all academies are part of a MAT, which vary in size; the majority comprise fewer than 10 schools, but a growing handful have upwards of 30 schools. Behaviour policy templates could be increasing the use of exclusions across groups of schools in some cases but of course, the inverse could also be true. Through our research we have also seen examples of MATs whose central guidance actively discourages exclusion.

Internal exclusion

The use of 'isolation rooms' as a sanction has also sparked debate. While it is not clear whether they are more prevalent in recent years, the use of isolation booths and rooms have been receiving increased media and public attention, and DfE research found that over half of secondary schools had an internal space designed for pupils removed from lessons.[128] Their use can be considered a form of informal exclusion, as they remove students from their lessons and peers, on occasion for significant periods of time. Although requiring further research, there is an argument that pupils who are in isolation might frequently feel a reduced sense of belonging at school, as well as fall behind in lessons; factors which could place them more at-risk of formal exclusion.[129] Some young people

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Case study: internal exclusion

Her grandson's transition from primary to secondary school was a concern for this grandmother. He had settled well at his primary school in Yorkshire, but she recognised that he was struggling with literacy and maths and had difficulties making friends. Secondary school began well. However, when he started in Year 8, the school became an academy and a new leader started. She holds their new behaviour policy responsible for damaging her grandson's education. Gaining 10 negative points a week would result in time spent in isolation, and these could be given for small infractions like forgetting equipment or calling out in class – things that her grandson struggled with. Soon, he was frequently in isolation for hours where he had no interaction with others, felt unable to access the work, and could be penalised for moving too much. Her grandson became more and more anxious, manifesting on his arms as eczema, and was unable to sleep. Now in college, she believes that the school's harsh behaviour policy and lack of understanding of her grandson's needs are the reason that he still struggles with writing and reading and contributed greatly to his mental health difficulties.

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124.   Bennet, T. (2018) 'Yes, school exclusions are up. But zero-tolerance policies are not to blame', *The Guardian*, [online] 26 July. Available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/26/school-exclusions-zero-tolerance-policies-disruptive-pupils [Accessed 16 December 2019]; Conservatives (2019) *The Conservative and Unionist Party Manifesto 2019*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets-global.website-files.com/5da42e2cae7ebd3f8bde353c/5dda924905da587992a064ba_Conservative%202019%20Manifesto.pdf

125.   Williams, J. (2018) op cit.

126.   Department for Education. (2020). *Exclusions Statistics*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-exclusions

127.   Ofsted. (2019). *Multi-academy trusts: benefits, challenges and functions*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817085/Multi_academy_trusts_benefits_challenges_and_functions.pdf [Accessed 16 December 2019].

128.   IFF Research Ltd. (2018). *Investigative research into alternative provision*. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748910/Investigative_research_into_alternative_provision.pdf [Accessed 6 November 2019].

129.   Department for Education (2019) School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf

we spoke to who had spent time internally excluded described isolation rooms as a "prison", and a head teacher stated that, "it's booths, it's bare walls. It's not a curriculum." 79 percent of teachers surveyed by the RSA stated that repeatedly removing a pupil from lessons was detrimental to their learning and progress.[130] In a survey of 47 MATs, more than half reported that pupils in isolation did not get identical work to their classmates.[131]

However, there is a case to be made for removing a pupil to receive additional support around their behaviour, or for a targeted learning intervention. Over three quarters of teachers thought removal from class was justified for this kind of support.[132] In these examples (see later case studies), the word 'isolation' is rarely used, instead seen as a form of inclusion. In DfE research, the difference between 'sanction rooms' and 'internal inclusion units' was highlighted, the latter being viewed as a way to prevent exclusion and allow the student some of the benefits of alternative provision, such as one-to-one support, while remaining in mainstream education.[133] As teachers require recourse when a student is displaying behaviour that makes it difficult to continue the lesson, or poses a safety risk, these spaces can be valuable for both students and teachers when properly staffed.

While clear and consistent behaviour policies are essential for creating a safe and mutually respectful environment, these policies should be considered by leadership to ensure they are supporting positive behaviour in all students, and do not risk a young person missing out on learning and becoming disengaged.

Discriminatory application of behaviour policies

During RSA interviews with excluded young people and their families, some interviewees shared experiences of discrimination within schools' behaviour management and exclusions processes. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people reported to us that they had been punished by their school for actions like "spudding" (or "fist bumping"). They felt that this was a part of how people in their community communicate with each other and that classifying this as a transgression led to more young people of BAME backgrounds being reprimanded compared with their white peers.

> **"There's so much culture barriers and that it's even the way we speak and the way that we just manoeuvre. In African and Caribbean culture, there's a lot of things that we do that won't necessarily be seen as friendly in a white culture, do you get what I mean?"**

Their experience seems to be part of a wider trends with media reports on cases including a school where the behaviour policy lists kissing teeth as a breach of behaviour code. Concerns were raised that this policy could lead to discrimination against black pupils because this way of showing exasperation originates from the Caribbean, while equivalent actions such as tutting carry no sanction.[134]

130.   The RSA (2019) *School exclusions: the teachers' perspective*. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/teacher-survey

131.   Staufenberg, J. (2018) *Isolation rooms: How swathes of schools are removing pupils from their classrooms* [online] https://schoolsweek.co.uk/isolation-rooms-how-schools-are-removing-pupils-from-classrooms/ [Accessed 20 February 2020]

132.   The RSA (2019) op cit.

133.   IFF Research Ltd. (2018). *Investigative research into alternative provision*. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748910/Investigative_research_into_alternative_provision.pdf

134.   Lough, C. (2019) 'Detention for kissing teeth 'risks racial harassment', *Tes*. [online] 18 October. Available at: www.tes.com/news/detention-kissing-teeth-risks-racial-harassment [Accessed 14 January 2020].

Young people with protected characteristics should be safeguarded from discriminatory application of school behaviour and exclusion policies by the Equality Act 2010.[135] Under this legislation it is illegal for schools to discriminate against a pupil 'by excluding [them] or subjecting them to any other detriment' on the basis of a protected characteristic.[136] However, research from the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) shows that many teachers are unaware of this duty: 'slightly [fewer] than four in ten teachers (38 per cent) said that their school had informed staff about the requirements of the Act, while a further four in ten did not know'.[137]

There is also evidence that teacher training insufficiently prepares teachers to work with pupils from a range of backgrounds. According to the latest DfE-commissioned survey of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in 2017, only 53 percent felt that teacher training had prepared them 'well' or 'very well' for teaching across all ethnic backgrounds, compared with over 70 percent in 2015.[138]

The young people we interviewed suggested that the problem is wider than simply training new teachers. They suggested that the teaching workforce does not include sufficient teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds and from the communities that the schools serve. Pupils described feeling that they lack opportunities to build trusting relationships with adults as a result. Indeed, 95 percent of teachers in English schools in 2018 were white, compared with 87 percent of the population.[139]

It is worth noting that it is not only pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds who experience discrimination during their education. Research from the Children's Commissioner also uncovered evidence of discriminatory practices against pupils on the basis of social class, gender and special educational needs.[140] This included differential application of behaviour policies, teaching pupils separately from their peer group and excluding them from school. We focused on BAME experiences of behaviour here as this emerged as a key theme in our research.

135.   The Equality Act makes it illegal to discriminate against someone on the basis of the following characteristics, which are 'protected' by law: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. See: www.legislation. gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/2

136.   Department for Education (2014) *The Equality Act 2010 and schools*. [PDF] Available at: www. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_ Act_Advice_Final.pdf

137.   NFER (2012) NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus November 2012 Survey. [PDF] Available at: www.nfer. ac.uk/publications/99930/99930.pdf

138.   Data from Department for Education (2018) *Newly qualified teachers: annual survey*. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/newly-qualified-teachers-annual-survey [Accessed 14 January 2020].

139.   Data from Department for Education (2018) *School workforce in England: November 2018*. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2018 [Accessed 14 January].

140.   Children's Commissioner. (2013). *They go the extra mile*. [Online]. Available at: www. childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/They_Go_The_Extra_Mile-.pdf

03

The conditions
for change
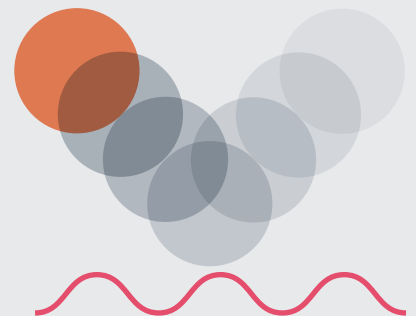
This project has identified various causes of rising school exclusions in England. They are complex, inter-related and some stretch far beyond the education system into questions about the shape of health and social care provision, and how we might eliminate poverty.

It would be easy to assume that these issues are too complex to resolve, but in our research we encountered much hope for the future of the education system and some concrete examples of approaches from case study schools, forward thinking local authorities and third sector organisations that could prevent exclusions.

We set about to identify the key conditions that would need to exist in the system to enable these approaches to thrive everywhere, not just where a small group of committed individuals were pushing to do something differently. There was much consensus from the experts we consulted through interviews, system change workshops and school visits. From their insights, we were able to identify five main conditions:

- Every child has a strong relationship with a trusted adult in school
- Every child's parents/carers are engaged as partners in their education
- Every child attends a school with an inclusive ethos
- Every child is assessed for learning and other needs throughout their school career and there is capacity to provide appropriate support
- We know where every child is in the system to ensure they can benefit from the four conditions above

In this chapter, we explore how we might remove the barriers to achieving each condition, what opportunities exist to achieve it, and best practice that could be built upon. We make reference to insights from interviews, school visits, workshops delivered in partnership with local authorities and existing research.

Every child has a strong relationship with a trusted adult in school

One unintended consequence of the accountability regime in England has been rising workload pressures on teachers, leaving less time for building relationships with pupils. Strong relationships are shown to have a positive impact on classroom behaviour, so would be expected to lead to fewer exclusions.[141]

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found that teachers in England reported the longest working hours in Europe.[142] Between 2013-2018, average hours per week rose from 48.2 to 49.3 for full-time secondary teachers.[143] However, it has been noted that this rise might be due to the TALIS methodology and other reports suggest that, instead of an increase, teacher workload has been similarly high for the

141. Education Endowment Foundation (2019) *Improving Behaviour in Schools*. [PDF] Available at: www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Behaviour/EEF_Improving_behaviour_in_schools_Report.pdf

142. OECD (2019) *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teaches and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

143. Department for Education (2019) *The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018.* [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/809737/TALIS_2018_research.pdf

past 20 years.[144] The 2019 Teacher Workload Survey found that teachers increasingly believe they are spending too much time on general administrative work (78 percent of teachers now believe this to be an issue).[145] Interviewees for this project noted that the pressure to collect and report data might limit the amount of time that teachers have for building relationships.

Interviewees for this project reported that it is particularly difficult for secondary school teachers to build strong relationships as they have less time with each pupil and substantial reporting requirements. For example, youth worker Luke Billingham described in an interview with the RSA that, unfortunately, resource-strapped public services like schools are having to become "more transactional, because being relational takes time". Moreover, there are fewer support staff available in secondary schools to support teaching staff in their efforts to build relationships, as they are the 'first to go' when budgets are tight, as discussed in the previous chapter.[146] Difficulties in building relationships are no doubt also exacerbated by high staff turnover in the teaching profession, which limits the opportunities for pupils to get to know a teacher well and build trust in them.[147]

In RSA system change workshops delivered for this project, the condition that our stakeholders most commonly identified as necessary for preventing exclusion was that every child should have a strong relationship with at least one adult in the school. They felt that ameliorating the unintended impact of accountability on teacher-pupil relationships would support improvements in behaviour and engagement in school that would, over time, reduce exclusions.

This notion is supported by guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) on how to reduce poor behaviour in schools, in which the authors recommend that "every pupil should have a supportive relationship with a member of school staff" explaining that "there is a strong evidence base that teacher-pupil relationships are key to good pupil behaviour and that these relationships can affect pupil effort and academic attainment".[148] Specifically, the authors comment on the role of a good relationship in ensuring teachers become aware of negative changes in a child's life before they manifest in bad behaviour, and giving the teacher the opportunity to mitigate against extreme reactions of the type that might result in exclusion.[149]

In the EEF's review, the authors explore a promising approach to building positive relationships between students and school staff: the Establish-Maintain-Restore (EMR) method. It consists of intentional practices to establish a relationship such as enquiring about a student's interests, proactive efforts to maintain the relationship such as sending positive notes home and repairing any harm such as through engaging in mutual problem solving. The authors note that this should take each staff member no more than 30 minutes per week and could be achieved during time that staff and students would be spending together anyway. Actions like these promote mutual

144.   Allen, R., Benhenda, A., Jerrim, J. and Sims, S. (2019) *New evidence on teachers' working hours in England. An empirical analysis of four datasets.* [PDF] Available at: www.johnjerrim.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/working_paper_teacher_hours.pdf

145.   Department for Education (2019) *Teacher workload survey 2019.* [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/855933/teacher_workload_survey_2019_main_report_amended.pdf

146.   Department for Education (2019) 'School Workforce in England: November 2018' [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811622/SWFC_MainText.pdf

147.   Henry, G. T., and Redding, C. (Forthcoming) 'The Consequences of Leaving School Early: The Effects of Within-Year and End-of-Year Teacher Turnover', *Education, Finance and Policy.* [online] Available at:

148.   Education Endowment Foundation (2019) op cit.

149.   Ibid.

respect and evidence suggests this kind of relationship leads to more prosocial behaviour longer term.[150]

In this section of the report, we will discuss the unique approaches that two schools – Carr Manor Community School and The Fermain Academy – take to developing strong relationships with pupils. We will also explore innovative practice by local authorities to support staff at schools in their jurisdiction to build strong relationships with pupils. Finally, we will propose three recommendations that would support schools everywhere to do this relational work.

Case study – the difference relationships can make

In primary school, a girl from London felt supported by her head teacher. However, her move to secondary school – one publicly recognised for producing good results and transforming its reputation – changed her experience. Her mum has borderline personality disorder and she found that her difficulties with this at home spilled over into school where she got into trouble with staff over her lack of focus and destructive behaviours. She felt that she had no-one she could trust to talk to. In her opinion, staff did not try to look behind her behaviour and find out what was going on at home. Instead, she was labelled as a 'naughty kid'. Escalation of behaviours led to repeated fixed-term exclusions. During this time, she got in trouble with the police. She believes that the turning point was getting into art and being supported by her art teacher. The first person in her family to go to university, she now works as a graphic designer and volunteers encouraging other young people to get into the industry.

Those recommendations look to build on the capacity that schools already have for pastoral work in middle leadership roles, but also at what can be learnt from other professions. For example, we think about what can be learnt from youth work, given that the way youth work is conceptualised, and youth workers are trained, focuses around 'building relationships of trust and mutual respect' with young people.[151] Indeed, youth workers are often found playing pastoral roles in schools, including doing targeted work with particular students in need of support.[152] Certainly, the young people interviewed for this project who had experienced exclusion noted the unique role that youth workers had played in helping them to mediate with schools in meetings about behaviour and exclusions.

We also consider how the teaching workforce might be more representative of the student population as discussed in the previous chapter. Research indicates that BAME teachers are well placed to develop 'caring and trusting relationships' with BAME students based on mutual respect and high expectations.[153] One study notes that it is problematic to assume that minority ethnic teachers will automatically become 'role models' for ethnic minority pupils; the strength of relationships built will depend on dynamics between individuals.[154] However, there is a general consensus that there are benefits to diversifying the teacher workforce including breaking down stereotypes, introducing more positive perceptions of BAME students and challenging institutional racism in schools, for example where rules unnecessarily disadvantage one group of pupils.[155]

However, we also note that more research is needed to understand which approaches to building trusting teacher-pupil relationships have the greatest benefits for student engagement and behaviour, and, ultimately, preventing exclusions.

150.   Obsuth, I., Sutherland, A., Cope, A., Pilbeam, L., Murray, A. L., & Eisner, M. (2016) London education and inclusion project (LEIP): results from a cluster-randomized controlled trial of an Intervention to reduce school exclusion and antisocial behavior, *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, [online] Available at: www.link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-016-0468-4

151.   Merton et al. (2004). An evaluation of the impact of youth work in England. De Montford University Press.

152.   Commission into the Role of Youth Work. www.nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Commission-into-the-role-of-youth-work-in-formal-education.pdf

153.   Villegas, A. and Irvine, J. (2010). *Diversifying the Teaching Force: An Examination of Major Arguments*. The Urban Review, 42 pp. 175-192. Available at: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11256-010-0150-1

154.   Carrington, B. and Skelton, C. (2010). 'Rethinking role models: equal opportunities in teacher recruitment in England and Wales'. *Journal of Education Policy*. 18:3. pp. 253-265. www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02680930305573

155.   Ibid.

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Innovative practice that can be built on to ensure that every pupil has a strong relationship with a trusted adult in school

School case studies

Carr Manor Community School, Leeds

Carr Manor is an all-through school in Leeds, serving 4-19-year olds. Carr Manor has 1,255 pupils on roll and more pupils requiring SEN Support, with English as an additional language and eligible for free school meals than the national average.[156]

Carr Manor is committed to building strong relationships between staff and students. All staff – both teaching and non-teaching – are 'coaches' for a group of around 10 students from a range of year groups. Coaching groups 'check in' on Monday mornings about their weekend and what is coming up in the week, have a mid-week 'check-up', and 'check out' last thing on a Friday to review how the week has gone. They sit in circles to enable participation from all members of the group.

Staff interviewed for the project said they find that, unlike traditional tutor groups, this format helps to facilitate a more relational model, even in a large school setting. It ensures that staff know students well and can identify issues in their home or school life before they manifest as behavioural issues. It also enables organic peer mentoring, especially between older pupils and their younger peers. Ofsted commented on the relationship between Carr Manor's coaching programme and strong relationships across the school: "the impact of this programme on relationships between staff and pupils and the inclusive ethos of the school are impressive".[157] Students we spoke to were also highly positive about the coaching group format.

Coaching group at Carr Manor Community School

One described her group as a "second family", while another explained that "you get to know one teacher really well… if there's a problem you don't want to speak to anyone at home about, you have that trust".

While Carr Manor school adopted a vertical tutoring approach, other schools have coaching groups or crews made up of pupils from the same year group.[158] Schools considering developing this model may opt to group pupils by year group for a number of reasons including the fact that the 'critical incidents' of education are different for the age groups (e.g. induction in Year 7; GCSE choices at the end of Year 9), staff need to have the experience and/or training on the concerns at each of these points and support strategies.[159] Proponents of vertical tutoring note the potential benefits in terms of mentoring across year groups but early evidence suggests that carefully structured

156.   Gov.uk (2019) *Carr Manor Community School, Specialist Sports College.* [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/108059/carr-manor-community-school%2c-specialist-sports-college/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 14 January 2020].

157.   Ofsted (2018) *Short inspection of Carr Manor Community School, Specialist Sports College.* [online] Available at: www.files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2786537 [Accessed 14 January 2020].

158.   For example, read about XP School Doncaster, discussed in the RSA's *Schools Without Walls* report: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/schools-without-walls

159.   Hamblin, D. (1978) *The Teacher and Pastoral Care.* Oxford: Blackwell.

activities are required to develop effective leadership and communications skills that support effective peer mentoring across age groups.[160]

The leadership at Carr Manor Community School note that the coaching approach has taken some time to embed but they believe that the rewards have been worth it. They attribute rising attendance and falling exclusions to this approach.

The Fermain Academy, Macclesfield

The Fermain Academy is an alternative provision free school for 13-16-year olds who have been excluded from mainstream school, with a particular focus on supporting young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school was shortlisted for Tes Alternative Provision of the Year 2019.[161]

Staff and students in shared common room at Fermain Academy

Opened in 2015, The Fermain Academy's physical environment was built to facilitate relationship building between staff and students. Each morning, students make themselves breakfast and hot drinks in a large room that serves as a school hall, canteen and social space. With no staff room, this communal space is shared by staff and students alike. During our visit, we watched teachers playing pool and darts with students at lunchtime. Head teacher Lee Cambray explained that this gives students opportunities to develop social competencies and, crucially, to open up to staff about circumstances in their home lives that might affect their behaviour and support needs. Under-used areas of the school have also been converted into spaces for students and staff to work together, such as a disused store cupboard now converted into a small room for one to one pastoral work.

The school's ethos is centered on fostering mutual respect and trust; something highlighted by Ofsted as contributing to its Outstanding judgement.[162] When we visited, we were taken on a tour of the school by three Year 10 students. Handing over his own set of keys to all areas of the building, the head teacher explained that it is crucial to "treat them as adults". Students we spoke to explained that they appreciate the relationships they have been able to build with teachers. One compared this to her experience in mainstream school where, because you only see teachers during class time, you have "no relationship". Another explained that teachers at The Fermain Academy are constantly checking in with students, so any issues are less likely to escalate. While this may come more easily to a small school offering specialist provision and a higher teacher-pupil ratio, staff at The Fermain Academy were confident that aspects of their approach to building relationships could be replicated in larger and mainstream schools.

160.   Best, G. M. (2014) *Activities and Prosocial Behaviour in Vertical Tutor Groups*. Institute of Education, University College London. [thesis] Available at: www.discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10018403/1/Graham%20Best%20Final%20Thesis%20for%20Publication%202014.pdf [Accessed 24 January 2020].

161.   Tes (2019) *Tes schools awards: Is your school on the shortlist?* [online] Available at: www.tesawards.co.uk/tessa2019/en/page/shortlist [Accessed 14 January 2020].

162.   Ofsted (2018) *School inspection report: The Fermain Academy*. [online] Available at: www.files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/2786535 [Accessed 14 January 2020].

Innovative practice from local authorities

Leeds City Council – restorative practice programme

Leeds City Council Children and Family Services Directorate is committed to a restorative and relational approach to working with families. This means that they will work with families rather than do things to them or for them.

The idea of restorative practice – influenced by work in the criminal justice field – is to rebuild and repair relationships where harm has been done. Restorative practice can take many forms. It may include reactive 'conferences', for example following a behaviour incident in class, in which the teacher and pupil involved would be guided by a mediator through a series of structured questions to explore who was affected, what harm was done, and how the relationship can be restored. Restorative practice also involves more proactive approaches such as regular meetings with all participating pupils and staff sitting in a circle to share feelings and ideas with each other, much like the approach to coaching taken at Carr Manor Community School (described above). To facilitate this work, the council offers schools access to restorative practice awareness briefings and some schools have accessed a more comprehensive training programme.

There is limited rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of restorative practice, but one high-quality study from the United States found that restorative practices led to stronger relationships with pupils and that suspension rates from school decreased in the participating schools compared with control schools.[163] Teachers also felt more positive about their working environment, suggesting positive benefits for staff retention. On the other hand, there was no impact on academic outcomes and the study did not capture reliable evidence on the impact of the approach on older (high school) students. The intervention involved two full days of compulsory International Institute for Restorative Practice (IIRP) training for all participating staff, which may explain the high rates of restorative practice use reported e.g. 69% of teachers said they often or always used proactive circles. One evaluation of the approach in Leeds suggests that practice is more variable between schools and some schools are keen to enroll more staff for training.[164] Given the positive early evidence from the American study, there is a strong rationale for further investment in the model, especially if it includes rigorous evaluation in order to understand the outcomes for pupils from this approach.

Greater London Authority – diversifying teacher recruitment

In December 2019, the Greater London Authority (GLA) issued a tender for an organisation to examine how they can recruit and retain more teachers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.[165] Currently, 26 percent of teachers in London are BAME compared with 81 percent of the student population. GLA-commissioned research found that the factor most commonly identified by BAME teachers that would make them stay in the profession is "improved opportunities for career progression". This was selected by 57 percent of BAME teachers, compared with 25 percent of their non-BAME peers. The work will include exploring how BAME teaching assistants can be supported to qualify as teachers, mentoring/coaching for BAME teachers and strengthening BAME teacher support networks.

163. Augustine et al. (2018). *Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions?* RAND. Available at: www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html [Accessed 20 February 2020]

164. University of Leeds. (Unknown). *An Evaluation Following the Introduction of Restorative Practice in Comparative School Settings*. Available at: https://resources.library.leeds.ac.uk/final-chapter/dissertations/llc/example1.pdf [Accessed 20 February 2020]

165. Greater London Authority. (2019). *Recruitment and retention of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)teachers project. Request for proposals*. [PDF] Available at: www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/bame_request_for_proposals.pdf
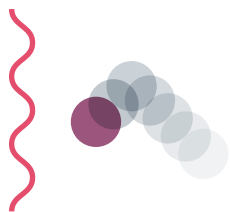
Their efforts may be supported by initiatives like the National Governance Association and Inspiring Governance's 'Everyone on Board' campaign which aims to improve representation of ethnic minorities on school boards. The campaign encourages people from ethnic minorities and those aged under 40 to become a school governor by demonstrating how their skills and lived experience can make a valuable and significant contribution to schools and the pupils and staff within them.[166]

Every child's parents or carers are engaged as partners in their education

Parental engagement in a child's education has been highlighted as a key contributor to success at school and could protect children against exclusion in two important ways:

1. Given the association between exclusion and familial adversity, understanding the child's behaviour in the context of the family's situation could enable the school to intervene early and so reduce the risk of exclusion for the child.[167]

2. Lower levels of parental support for learning are strongly associated with exclusion, which may be because of the impact of this on a child's own engagement with education.[168]

However, since the mid-2000s – as discussed above – there have been reductions in the number of support staff available in schools, including dedicated family support staff. In 2006, 68 percent of schools offered parenting courses and 70 percent offered specialist support to parents.[169] But schools report doing less work with families today since the loss of ringfenced funding for these services. For example, a 2016 survey of 1,088 head teachers found that less than half offered parenting support.[170] As a teacher interviewed for this project noted, teaching staff cannot prioritise parental engagement as much of their time is taken up with assessments and data collection – "the things that are judged" – leaving limited time for building relationships with families.

"It would be brilliant to work with parents in mainstream school, but it can take terms to build a relationship and there simply isn't the time"

There are also indications from our research that poor handling of behavioural concerns by secondary schools might contribute to further disengaging parents/carers. Parents of secondary school students interviewed noted that they have multiple contacts for different subjects, plus a form tutor and a head of year. One parent we spoke to felt that there was "no discretion" in how the school reported behaviour, with several different staff members contacting them multiple times a day. She felt worn down by the constant negativity, and believed the school showed little consideration

166. Inspiring Governance (2020) *Everyone on Board*. [online] Available at: www.inspiringgovernance. org/everyone-on-board/ [Accessed 7 February 2020].

167. Ford, TJ., Paget, A., Parker, C et al. 'Which children and young people are excluded from school? Findings from a large British birth cohort study, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)'. *Child: Care, Health and Development*. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10871/29521 [Accessed 5 February 2020]

168. Ibid.

169. Partridge, L. and Bath, N. (2019). 'Schools Without Walls'. London: RSA. [PDF] Available at: www. thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/the-rsa-schools-without-walls.pdf [Accessed 27 January 2019].

170. Ibid.

for positive reinforcement. This is supported by previous research, showing that lack of coordination between staff members may mean parents/carers whose children are at risk of exclusion receive frequent negative feedback about their child.[171] Rather than working in strong partnership with families to resolve the underlying causes of behaviour, the actions of schools may be contributing to further alienating the family.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) recommend that promoting parental engagement should be in the form of a partnership.[172] This should be built through a positive and mutually respectful relationship where, if interventions are required, parents/carers are made to feel part of the solution. For example, there is promising evidence from programmes which support the parents and school to take a consistent approach on behaviour.[173] As the most cited reason for exclusion is 'persistent disruptive behaviour', working with parents/carers to support and reward positive behaviours, as well as a consistent approach to more challenging behaviours, could reduce the number of children who become at-risk of exclusion due to this. Working together for a substantial amount of time, teachers and parents/carers can discuss problem behaviours, set targets and learn and practice strategies to be applied at home and at school. In some programmes, this is as a group of parents who can facilitate peer-support and make parents feel less singled out.[174] However, teacher workload can make developing these relationships a big ask alongside their classroom responsibilities, and some more intensive programmes require trained facilitators.[175]

In addition to thinking about the positive partnership work schools and families can do to prevent a child reaching the point of exclusion, we also need to give serious consideration to how schools work with parents/carers following an exclusion. Families interviewed for this project reported receiving limited information about their child's exclusion and feeling that they were powerless during the exclusion appeal process. This is supported by other research on parental experiences of appealing their child's exclusion, which finds that schools understand the requirements of the appeals process and know the others in the room, parents/carers can often feel out of their comfort zone and ill-informed.[176] In a survey by Coram, 38 percent of parents felt that the school's communication with them about their child's exclusion was very poor and 47 percent reported receiving an unclear explanation for the exclusion.[177] Legally, head teachers must provide parents/carers a reason for exclusion 'without delay', but Coram's research may indicate that parents are not aware of this and this undermines their

171. Davies, J. D., Ryan, J. and Tarr, J. (2011) 'What we tell them is not what they hear: The importance of appropriate and effective communication to sustain parental engagement at transition points', *International Journal about Parents in Education*. [PDF] Available at: www.uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/967848

172. Education Endowment Foundation (2018) *Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning*. [online] Available at: www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/working-with-parents-to-support-childrens-learning/ [Accessed 7 December 2020]

173. Ibid.

174. Mullarkey, S. (2019) *Second Chance Stories: Children and Families' Journey from School Exclusion to Therapeutic Alternative Provision*. [thesis] Available at: www.repository.uel.ac.uk/download/094e98d1d7d72b108a39c64a3645c63679083fff01f2d49d0d3a57fd15e3fa17/1772386/2019_ClinPsyD_Mullarkey.pdf [Accessed 31 January 2020].

175. Ellis, N. (2017) 'Parents, it's not we don't care about you…we just don't have time for you', *Schools Week*. [online] 29 April. Available at: www.schoolsweek.co.uk/parents-its-not-that-we-dont-care-about-you-we-just-dont-have-time-for-you/ [Accessed 7 December 2020]; the Incredible Years programme has been found to be effective, using videos to stimulate discussion and role play. However, it requires a trained group leader to implement the programme and lasts for 12 to 18 weeks. See The Incredible Years (2013) *Programs*. [online] Available at: www.incredibleyears.com/programs/ [Accessed 31 January 2020].

176. McDonald, T., and Thomas, G. (2003). 'Parents' reflections on their children being excluded', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. Available through Taylor & Francis Online: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13632750300507011 [Accessed 31 January 2020].

177. Coram. (2019) *Unfair results: Pupil and parent views on school exclusion*. [PDF] Available at: www.coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/School%20exclusions_full%20report_final_0.pdf

ability to challenge schools about decisions to exclude.[178] During the exclusions process, parents and carers also expressed to us a desire to be partners with the excluding school and local authority in finding the most appropriate alternative school for their child. However, families received limited information about the options available to them and therefore were not empowered to advocate for their child.

Although the benefits of increased parental engagement to prevent exclusion and to agree next steps if exclusion occurs is recognised, it is challenging to develop solutions that are achievable within the limited time and resources of schools and teachers. Some families might have less time or interest in engaging with the school and may feel stigmatised by targeted approaches that seem to have an undertone of reforming them as parents. In this section, we share innovative practice around engaging parents as partners from The Family School, Surrey Square Primary School and Reach Academy Feltham – the latter two schools were also written about in a previous RSA report, Schools Without Walls.[179] We also explore innovative practice from local authorities looking to support strong relationships between families and schools. Finally, we propose three policy recommendations that would support every school to work closely with the families of the pupils they serve.

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Innovative practice in engaging families as partners in their child's education

School case studies

The Pears Family School, London
The Pears Family School is a small alternative provision school in the London Borough of Islington, serving 5 to 14-year olds. It specialises in providing placements for students with behavioural issues, designed to prepare them to return to mainstream settings. Established by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, The Family School combines teaching and learning with a mental health-focused curriculum.

As the name suggests, family is central to all that this school does. Its vision is to "provide vulnerable young people and their families with a therapeutic, nurturing, as well as academically rigorous, learning environment".[180] As such, families are involved and embedded across the school's practices in ways that have been recognised by Ofsted as "innovative and groundbreaking".[181]

During our visit, we joined a group of parents, carers, teachers and therapists at the 'Parental Learning Hub', a weekly session in which families meet and are supported to better understand and manage their child's needs. In these meetings, families are invited to share experiences and challenges and learn from one another. Members of the group expressed their appreciation for the "support network" these sessions helped to foster, with one commenting that "it's like a big family".

178.   Department for Education (2017) *Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/641418/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf

179.   See Partridge, L. and Bath, N. (2019). 'Schools Without Walls'. London: RSA. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/the-rsa-schools-without-walls.pdf [Accessed 27 January 2019].

180.   Pears Family School (2020) *Head teacher's Welcome*. [online] Available at: www.thefamilyschoollondon.org/about/head teachers-welcome/ [Accessed 30 January 2020].

181.   Ofsted (2017) *The Family School London*. [PDF] Available at: www.annafreud.org/media/6723/the-family-school-ofsted-2017.pdf

Each session also involves an element of learning for parents and carers, who follow a 10-session curriculum covering topics such as child development, diagnosing a child's needs, and managing challenging behaviours.[182] When we visited, the topic of this learning was early childhood trauma and the importance of schools, therapists and families working together in a joined-up way to meet the needs of the child. After a short presentation from Brenda McHugh, co-founder of The Family School and consultant psychotherapist, families and staff reflected on the content, relating it to their own child's experience.[183] Parents we spoke to were enthusiastic about the learning available to them: one parent compared this to his experience with a mainstream school, where "they just tell you to fix your child" but are not able to offer support to deal with any problems.

As well as meeting with other families, parents and carers are invited to join students in the classroom on certain days of the week. For instance, they spend 15 minutes reading with a student and share feedback about their progress with the child's parents, and join their child for 'family learning', lessons that explore the school's values through topics such as friendship that are designed to develop pro-social skills.

Because of its size and specialism, The Family School can offer intensive support to both students and their families that is difficult to achieve in a large mainstream setting. Nonetheless, staff and families stressed the importance of adopting elements of their approach, such as incorporating a focus on mental health into the curriculum and equipping staff and families alike to understand the impact of trauma on behaviour.

Surrey Square Primary School, London

Surrey Square is a much larger than average comprehensive primary school in the London Borough of Southwark, with 473 3 to 11-year olds on roll.[184] It has higher than the national primary average of students eligible for free school meals (36.8 percent compared with 23 percent) and those with English as an additional language (53.1 percent compared with 21.2 percent).[185] Surrey Square became part of the Big Education Trust in 2018.[186]

During our visit to Surrey Square, senior leaders reported that around 15 percent of children on roll are living in temporary accommodation and, for some, their family's immigration status means they cannot access financial support or benefits. With such high levels of need among their school community, Surrey Square employs a part-time family worker (three days per week) whose role is to provide support for families around parenting, housing, immigration, and personal development. Building trusting relationships between family and school is central to the role, not least because families may fear being reported to the authorities or have had previous negative experiences when seeking support from professionals.

The role of family worker is currently held by Fiona Carrick-Davies, who explained to us that for students facing insecurity in their home lives, getting on at school isn't always straightforward. For some, these challenges manifest in behavioural issues, poor attendance and disengagement in the classroom. In this context, staff at Surrey Square are committed to supporting students' needs and removing barriers to learning, even

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182. The Family School (2016) *TFS Parent and Carer Learning.* [PDF] Available at: www.thefamilyschoollondon.org/uploads/2016/11/plp-website.pdf

183. Link to the video shown in the parental learning session: The repair of early trauma – a bottom-up approach

184. Gov.uk (2019) *Surrey Square Primary School.* [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/146117/surrey-square-primary-school/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 30 January 2020].

185. Ibid.

186. Big Education (2020) *Our Purpose.* [online] Available at: www.bigeducation.org/our-purpose/ [Accessed 30 January 2020].
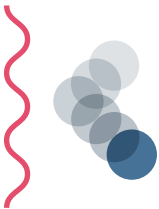
Display designed by parents and carers at Surrey Square Primary School

when this extends well beyond the usual remit of a school. As Fiona explained to us, "if something in your home life is affecting your ability to learn then we need to do something about it".

In interview, co-head teacher, Nicola Noble, gave us the example of a student whose frequent poor behaviour resulted in him spending many hours out of class and in her office. In time, they discovered that the child was homeless, hungry, his shoes several sizes too small and his family sleeping on the floor of a local church. She explained that these practical issues have easy solutions, such as buying new shoes and socks for the student, providing food bank vouchers and blow up mattresses for the family, and supporting the student's parents/carers to find a more suitable housing arrangement. With these in place, Nicola explained, the student's behaviour "transformed" and learning became possible. With improved behaviour, the student spent less time out of class and the risk of sanction escalating to formal exclusion for 'persistent disruptive behaviour' reduced.

Reach Academy Feltham, Greater London

Reach Academy Feltham is an all-through mainstream free school in the London Borough of Hounslow, serving approximately 900 students aged 2 to 18-years old. Almost half (44.9 percent) of the school's pupils have been eligible for free school meals at some point in the past six years.[187] Reach Academy Feltham is currently the only school in the Reach Academy Trust, which has plans to expand in the coming years.[188]

At Reach Academy Feltham, relationships with parents and families are nurtured early on. Before a child begins at Reach Academy, their family receive a visit from school staff. As well as allowing the Reach team to identify any students that might require additional support, such as in-school mentoring or referral to specialist external support, these visits allow the school to begin to develop relationships with families. This relationship is formalised by a commitment form, signed by student, parents/carers and staff, outlining that families and school are partners in "creating the best possible education" for children, and developed throughout the school year through social events for families. This family support work is overseen by the school's assistant head for safeguarding. This position, currently held by Georgia Crew, ensures that this vital work is represented at senior leadership level but does not rest solely with the head teacher. Working alongside Georgia are a family support worker and a pupil support worker.

For senior leaders at Reach Academy, the work done to develop strong relationships with families is essential for ensuring the success of their students, something they see as particularly important given that the school's intake is disproportionately from low-income backgrounds. As Ed Vainker, co-founder and executive head teacher of Reach Academy Feltham, explained to us: "the key thing is that we're not doing this from a moral standpoint. It's about how to get great results and win; to get the outcomes you're striving for you need to do that work with the family".

187. Gov.uk (2019) *Reach Academy Feltham*. [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance. service.gov.uk/school/138266/reach-academy-feltham/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 30 January 2020].

188. Reach Academy Trust (2020) *Our Vision*. [online] Available at: www.reachacademy.ovw5. devwebsite.co.uk/page/?title=Our+Vision&pid=19 [Accessed 30 January 2020].

More recently, Reach Academy has extended its offering, positioning itself as a hub for families in the wider local community to access support around antenatal care, mental health and adult education and employment. To deliver this, the school registered as a charity, Reach Foundation, in order to access funding that they otherwise are not eligible for.

Innovative practice from local authorities

Tower Hamlets Parent and Family Service
The London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council offers an extensive programme of school-based parental and family support. Family support workers can be allocated to a school daily, weekly or monthly depending on the levels of need identified at that school. The council thus provides a flexible resource for supporting local families in need across all the schools in the borough. Practitioners work with families identified by the schools as 'vulnerable' to identify issues that could impact on a child's engagement with school and their attainment. They work together, bringing in other agencies where needed, to solve these problems. One-to-one sessions might take place at school or may take the form of a home visit. Parents/carers and schools involved report improvements in behaviour at school and home, in attendance, and engagement in learning.

Rethink Formulation Leeds
From local research around the difficulties faced by some of the most vulnerable adolescents in Leeds, the council learned that that multiple referrals of children and families to different services was a common practice, especially when services were unsure of exactly what the underlying issues were or what would help. This meant that children and families experienced multiple assessments and that there was poorly joined-up thinking and planning around complex cases.

The Rethink Formulation approach was developed to bring together agencies to:

- Use one consistent approach to analysing information and understanding families' situations – the Rethink approach
- Support all agencies to have conversations with families and each other using the Rethink approach
- Grow multiagency knowledge and develop stronger links between professionals across the city.

The Rethink Formulation is a tool that is designed to allow the development of a clear understanding, using multiple perspectives, of any given situation. The tool encourages practitioners to consider together:

- The challenges and difficult experiences families have faced in the past
- What led up to these challenges
- Their strengths and positive aspects of their lives
- What might happen if concerns are not addressed
- Why their struggles persist, including why the approaches taken by services may be failing and how this can be improved.[189]

The Rethink team regularly facilitate 'Rethink Forums' wherein multiple agencies come together to learn about and try out the approach. All agencies in the city can attend Rethink Forums free of charge and they run approximately three times week across the city.

189. Leeds City Council (2017) *Re-thing Formulation*. [PDF] Available at: www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Rethink%20Formulation%20-%20Briefing%20-%20June%202017.pdf
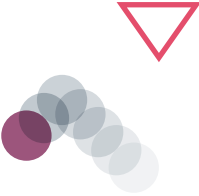
Additionally, the Rethink team facilitate 'Rethink Spaces' which are specific requested events organised around the needs of a particular family and specifically require the family and the entire team around the family to attend. These spaces are designed to help all those involved fully understand each other's perspectives and concerns and reach a common and aligned solution.

The Rethink team can work with any agency to help them use and embed this approach and are currently working with several schools.

Every child attends a school with an inclusive ethos

An inclusive ethos, spearheaded by a committed leader, can create a whole school environment that is inclusive to pupils no matter what their background, abilities or needs. A child who is fully 'included' – given a sense of belonging and opportunities for success – is far less likely to behave in a way that would lead to an official exclusion from school. But this is not about identifying the specific needs of a child who requires intervention; that is what we explore in the next condition for change (that every pupil is assessed early and continuously for learning and social and emotional needs and appropriate support can be provided). Rather, this is about the universal experience that a school creates for its pupils.

As mentioned above, accountability measures have unintentionally incentivised some schools to resort to unethical practices such as off-rolling students in order to improve their position in league tables.[190] In this context, many stakeholders interviewed for this project felt that it takes an ethical leader to create an environment in which all pupils, no matter their needs, can thrive. These inclusive leaders admit pupils of all abilities to their school and they wholeheartedly commit to holding on to these pupils no matter the consequences for the school's standing. However, when we talk about schools pursuing an inclusive ethos, we are not simply talking about schools that operate fair admissions and resist exclusions, but rather schools that do the important preventative work of actively including pupils.

There are some recent changes that support this kind of leadership. Ofsted have begun to take action against schools that they suspect of off-rolling pupils. For example, one school that had been rated Outstanding since 2013 has been rated Requires Improvement in a 2019 Ofsted report that raises concerns about pupils spending too much time in isolation and there being insufficient oversight over pupils leaving the roll of the school to go to the academy group's alternative provision.[191] Ofsted's challenge to schools who off-roll pupils is undoubtedly positive, but is not the same as proactively encouraging schools to develop inclusive cultures.

Research from Ofsted comparing high- and low-excluding primary schools in socially deprived areas found the school's philosophy was one of the main determinants of its exclusion rate.[192] Perhaps unsurprisingly, a school was less likely to exclude if the

190. Nye, P. and Thomson, D. (2019) 'Who's Left 2019, part one: The disadvantage gap is bigger than we thought', *FFT Education Datalab*. [online] 5 December. Available at: www.ffteducationdatalab.org. uk/2018/06/whos-left-2018-part-one-the-main-findings/ [Accessed 24 January 2020].

191. Ofsted (2019) *Inspection of the Farnley Academy*. [online] Available at: www.files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50130445 [Accessed 24 January 2020].

192. Ofsted (2009) *The exclusion from school of children aged four to seven*. [PDF] Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4175/1/The_exclusion_from_school_of_children_aged_four_to_seven%5B1%5D.pdf

leader did not believe that exclusion was purposeful or even morally defensible, and if staff had very positive relationships with pupils based on them valuing each individual and wanted to help them succeed. This chimes with our understanding of an inclusive education: an approach that considers and supports the needs of all students.

The promising development that might encourage more schools to pursue this inclusive ethos is guidance in the revised Ofsted inspection handbook that schools 'should have an inclusive culture that supports arrangements to: identify early those pupils who may be disadvantaged or have additional needs or barriers to learning; meet the needs of those pupils, drawing, when necessary, on more specialist support, and help those pupils to engage positively with the curriculum; [and] ensure pupils have a positive experience of learning and achieve positive outcomes.'[193] Our recommendation to Ofsted from this report is that inclusion should carry explicit weight in the grading of a school as it did in an earlier iteration of the inspection framework in order that the framework fully reflects the guidance to inspectors. Under the framework in the early 2000s, inspectors received comprehensive guidance on evaluating 'how inclusive the school is' which was the first criterion for assessing the 'overall effectiveness of the school'.[194]

During school visits for this project, teachers and students expressed the importance of being flexible and responsive to the needs of students in various ways including:

"Everyone's got different problems so you can't just make one solution for everyone" (young person)

"Real inclusion is about adapting our systems to adapt around you. Rather than focusing on whether children are 'school ready', we should be considering whether schools are 'children ready'" (Rohit Naik, Hope School).

An inclusive school puts in place school-wide practices that ensure the environment is one in which all pupils can thrive. imple actions such as school guidelines to ensure presentations and resources are dyslexia-friendly, can begin to embed this vision into each lesson.[195] Another important factor given how common it is for pupils to be excluded on the grounds of persistent disruptive behaviour is considering the benefits of positive behaviour management to creating a cohesive school community in which the risks of exclusion are limited.[196]

It is worth noting that interviewees reported that many pupils struggle with the transition from primary to secondary schools because there is often an abrupt change in ethos between the two educational phases. Transition between primary and secondary school can be an especially difficult time for some children, particularly those who have relied upon a strong relationship:

193. Ofsted (2019). School inspection handbook Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/843108/School_inspection_handbook_-_section_5.pdf

194. Office for Standards in Education (2000). Evaluating educational inclusion: guidance for inspectors and schools. Available at: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4455/1/Evaluating%20Educational%20Inclusion%20-%20Guidance%20for%20Inspectors%20and%20Schools%20%28PDF%20format%29.pdf

195. British Dyslexia Association (2020) Dyslexia friendly style guide. Available at: www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide [Accessed 27 January 2020].

196. Cole, T. (2003) 'Policies for Positive Behaviour Management', in C. Tilstone and R. Rose (eds.), Strategies to Promote Inclusive Practice. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

"Knowing the children...people wonder what happens between primary and secondary but it's quite simple if you compare the form tutor who knows their 25-30 pupils to the maths teacher who sees 200-300 pupils in a week."

Interviewees felt that there needs to be a support system in place so that the children still feel "held on to". Research supports the experience of interviewees who felt that issues, particularly conduct problems, occurred due to the stress of having to adapt quickly to a new environment: bigger classes, more rooms, and often stricter behaviour policies.[197] Therefore, transition work should be considered an ongoing process, not confined to the first few weeks, especially in cases of more vulnerable students who may require longer to adjust.[198]

Some students may specifically require intervention, or additional support, around literacy and numeracy catch-up as they start secondary school. In 2019, 27 percent of students began secondary school below the 'expected standard' in reading.[199] These students are more likely to experience a more difficult transition to secondary school, with potential for a range of lasting effects, such as lower self-esteem and persistent low attainment, as they struggle to keep up with peers.[200] The 'catch-up' premium allocated by the government for pupils who do not reach expected standard in maths or English by the end of primary school is intended help schools provide additional support.[201] While some trials such as Accelerated Reading demonstrate promise, there is still a lack of well-evidenced interventions. In fact, some approaches such as summer schools have been found to have little impact, despite the resources and time dedicated to them.[202] A well-managed transition can prevent declines in wellbeing, motivation and attendance. However, it requires a shift in thinking about the relationship between primary and secondary, as well as a commitment of time and resources.[203]

The following case studies illustrate where schools have gone ahead, as many have, in promoting inclusive approaches and visions without incentives from the accountability system. This includes exciting approaches to transition support for pupils, such as having trained primary teachers in secondary school. In order to embed inclusion in every school, however, the promising first steps of Ofsted and local authorities need to be supported, strengthened and sustained. This comes by changing policies so that inclusive practices, like those in the case studies, are rewarded in a similar way to academic results, rather than feeling like a risk by leadership.

197.   Theriot, M. T., and Dupper, D. R. (2009) 'Student Discipline Problems and the Transition from Elementary to Middle School', *Education and Urban Society*. Available through Sage Journals: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0013124509349583 [Accessed 29 January 2020].

198.   McLellan, R. and Galton, M. (2015) *The impact of primary-secondary transition on students' wellbeing*. Nuffield Foundation. [PDF] Available at: www.nuffieldfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/McLellan20-20Final-Report-June-2015.pdf

199.   Gov.uk. (2019). *National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England, 2019 (revised)*. [online] Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/851798/KS2_Revised_publication_text_2019_v3.pdf [Accessed 14 February 2020].

200.   Gorard, S., Siddiqui, N., and See, B. H. (2017) 'What works and what fails? Evidence from seven popular literacy 'catch-up' schemes for the transition to secondary school in England', *Research papers in education*. [PDF] Available at: www.dro.dur.ac.uk/19359/1/19359.pdf

201.   Department for Education (2019) *Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium: guide for schools*. [online] Available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/year-7-literacy-and-numeracy-catch-up-premium-guide-for-schools [Accessed 30 January 2020].

202.   See, B. H. and Gorard, S. A. (2014) 'Improving literacy in the transition period: a review of the existing evidence on what works, *British journal of education, society and behavioural science*. [PDF] Available at: http://dro.dur.ac.uk/12129/1/12129.pdf?DDD29+ded4ss

203.   Scottish Government (2019) *Primary-Secondary Transitions: A Systematic Literature Review*. [PDF] Available at: www.gov.scot/publications/primary-secondary-transitions-systematic-literature-review/pages/2/

In addition to our examples of schools demonstrating best practice in creating an inclusive ethos, we also include examples of local authorities that have supported schools locally to co-create a shared vision for inclusivity. This has even been formalised in places like Newcastle through a partnership that takes collective responsibility for the most vulnerable learners, sharing expertise between schools and providing challenge where needed to ensure that all schools uphold the values of the partnership.

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Innovative practice in creating inclusive school cultures

School case studies
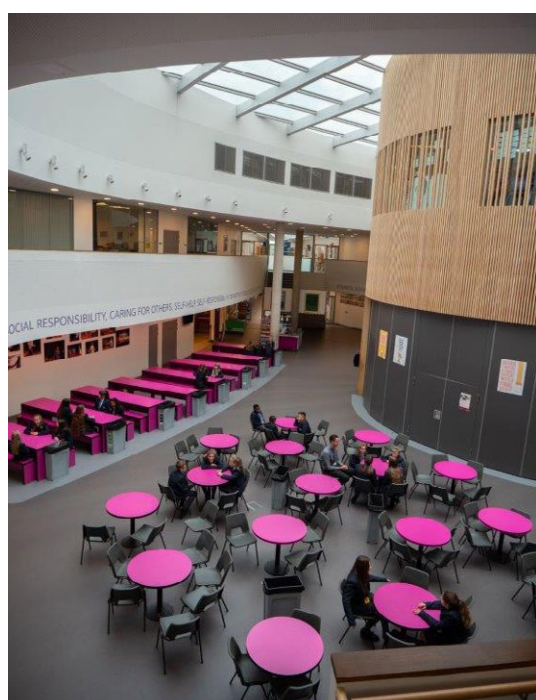
Inclusion Hub at Passmores Academy

Passmores Academy, Harlow

Passmores Academy is a comprehensive secondary school in Essex with 1,116 pupils on roll. Of these, 4.8 percent have an EHCP and 14.7 percent receive SEN support (compared to national averages of 1.7 percent and 10.8 percent respectively).[204] Passmores is the lead school in The Passmores Cooperative Learning Community multi-academy trust. You may recognise the school's name from the Channel 4 documentary series 'Educating Essex', in which it featured.

The centrality of inclusion to Passmores Academy's vision is mirrored in the physical space of the school building. Passmores' Inclusion Hub (pictured) stands at the very centre of the school's large atrium, designed specifically to ensure that "pastoral support is accessible and visible to all".[205] Inside the Hub, students receive targeted academic and pastoral support to ensure each one's needs are met.

Support on offer includes a bespoke maths, literacy and science curriculum for students requiring additional support, delivered by primary-trained teacher, Dawn Moore. During our visit, Dawn explained that secondary-trained teachers do not always have the tools to support a student with low literacy and numeracy comprehension. She felt that in a less supportive school her students would likely become disengaged, manifesting in poor behaviour and putting them as risk of behaviour sanctions, which might include fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

The school's commitment to inclusion is also evident in its daily operations, which are flexible enough to provide the support required by each student. This is facilitated by an Inclusion Panel, who meet weekly to discuss individual student's needs and to put a personalised plan in place for each. As Tina Baldwin, leader of the STEP Team, which offers early intervention for students demonstrating poor behaviour, explained, at Passmores "we do absolutely everything we can to keep [students] here". She gave the example of a Year 10 student who, owing to a turbulent relationship with her form tutor, registers for the school day at the Inclusion Hub. The same student told us that she probably wouldn't be in school if it wasn't for the relationships, she and her family have with staff at the Inclusion Hub.

Passmores' approach to creating an inclusive environment can also be seen in its specialist provision, namely its on-site Autism Hub. The school receives funding to

204. Gov.uk (2019) *Passmores Academy*. [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/137445/passmores-academy/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 14 January 2020].
205. Jestico + Whiles (2020) *Projects: Passmores Academy*. [online] Available at: www.jesticowhiles.com/projects/passmores-academy/ [Accessed 14 January 2020].

Welfare Centre at Towers School

deliver specialist provision for 15 students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) but regularly have more on roll, for whom they find funding within the school's own budget. Each student at the Autism Hub receives a tailored timetable, splitting their time between mainstream and Hub classes as required. During our visit to the Hub, co-principal Vic Goddard highlighted the importance of creating a calm learning environment with clear transitions through the school building. A few minutes before the start of the next lesson, this was demonstrated as students put ear defenders on and lined up at the door with staff members, ready to move into the school for their next lessons. Crucially, Vic stressed that these everyday inclusive practices benefit all students, not only those with ASD: "if a classroom is set up to cater for an autistic student's needs, it's set up to cater for every student".

Towers School and Sixth Form Centre, Ashford

Towers School and Sixth Form Centre is a comprehensive secondary school in Kent, serving students aged 11 to 19 years old. It is a standalone academy with 1,083 pupils on roll and serves more pupils eligible for free school meals than the national average (31.6 percent compared to 27.7 percent).[206]

During our visit, principal Richard Billings explained that at Towers School inclusion means "providing an education for every single student and never going down the route of permanent exclusion". In order to achieve this, Towers has an extensive 'welfare' offering for its students, provided at its dedicated Welfare Centre (pictured). Unlike at Passmores Academy in Essex where the Inclusion Hub sits inside the main school building, Towers' Welfare Centre is located in its own distinct building on the school site.

The Welfare Centre offers interventions such as resilience training, anxiety and anger management groups and support for self-harm. While some students choose to self-refer to the Welfare Centre, others are referred by their welfare manager, a non-teaching member of staff responsible for the wellbeing of a specific year group. Welfare managers meet with students weekly, are on-hand at break and lunch times, and have direct email and telephone contact with students and their families. The students we spoke to were appreciative of the support on offer from welfare managers, who they felt "try to get to know you". During our visit, Year 7 welfare manager Anmari Clarke explained that she had recently been out visiting their incoming Year 6 cohort to find out about their needs and family circumstances.

Staff use BehaviourWatch software to record and monitor pupils' attendance, behaviour and interventions that they have accessed. This software has been adapted from a base model so that staff are able to attach full narrative notes, something welfare staff explained is useful when they are making referrals to social work and other services.

Senior leaders explained to us that, at Towers 'inclusion' means having one set of rules and expectations for all students. This builds on the school's ethos of being 'strict because we care'. Principal Richard Billings told us that they have seen students

206.   Gov.uk (2019) *Towers School and Sixth Form Centre*. [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/136583/towers-school-and-sixth-form-centre/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 14 January 2020].

with ASD and ADHD "flourish" under this ethos, as they benefit from having firm boundaries in place. Students we spoke to were generally positive about the environment for learning these boundaries help to create, but did highlight that certain rules – such as the requirement for students to spend part of their lunchtimes sat in tutor groups – did not suit everybody.

Co-op Academy Leeds and Co-op Academies Trust

Co-op Academy Leeds is a comprehensive secondary school and Sixth Form in Harehills, Leeds. The school serves 900 pupils and has a higher than average number of students with English as an additional language (73 percent compared with 16.9 percent) and eligible for free school meals (62.1 percent students compared with 27.7 percent).[207] The school is part of Co-op Academies Trust, a MAT with 24 schools across the north of England.[208]

For Co-op Academies Trust, being inclusive means that a school must serve its local community and all within it. Schools within the Trust are expected to work to Co-op ethical values: openness, honesty, social responsibility and caring for others.[209] These values run through each Co-op academy's approach to inclusion. We visited Co-op Academy Leeds, a school that has made inclusion central to its vision in various ways to meet the needs of all students, despite increasing external pressures.

During our visit, head teacher Jonny Mitchell explained that under budgetary constraints, he has used the 'what if absent' principle to prioritise the kinds of support that students cannot do without: a full-time Safer Schools Officer (funded jointly by the school and the police), a school counsellor, English as an additional language (EAL) teachers and interpreters. Jonny has also invested in arts teachers, as he believes subjects such as performing arts can develop students' confidence, and continues to offer alternative qualifications, such as ASDAN and Prince's Trust, even though these go unrecognised in official league tables.[210]

The school has also developed its own alternative provision, 'Frank's Place' (named after former CEO of the Co-op Academies Trust, Frank Norris), for students who struggle in a mainstream setting. This provision is located off-site on a nearby business park, approximately 1.5 miles away from the main school site. Although it is separate, students are expected to adhere to the same rules and wear the same school uniform as those at the main site. One Year 11 student told us that because of this, "you still feel as if you're in the school". Students at Frank's Place have the same wide range of subjects and qualifications available to them as their peers in the mainstream school.

207.   Gov.uk (2019) *Co-op Academy Leeds.* [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance. service.gov.uk/school/137065/co-op-academy-leeds/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 14 January 2020].

208.   Co-op Academies (2020) *Our Academies.* [online] Available at: www.coopacademies.co.uk/about-us/ouracademies/ [Accessed 14 January 2020].

209.   Co-op Academies (2020) *Our Values.* [online] Available at: www.coopacademies.co.uk/about-us/our-values/ [Accessed 14 January 2020].

210.   ASDAN focuses on developing students' personal, social and work-related abilities. It offers a range of qualifications for students working at different levels, including some equivalent in size to GCSEs and A/AS-Level options. Although ASDAN qualifications are not included in school league tables, research has found "statistically significant association with improved attainment in GCSE qualifications", particularly for students with SEND, from BAME communities and those eligible for free school meals. See ASDAN (2016) 'Building a culture of achievement: the impact of the pursuit of CoPE (the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) on GCSE attainment and engagement in learning'. Bristol: ASDAN. [PDF] Available at: https://asset.asdan.org.uk/54b3e9c1ac261 [Accessed 29 January 2020]; The Prince's Trust qualifications are aimed at recognising skills, qualities and attitudes valued by employers, such as presentation skills and customer service. Students can complete units or the full programme to earn the Prince's Trust Award, Certificate and Diploma in Personal Development and Employability Skills (PDE). See The Prince's Trust (2020) *Prince's Trust Qualifications.* [online] Available at: www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/qualifications [Accessed 30 January 2020].

For instance, a student we spoke to was studying for seven GCSEs, where in a previous alternative provision setting, he was only offered English and maths. Having this range of opportunities available to him and, crucially, support from teaching staff to access them, has helped to rebuild his confidence, so much so that he now aspires to go to college and train to become a psychologist.

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Local authority approaches to supportive inclusive schools

Child Friendly Leeds

Leeds City Council aims to be a 'Child Friendly City' which they define as "the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in – a place where children are valued, supported, enjoy living and can look forward to a bright future". When Leeds first set out its vision, thousands of young people of all different ages were asked what they thought would make Leeds a better city for them to play, live and grow up in and their feedback was collated to form '12 wishes'.[211]

A strong and growing network of Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors, made up of representatives from businesses, schools, and third sector organisations, support this ambition and the 12 wishes. Some ambassadors make financial or in-kind contributions to improve the lives of vulnerable children and young people in Leeds through, for example, offering enrichment opportunities for looked after children and care leavers, activity days for foster families, and by sponsoring prizes and events such as the annual Child Friendly Leeds Awards. The awards celebrate the achievements of young people and the individuals and organisations who support them.

Ambassadors are supportive of Leeds City Council's focus on improving the '3 As' for all children and young people in the city. These are to:

- Attend their school or education setting regularly
- Achieve socially at school, e.g. through having friends, a good relationship with at least one trusted adult, and participating in extra-curricular activities
- Attain – to be supported to reach their academic potential.

Norwich Inclusion Charter

As part of the Opportunity Areas initiative, Norwich produced an Inclusion Charter which outlines its commitment to improving inclusivity. This includes partnerships between schools and agencies, commissioned work with young people and families, and development of school action plans to support inclusion.[212] The Charter is part of their aim to reduce the level of exclusions by two thirds from 2017 to 2020. Although there is limited data, the commitment appears promising with a drop from 61 permanent exclusions in 2016/17 to 41 in 2017/18 – a significant decrease compared to other areas of Norfolk.[213]

Lincolnshire Learning Partnership

In 2014, Lincolnshire County Council started to develop the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership, which aimed to create a school-led improvement system based on a shared

211. Leeds.gov.uk (2020) *12 Wishes* [online] Available at: www.leeds.gov.uk/childfriendlyleeds/cfl-the-story/12-wishes [Accessed 20 February 2020]

212. Norwich Opportunity Area (2018) *Norwich Inclusion Charter.* [PDF] Available at: https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/inclusion/

213. Norfolk County Council (2018) *Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions.* [powerpoint] Available at: http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/view/ncc184874 [Accessed 24 January 2020].

moral purpose between local schools and the local authority. The partnership would be spearheaded by a board that would meet six times per year and include representatives from primary, secondary and special schools and the Council.

The Staff College – the organisation that provides professional development to those working in local authority children's services – provided support to the founding board members to develop their shared purpose and design their governance structure and working practices. Over the course of two residentials, they established the following principles:

- All children and schools in Lincolnshire are our collective responsibility
- Every child and school are known, valued and supported to achieve
- No school is more important than an individual child's needs

At the time of the development of the partnership and its board, Lincolnshire was considered one of the highest excluding local authorities in the country: in 2013/14, the permanent exclusion rate for the county was 2.5 times the national average.[214] The partnership were able to be part of a working group tasked with developing a new Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy to "build resilience across all schools to support all pupils, promote collective responsibility and reduce exclusion".[215] This included designing a new 'ladder of behaviour intervention', which outlined the commitment all schools would make to identifying and meeting behavioural needs in schools and the point at which additional intervention would be offered. Thanks to the work that had been done through the partnership to develop a sense of collective responsibility, the implementation of the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy has been successful. Lincolnshire's permanent exclusion rate has decreased substantially in recent years. It was in line with the national average in 2017/18. At the time of publication of this report, permanent exclusions for 2018/19 were down by a third compared with the same time in the previous academic year.
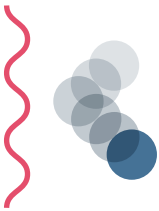
Newcastle Promise Board

Newcastle City Council identified a need for a formal partnership between schools across the city to enable them to have a unified voice in and provide mutual support around school improvement.[216] Throughout 2017, an initial group of representatives of local schools and the council were supported by The Staff College to develop a vision to create "a city where we all share responsibility for providing the best educational opportunities for all our children and young people".[217] They called this the 'Newcastle Promise'. The promise came from a collective agreement that:

- Education is the pathway out of poverty, especially for our most vulnerable pupils
- We have a shared moral purpose that we do not leave any school behind
- Collaboration makes all of us stronger

This promise was proposed to all head teachers who subsequently agreed to create a board that would ensure that schools were represented, and collectively supported and challenged, to deliver the vision.

214.   Gov.uk. (2020). *Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2013 to 2014 – Local authority tables*. [online]. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2013-to-2014

215.   Lincolnshire County Council. (2015). *Inclusive Lincolnshire: a strategy to build resilience across all schools to support all pupils, promote collective responsibility and reduce exclusion*. December 2015.

216.   Newcastle City Council. (2020). *Newcastle Promise Board*. Services to Schools. [webpage]. Available at: http://www.servicestoschools.org.uk/Services/4423

217.   Newcastle City Council. (2020). *The Newcastle Promise (full)*. [online]. Available at: http://www. servicestoschools.org.uk/Pages/Download/d4f30781-1eae-42f6-8f03-1362365c1f92

The Board is made up of local authority representatives and school leaders who represent a geographical area or a school trust. They meet six times per year and discuss issues including patterns in exclusion and home education and work to develop shared approaches that the partnership can implement. The Board have a strong commitment to promoting the principles of inclusion within all Newcastle schools, and an Inclusion sub-group has been established to focus on this.[218] The subgroup also meets six times per year and includes representation from health and social care alongside school leaders and local authority representatives. Their work to date includes developing an Inclusion Quality Framework for schools in the city.[219] The criteria to become an 'advanced' school under the framework include having "bespoke systems in place to prevent exclusions" and "supporting other schools in relation to exclusions through the sharing of best practice". The meeting minutes show schools sharing their exclusions data and best practice.[220] Feedback from this group is shared at meetings of the Newcastle Promise Board.
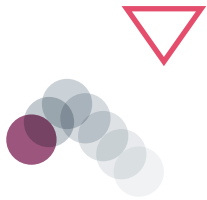
Every pupil is assessed early and continuously for learning and social and emotional needs and appropriate support can be provided

Timely assessment can enable interventions to be put in place that support a pupil to be successful at school. On the contrary, if learning and social and emotional needs go unidentified, they could manifest as challenging behaviours and subsequently lead to exclusions. Indeed, it seems that many pupils whose needs have gone unidentified turn up in alternative provision. An educational psychologist interviewed for this project reported that they spend a lot of their time assessing students for mental health needs after they have been excluded and arrive in alternative provision schools. "We've become a reactive, rather than a preventative service, which is incredibly frustrating really", she said. Throughout our research, two areas of need were repeatedly identified as risk factors for exclusion if not identified and supported: speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), and adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and trauma.

Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)
Research has highlighted the links between late identification of learning needs and exclusion. Specifically, concerns have been raised over the number of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) being excluded.[221]

218. Newcastle City Council. (2020). *Newcastle Promise Board: Inclusion subgroup.* [webpage]. Available at: http://www.servicestoschools.org.uk/Page/10633

219. Newcastle City Council. (2020). *Inclusion Quality Framework: A self-evaluation tool for schools and settings in relation to SEN, disability and vulnerable learners.* [online]. Available at: http://www.servicestoschools.org.uk/Pages/Download/b6b0f346-e3b5-4dde-92d3-b8e99e9169ca

220. Inclusion subgroup minutes are available via Newcastle City Council. (2020). *Newcastle Promise Board: Inclusion subgroup.* [webpage] http://www.servicestoschools.org.uk/Page/10633

221. Clegg, J., Stackhouse, J., Finch, K., Murphy, C., and Nicholls, S. (2009) 'Language abilities of secondary age pupils at risk of school exclusion: A preliminary report', *Child Language Teaching and Therapy.* Available through Sage Journals: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0265659008098664 [Accessed 28 January 2020].

Without identification and support, pupils with auditory working memory deficit struggle to process verbal information including classroom instructions. This can manifest as 'not following' rules, and this special educational need has been linked to exclusion. One study found that pupils excluded from primary school had poorer auditory working memory than their peers.[222] The same study found that excluded pupils were significantly impaired in verbal communication (such as struggling to express themselves) compared with non-excluded peers, and these pupils had more emotional symptoms such as having many fears or being easily scared.

Similarly, a study of secondary pupils who had experienced a least three fixed-term exclusions and were therefore deemed at risk of permanent exclusion found that for a 'high proportion' of these pupils, 'language difficulties are a factor in their behaviour problems and school exclusion'.[223] These pupils did not have a statement for their needs (they had not been formally identified) and they were not currently receiving speech and language therapy. One had previously had therapy for a stammer, but the study noted that the other participants may not have been referred for assessment and support specifically because they did not have a presenting speech difficulty. The Centre for Social Justice suggests that the issue of SLCN going unidentified is heightened due to a lack of requirements for measuring and monitoring communication skills in primary and secondary schools, meaning these needs go unrecognised.[224]

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and trauma

Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) such as abuse, neglect and witnessing domestic violence – sometimes referred to as childhood trauma – can present in the classroom as disruptive behaviour, due to the complex social, emotional and mental health needs that they can involve.

ACEs can cause lasting trauma which has a range of impacts, including being more at-risk of poor mental health. Secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys found a bi-directional association between psychological distress and exclusion; being excluded may contribute to a deterioration of psychological wellbeing, just as underlying or developing psychological issues increase the risk of exclusion.[225] While ACEs do not have to determine a child's future, these children may require more support developing resilience and maintaining their wellbeing. In schools, they may struggle more with developing relationships with adults, controlling emotional responses, and coping with large amounts of information. Sometimes this can manifest in behaviours which could lead to exclusion, such as disruptive or destructive behaviours.[226] Research suggests that trauma-informed practice in schools, particularly around behaviour, can help students feel safe and develop the necessary relationships with adults to succeed in school.[227]

222. Ripley, K. & Yuill, N. (2005). Patterns of language impairment and behaviour in boys excluded from school. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 75, 37-50. Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/493a/dc860e0cda4ae1424aad3f4028277e69f8b2.pdf

223. Clegg, J. et al (2009) op cit.

224. Eastman, A. (2020). *No excuses: a review of educational exclusion.* [online] Centre for Social Justice. Available at: www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ_Educational_Exclusion.pdf [Accessed 14 February 2020].

225. Ford, T., Parker, C., Salim, J., Goodman, R., Logan, S. and Henley, W. (2017) 'The relationship between exclusion from school and mental health: a secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys 2004 and 2007', *Psychological Medicine.* [e-journal] Available through Cambridge Core: www.doi.org/10.1017/S003329171700215X [Accessed 13 January 2020].

226. NHS Health Scotland (2017) *Tackling the attainment gap by preventing and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)* [PDF] Available at: www.healthscotland.scot/media/1517/tackling-the-attainment-gap-by-preventing-and-responding-to-adverse-childhood-experiences.pdf

227. Education Scotland (2018) *Nurture, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma informed practice: Making the links between these approaches.* [PDF] Available at: www.dera.ioe.ac.uk/31839/1/inc83-making-the-links-nurture-ACES-and-trauma.pdf

A lack of understanding, identification and support for mental health needs is costly to both the individual and the public purse. For example, it is estimated that 'late intervention' for young people who have suffered trauma or adversity costs at least £16.6bn each year in England and Wales as problems arise, and potentially worsen, throughout their life.[228] In the case of ACEs, there is a risk of poorer health outcomes and increased risk-taking behaviours in later life, therefore school is a crucial time to make a difference.[229]

Early identification in practice

The need for early assessment and intervention is recognised in the SEND code of practice. It states that schools must have a "clear approach to identifying and responding to SEN" as "identifying need at the earliest point" can improve long-term outcomes.[230] This includes communication needs, such as SLCN, and the social, emotional and mental health needs that ACE and trauma may involve.

However, identification of these needs requires expertise. For schools with tight budgets, or who have difficulty recruiting, staff trained in these areas can be hard to come by which means referrals to educational psychologists can be missed. However, especially in certain areas, the number of educational psychologists is not adequate to cover rising caseload, and this can lead to delays in assessment.[231] As an assistant head teacher noted during one of our workshops, this can mean that sometimes students' needs are not identified "until breaking point".

There may also be other important contextual factors in a young person's life that put them at risk of exclusion beyond a formal learning or social emotional need. These may be factors in the young person's life outside of school, both intra- and extra-familial. Recently developed by the University of Bedfordshire, the 'contextual safeguarding' approach aims to keep young people safe by identifying forms of harm they may be exposed to in their wider social environment beyond the family including online bullying and harassment, violence in parks or on streets, anti-social or unsafe friendships.[232] Interviews for this project suggest that contextual safeguarding could be particularly important for young people experiencing repeated or long fixed-term exclusions as during their time outside of school – especially when sufficient school work is not provided and they are not supervised – where they are at risk of exposure to malign social influences. Young people who had been fixed-term excluded from school described how "falling into the wrong crowd" during that period led to disengagement with school when they returned. This suggests that a pupil's return to school following suspension is an important moment for review and support.

Training for teachers in supporting pupils with additional needs

Some interviewees for this project highlighted that the move from university-based teacher training to school-based training left less time for trainees to learn about approaches to supporting pupils with additional needs. Indeed, in 2019/20, 56 percent

228. House of Commons Library (2019) *Early Intervention,* CBP-7647, [online] 11 July. Available at: www.researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7647 [Accessed 19 December 2019].

229. NHS Health Scotland (2017) Tackling the attainment gap by preventing and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) [PDF] Available at: www.healthscotland.scot/media/1517/tackling-the-attainment-gap-by-preventing-and-responding-to-adverse-childhood-experiences.pdf

230. Department for Education and Department for Health (2015) *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.* [PDF] Available from: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398815/SEND_Code_of_Practice_January_2015.pdf

231. Department for Education (2019) *Research on the Educational Psychologist Workforce.* [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787417/Research_on_the_Educational_Psychologist_Workforce_March_2019.pdf

232. Firmin, C. (2017). *Contextual safeguarding: an overview of the operational, strategic and conceptual framework.* Institute of Applied Social Research. November 2017. Available at: https://csnetwork.org.uk/assets/documents/Contextual-Safeguarding-Briefing.pdf

of those starting teacher training were entering school-based programmes, compared with just 27 percent in 2013/14.[233] On the other hand, there could be benefits to on-the-job learning with those pupils – it will depend on the school placements that trainees undertake as to whether they get that chance. As it is, only 53 percent of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) reported feeling well-prepared to teach pupils with SEND.[234]

Participants also noted that schools were struggling to find time for continuing professional development in the context of staff shortages and cuts to school budgets. This could lead to a lack of confidence or knowledge in supporting SEN effectively, particularly for teaching assistants. Although teaching assistant (TA) qualifications are available, these are often gained during employment; for inexperienced TAs in schools where the SENCO has limited capacity and there is limited funding for additional training, they may not fully understand the support that certain students require, and this can be a barrier to effective working.[235] It follows that if pupils' needs go unmet, this may increase the risk of them displaying behaviours that lead to exclusion.

While Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and the Teachers' Standards include an awareness of the 'physical, social and intellectual development of children', there is arguably no focus on specific impacts of trauma, mental health issues, or attachment difficulties on development and learning.[236] Workshop participants suggested that this was required to "understand the journey" of children who could be at-risk of exclusion. However, in an RSA-commissioned NFER survey of teachers and school leaders, only one in ten chose training in these areas as most helpful to reducing exclusions, while the top choice (54 percent) was being able to refer pupils to a trained mental health practitioner at school.[237] This could reflect that teachers feel that meeting additional needs of pupils should not be their responsibility, it could be an indication that they do not feel they have enough time for training, or could suggest dissatisfaction with training they have previously received. Regardless of the explanation for this finding, it is clear that a two-pronged approach is needed: training and professional development that enables teachers to signpost to other services where needed, and greater availability of those other services when that need arises.

The most popular training option proposed to teachers in the RSA was further training on behaviour management.[238] A randomised control trial of online training for teachers to develop empathic response to student misbehaviour produced promising results, halving the number of exclusions in the selected American school districts.[239] While ITT guidelines include advice on 'normalising good behaviour', given the pressures of the curriculum, it could be helpful to emphasise how developing and supporting positive

233. Foster, D. (2019). *Initial Teacher Training in England*. Parliamentary research briefing. Available at: www.researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06710/SN06710.pdf; and www.gov.uk/government/publications/itt-performance-profiles-management-information-2013-to-2014

234. Department for Education (2018) *Newly qualified teachers: annual survey 2017*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/738037/NQT_2017_survey.pdf

235. Department for Education (2017) *SEN support: a survey of schools and colleges*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/628629/DfE_SEN_Support_Survey_Report.pdf

236. Department for Education (2011) *Teachers' Standards*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/665522/Teachers_standard_information.pdf

237. The RSA (2019) *School exclusions: the teachers' perspective*. [PDF] Available at: www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/reports/teacher-survey

238. Ibid.

239. Okonofua, J. A., Paunesku, D. and Walton, G. M. (2016) 'Brief intervention to encourage empathic discipline cuts suspension rates in half among adolescents', *PNAS*. [e-journal] Available at: www.pnas.org/content/113/19/5221 [Accessed 14 January 2020].
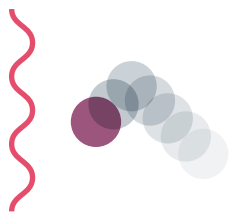
learning behaviours is as important, and give teachers time and training to support this both in ITT and through certified continuing professional development opportunities.[240]

Innovative practice in ensuring every pupil is assessed early and continuously for learning and social and emotional needs so that appropriate support can be provided

School case studies

Risedale Sports and Community College, Catterick Garrison

Risedale Sports and Community College is a comprehensive secondary school in North Yorkshire, serving students aged 11 to 16 years old. It is a small secondary school with 538 pupils on roll and serves a greater number of pupils with SEN support than the national average (14.6 percent compared with 10.8 percent).[241]

The Hub at Risedale Sports and Community College

Risedale Sports and Community College is uniquely located on a military garrison, and half of the students come from military families. The head teacher described that there is a higher prevalence of mental health issues among the cohort, which he linked in part to parents being on deployment for long periods or having to repeatedly break friendship bonds with peers by moving schools. He noted that sometimes parents return from deployment with mental health issues and it has been known for a parent not to return from deployment at all. This can often cause emotional well-being concerns for children's mental health. This idea is supported by research, which shows that child development can be disrupted by the prolonged absence of a parent, and that when a parent is deployed the children are under stress and face higher levels of health, behavioural and mental issues than their peers. As they often move, this can result in increased anxiety and isolation – they may struggle to feel school belonging and make friends.[242]

The school runs screenings during the two-week transition period that incoming students spend at the school in their final term of primary school, including lucid screenings for specific learning difficulties like dyslexia. This screening is also used for students who arrive into any year group from any school. As recommended by the SEN

240.   Bennett, T. (2016) *Developing behaviour management content for initial teacher training (ITT)*. [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536889/Behaviour_Management_report_final__11_July_2016.pdf

241.   Gov.uk (2019) *Risedale Sports and Community College*. [online] Available at: www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/school/121663/risedale-sports-and-community-college/absence-and-pupil-population [Accessed 4 February 2020].

242.   Centre for Social Justice (2016) *Military Families and Transition*. [PDF] Available at: www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MILITARY-FAMILIES.pdf

code of practice, the school has a map of provision that is available above and beyond the curriculum to support pupils' needs. For pupils who are identified as requiring additional support, an individualised provision map highlighting the interventions recommended for them is produced.

The school is well-placed to offer interventions to pupils because it has a 'Hub' to offer nurturing support to pupils who find transition between schools difficult. There is also a separate facility in a house on site, often referred to as Lawrence House, nicknamed after the former caretaker who lived there, where some pupils who find managing behaviour in a mainstream school difficult can be supported to develop their social and emotional skills. Both facilities, the Hub and Lawrence House, are intended to be a nurturing environment offering everything from social skills groups to gardening clubs. One student noted that it caters to a variety of student needs: "there's a club that happens there every Tuesday after school, where we have tips on how to de-stress from exams, and it's very useful for people who have been misbehaving, or people who need help, extra help, to deal with mental illnesses and that".

Breakout space for pupils at Hope School
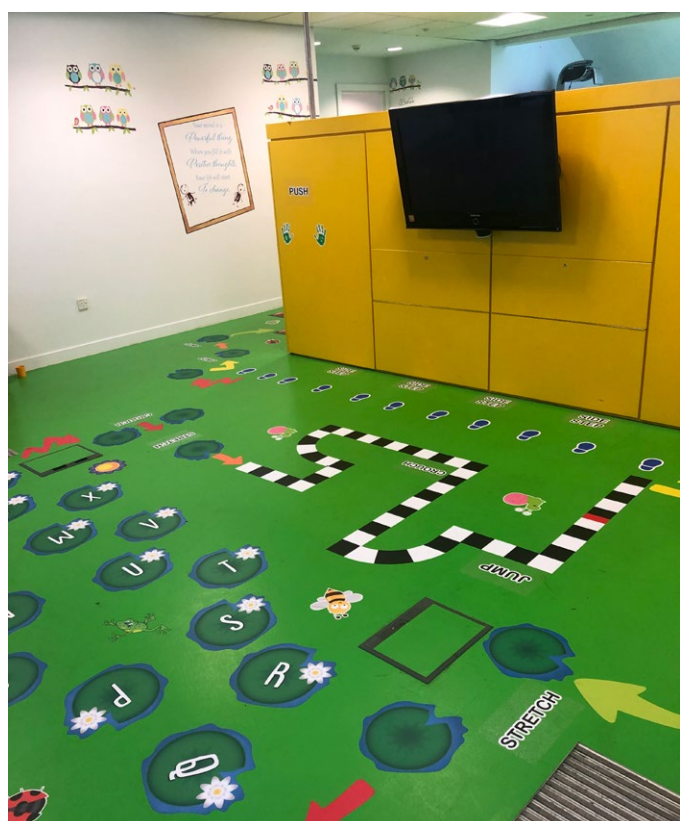
Hope School, Liverpool

Hope School is a special school for children aged 5 to 13 years old with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs. Students who attend Hope are referred to the school by the local authority during the EHCP process.

During our visit, head teacher Rohit Naik explained that Hope School had traditionally focused on behaviour management. While they were doing this effectively, as recognised in positive Ofsted inspections, Rohit felt that they were doing students "a disservice" because, after leaving Hope, some ended up being excluded from the schools they went to, struggled to become part of their local community and/or became involved in anti-social behaviour.

After extensive research, Rohit made the decision to change approach and focus on understanding the root causes of students' behaviour, rather than on managing how it manifests externally. As a result, the school has been on a journey over the past four years to become attachment friendly and trauma sensitive; its mission to provide "an attachment friendly community which fosters warmth with high boundaries so that all can achieve to their full potential".[243]

He introduced training for all staff to help them to understand how insecure attachment and trauma can affect children, their behaviour and how they build relationships with adults. As well as providing grounding in attachment theory for all staff, particular members of the Hope team have undertaken further training, enabling them to provide more intensive intervention where needed. For instance, two members of staff are trained THRIVE practitioners, an approach that incorporates child development, neuroscience and attachment theory to support the social and emotional development of children and young people.[244] Most importantly for Rohit,

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243. Hope School (2020) *Mission Statement, Vision and Core Values*. [online] Available at www.hopeschool-liverpool.co.uk/mission-statement-vision-and-core-values/ [Accessed 30 January 2020].

244. Thrive (unknown) *The Thrive Approach*. [online] Available at: www.thriveapproach.com/the-thrive-approach/ [Accessed 30 January 2020].

all staff have been supported through supervision by an external counsellor to help manage their own attachment and trauma.

Staff are further supported by external practitioners, such as an occupational therapist and a speech and language therapist, who visit the school weekly. These practitioners assess individual students and share strategies for staff to implement both in and out of the classroom. They reassess the progress of students at regular intervals and support staff to tailor their strategies as needed.

Rohit explained that, although providing whole-staff training is undoubtedly expensive, working in this way "builds capacity" by arming staff with the skills to provide high levels of support directly to students. As well as empowering staff, he highlighted that this is more effective as it is school staff who have relationships with students, rather than visiting practitioners who may only see a student on a monthly basis.

As a National Leader of Education, head teacher Rohit is committed to sharing his expertise in becoming an attachment friendly school and has begun work with other schools and the local authority to develop good practice across the area. During our visit, he explained that schools interested in embedding an attachment focus should know that it is no "quick win", taking a minimum of three years, but that it is well worth doing. A recent glowing report from Ofsted also celebrates the positive impact that the approach is already having for students and staff alike.[245] Although Hope School is a small specialist setting, its senior leaders are confident that mainstream schools could also embed attachment theory. In fact, Rohit felt that many mainstream schools already use elements of attachment theory but should consider adopting it in a more explicit and formalised way.

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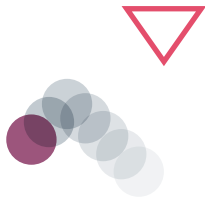
Innovative practice in identifying needs and providing appropriate interventions from local authorities and third sector organisations

Tower Hamlets – early identification of need

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has developed a comprehensive primary to secondary school transition programme. As part of this programme, the behaviour and attendance teams work with schools to identify Year 6 pupils who do not have an EHCP, and therefore wouldn't normally be picked up for additional support during transition, but who teachers feel might not cope well with the move to secondary school. Council staff work with teachers during the summer term of Year 6 to identify their needs and provide support.

Students can also be referred to external partners such as the council's programme with Half Moon Theatre. This aims to help young people prepare for their transition to secondary school through drama, where they explore the situations they may face and how to deal with them. Young people identified as vulnerable during the transition can attend after-school sessions in the last term of primary school, a week-long summer school during the holidays and after-school sessions in the first term of secondary school.[246]

245.   Ofsted (2019) *Short inspection of Hope School*. [PDF] Available at www.files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50074695

246.   Half Moon. (2020). *Next Steps - Half Moon*. [online] Available at: www.halfmoon.org.uk/participate/educators/early-years-primary/next-steps/ [Accessed 12 February 2020].

In addition to this, the council provides materials for primary schools to use to explore the transition to secondary with their pupils.

Whole School SEND Review - nasen

In order to improve the effectiveness of schools' provision for pupils with SEND, nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs) have developed the Whole School SEND Review. Whole School SEND Reviews usually take two to three days and are carried out by the participating school's SENCO, who receives a day of training to support them through the audit process. After self-evaluation is complete, schools are paired up for a process of peer-review, through which partnering SENCOs work together to identify each school's strengths and shortcomings and develop a plan to make the improvements needed.[247]

To date, nasen have trained more than 600 practitioners to conduct SEND Reviews. A further 5,000 schools have downloaded the SEND Review guide that outlines the review process.[248] A 2016 evaluation of the SEND Review process concluded that 'teachers engaged in the process demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of assessment for learning and targeted teaching for pupils with SEND. Furthermore, some participants secured improved attainment scores and evidence of accelerated progress for learners with SEND.[249]

Currently, there is a lack of high-quality evaluations of interventions focused on SEND provision at secondary school level. In response to this, from summer 2020, the Whole School SEND Review programme will undergo a rigorous evaluation led by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Manchester Metropolitan University. The literacy, wellbeing, attendance and exclusion levels of 80 mainstream schools who undertake a SEND Review will be compared with the results of 80 similar schools who do not do a review.[250]

Leeds Area Inclusion Partnerships

Leeds City Council has developed five 'Area Inclusion Partnerships' (AIPs) across the city. In each geographical area, every school jointly enters into an agreement with the local authority to plan and deliver services for children at risk of exclusion. The aim of the partnerships is to reduce the number and length of fixed-term exclusions, reduce persistent absenteeism from school, increase the number of early help assessments for pupils who have had three or more fixed-term exclusions and reduce the rate of permanent exclusions. The role of the AIPs is to promote inclusion, prevent exclusion and to provide support for learners in vulnerable contexts. This may lead to the provision of specific interventions such as in-reach support in school, or personalised multi-agency packages of support. It may also include provision within the school's partnership inclusion base where additional support, assessment and resources can be provided.

AIPs support early intervention and a graduated approach to meeting needs. Work is underway to link the work of the AIPs and education to early help assessments. Early help assessments are supported to happen in a timely manner through collaboration

247.   nasen (2020). *Projects*. [online] Available at: https://nasen.org.uk/about-nasen/projects.html [Accessed 12 February 2020].

248.   London Leadership Strategy (no date) *SEND Review Guide: A school-led approach to improving provision for all*. [PDF] Available at: www.sendgateway.org.uk/download.send-review-guide.html [Accessed 12 February 2020].

249.   Education Endowment Foundation (2019) 'School Information Sheet: Whole School SEND Review Process Evaluation'. [PDF] Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Projects/School_Information_Sheets/SEND_Review_School_Information_Sheet.pdf [Accessed 12 February 2020].

250.   Education Endowment Foundation (2020) *SEND Review: Projects*. [online] Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/send-review/#the-project [Accessed 12 February 2020]; Reid, N. (2020). *Whole School SEND Review Trial*. [online] Send Gateway. Available at: www.sendgateway.org.uk/whole-school-send/eef-trial-.html [Accessed 12 February 2020].

with local 'clusters' of universal, targeted and specialist children's services including children's centres, police, social work, the third sector, elected members and some relevant services for adults, such as housing. The AIPs also provide six-day cover and reintegration support following an exclusion.

Each partnership receives funding of around £1m per annum to deliver these duties. A management group made up of representative head teachers from primary and secondary schools, children and family officers from the council and project leaders meets at least once per term to agree their approach and communicate regular updates to all member schools.

Tower Hamlets reintegration programme

Tower Hamlets Borough Council offers mainstream schools the opportunity to refer pupils who are at risk of exclusion for a preventative programme in the borough's PRU. The reintegration programme places the pupil in the PRU for eight weeks to address the underlying problems that are contributing to them struggling in mainstream school. This could include anything from intensive literacy support, to helping the pupil to regulate their behaviour in class. The pupil remains on the roll of the mainstream school throughout their time at the PRU and is supported to return to mainstream immediately following the programme's conclusion.

Football Beyond Borders

Co-founded by RSA Fellow Jack Reynolds, Football Beyond Borders (FBB) is a three-year programme designed to support children at risk of exclusion to stay in school and complete their education.[251] They work with each school partner to identify around five pupils at greatest risk of permanent exclusion or a managed move to another school. These pupils are usually in the top 10 percent of behaviour points in the school, have a history of fixed-term exclusion, have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years and/or receive support for special educational needs. They also identify a further 10 pupils who are disengaged with education and are not on track to achieve a grade 4 or above in their GCSE English and maths.

The programme offered to the selected students includes four components:

1. **Classroom-based learning**: a football-themed curriculum aims to develop key social and emotional competencies, for example looking at the self-regulation it takes footballers to keep calm and shoot the perfect penalty

1. **Pitch-based learning:** the football coaching element of the programme is designed to contain many 'teachable moments' for students to reflect on their social and emotional competencies. For example, introducing a second ball to a game unannounced can cause frustration for some players, offering an opportunity to discuss together how they handle unexpected changes

1. **Trips:** these give participants the opportunity to expand their horizons and often involve meeting inspiring individuals from the football and media industries.

2. **One-to-one intervention**s: more recently, they introduced one-to-one talking therapy sessions with British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy-trained counsellors for the most at risk pupils. These are an opportunity for pupils to be supported to work through the traumatic experiences that contribute to their challenging behaviour.

The theory of change for Football Beyond Borders explains that by improving behaviour for learning, and pupils' self-esteem, the programme should reduce

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251. Football Beyond Borders. *About us*. Available at: www.footballbeyondborders.org/

behaviour incidents in school and thereby improve the chances of pupils staying in school, achieving GCSEs and making a successful transition to adulthood. In order to understand the effectiveness of the programme, they are comparing the outcomes of these pupils with a comparison group of similar pupils from other local schools. First year participants last year had 42 percent fewer behaviour incidents than similar pupils who did not participate. Second year participants had 51 percent fewer incidents.[252] Participating schools reported that 70 percent of participants improved their behaviour and 95 percent of pupils most at risk of exclusion did not experience an exclusion from school during their participation in the programme.

These early evaluations show the promise of Football Beyond Borders as an approach to improve outcomes for pupils at risk of exclusion, but co-founder Jack Reynolds is committed to developing more rigorous evaluations to better understand the impact the programme has on participants and partner schools. He firmly believes that the strong relationships Football Beyond Borders staff develop with participants is key to the programme's success, and surveys of school staff before and after the programme suggest a significant improvement in the participants' relationships with adults in school. Further evaluation is needed to explore this trend.
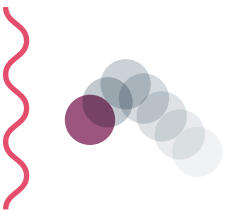
The Difference

The Difference is a non-profit organisation which aims to "change the story on school exclusion".[253] To do this, it offers training programmes for school leaders that are designed to share learning between the mainstream and alternative provision sectors. The Difference also works to improve the evidence base about which approaches best support vulnerable learners.

The Difference Leaders Programme recruits mainstream teachers to spend two years in the senior leadership team of a Good or Outstanding alternative provision school, alongside an intense leadership training programme. Through their time in alternative provision, Difference Leaders develop their skills in improving outcomes for excluded learners and support school improvement of their alternative provision school through training, coaching and work-based assignments.

Difference Leaders complete 12 assignments in each year, supported by one day and one evening of off-site training each half term where they learn from colleagues working across pupil referral units and mainstream schools. They also receive supervision with a psychologist each fortnight. The programme is accredited as a National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL). It is intended that Difference Leaders will progress to promoted senior leadership positions in mainstream schools at the end of the programme to apply their learning in ways that reduce the likelihood and need for exclusion.

The Difference also run inclusive leadership training for mainstream heads and deputies. Topics of school development in the programme include inclusive curricula and pathway planning for NEET prevention, restorative and trauma-informed practices, contextual safeguarding and parent support.

Social Finance – maximising access to education programme

In 2013, leading UK foundations and Social Finance set up the Impact Incubator with the ambition of transforming outcomes for some of the most entrenched issues including domestic abuse and mental health inequity for black communities.

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252. Football Beyond Borders (2019). *Impact report*. [online] Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1urFKM-OyEdCk43RWFPPLVKRbHckvqozk/view [Accessed 20 February 2020]

253. The Difference. *Changing the story on school exclusion*. [online] Available at: www.the-difference.com/ [Accessed 20 February 2020]

Since late 2018, Social Finance has been collaborating with two local authorities to help them identify pupils at risk of exclusion so that targeted support can be offered.

The first phase of work aimed to identify pupils at risk of exclusion by developing a 'longitudinal picture of children's journeys through secondary school'.[254] This included interviews with school and local authority staff, and analysis of data for over 10,000 pupils from more than 700 sources covering schools, children's social care, special educational needs, deprivation and exclusion.

The research found that exclusion rates are driven by deprivation level, SEND and contact with children's social care. It also revealed that the level of need of pupils at risk of exclusion may be under the threshold for schools to access additional support. The full findings of this research will be shared in an upcoming publication.

The next phase of the programme aims to respond to the needs of pupils identified through the research. It involves co-producing, with professionals, young people and families, an enhanced, evidence-based support offer for these pupils. The new model will be piloted from autumn 2020.

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We know where every child is in the system

It is essential that LAs know how and when children move around our school system, and DfE have oversight of this. This includes knowing where the child is, who is delivering their education and why a decision has been made to move them.[255] – Timpson Review

As noted in the opening section of this report, there is a far greater number of pupils who have left the rolls of mainstream schools than have been formally excluded. If we are to protect their entitlement to a good education, we must understand more about where those pupils are.

Pupils can be removed from their school's roll following permanent exclusion as long as the time limit for an appeal has expired or an appeal has been brought and failed/abandoned. This triggers local authority intervention, and there is a requirement to find a school place by the sixth day following this exclusion. The issue in a context of rising exclusions is that it can take some time for the local authority to find an appropriate placement for the child. Arguably, there should be sharing of responsibility with the excluding school to find a new school placement so that the pupil can be neatly transferred from one school roll to the next. Transferring the responsibility for finding a new school placement to the excluding school was one of the approaches tested as part of the School Exclusions Trial.[256] There were no statistically significant differences in exclusion rate between participating and non-participating schools, but the qualitative

254. Social Finance (2020) *Maximising access to education programme – confidential briefing.* London. February 2020.

255. Department for Education (2019) *Timpson Review of School Exclusion*. [PDF] Available at: www. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf

256. Department for Education (2014) *School exclusion trial evaluation*. [PDF] Available at: www. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/331795/RR364_-_School_Exclusion_Trial_Final_Report.pdf

evaluation found that schools responsible for identifying alternative placements for pupils worked diligently to find appropriate, high-quality placements, and continued to monitor pupils' progress after the move.

Currently, there is a risk that pupils end up in alternative provision that is unregistered and therefore there is no new school roll for them to appear on. If an independent alternative provision provider only offers part-time education, has fewer than five pupils, and no SEN or LAC pupils, then it does not have to register with the DfE.[257] However, 'part time' can be interpreted differently and can lead to 'illegal' alternative provision, either intentionally or unintentionally. 171 referrals have been made to the new Ofsted taskforce about possible illegal alternative provision.[258] As these providers do not have to be inspected, it is important there is clarity and accountability to guarantee that no pupils are receiving unmonitored and potentially poorly implemented provision as their full-time education. FFT Datalab estimates up to 2,600 pupils are in unregistered alternative provision, but we cannot know for certain the number of pupils receiving education in these settings.[259] They are, to all intents and purposes, lost from the system.

Pupils who are home educated can also effectively go missing. Pupils can be removed from their school roll with written notification from the parent that they are receiving education elsewhere. Some local authorities have operated voluntary registration schemes whereby parents/carers could register their child as receiving home education, but there was no legal duty on them to do so. This could be soon to change. The DfE ran a consultation from April to June 2019 on proposed legislation to establish 'a register maintained by local authorities of children not attending mainstream schools'.[260] A previous call for evidence suggested that while councils are supportive of this change, there will likely be resistance from home educators.[261] At the time of writing, there is no news on the outcome of the formal consultation.

As noted in the Education Policy Institute's recent report on 'unexplained pupil exits' there are other kinds of school moves that we do not currently capture clear data on. This includes pupils who experience a 'managed move' from one mainstream school to another by agreement between the schools and pupils who receive a portion of their education in off-site alternative provision.[262] They also noted that it would be useful to more closely monitor the use of 'internal exclusions' (sometimes referred to as 'isolation') as discussed in the previous chapter. If a pupil is spending many days outside of the classroom in a form of internal exclusion where teaching does not take place, they are missing out on education. Local authority employees interviewed for this project considered this a form of exclusion but one that they were unable to monitor without access to school-level data. They expressed concerns that pupils with additional

257. Department for Education (2019) *Registration of Independent Schools.* [PDF] Available at: www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831632/Independent_school_registration_guidance_21v3_August_2019.pdf#page=6 [Accessed 17 January 2020].
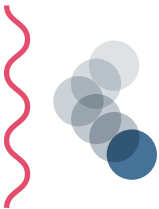
258. Whittaker, F. (2020) 'Ofsted illegal school taskforce investigates more than 600 settings', *Schools Week*. [online] 16 January. Available at: www.schoolsweek.co.uk/ofsted-illegal-schools-taskforce-investigates-more-than-600-settings/ [Accessed 17 January 2020].

259. Nye, P. (2019) 'Nobody knows how big the unregistered alternative provision sector is', *FFT Education Datalab*. [online] 10 October. Available at: www.ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2019/10/nobody-knows-how-big-the-unregistered-alternative-provision-sector-is/ [Accessed 17 January 2020].

260. Gov.uk. *Children not in school*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/children-not-in-school

261. Foster, D. and Danechi, S. *Briefing paper number 5018: Home education in England*. House of Commons Library. Available at: http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05108/SN05108.pdf

262. Hutchinson, J. and Crenna-Jennings, W. (2019). *Unexplained pupil exits from schools: further data analysis*. Available at: https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/unexplained-pupil-exits-data-multi-academy-trust-local-authority/

needs may be over-represented in isolation rooms – and this suspicion is partially confirmed by some of the interviews for this project – but we cannot conclusively say that this is the case without further data.

There may also be a significant number of pupils missing out on school through forms of self-exclusion whereby they regularly do not come into school. Local authorities are able to oversee patterns of non-attendance in maintained schools because they have the right to inspect their registers during the school day. They are not able to do this in academies. Being able to access data on low attendance and other factors that may indicate risk of exclusion for a pupil might better enable schools and other public services to provide the early support needed to get a pupil back on track.

It would also be interesting to consider whether the data captured at the point of official exclusion could help to prevent future exclusions. This is a theme explored in the government-commissioned Timpson Review of School Exclusions. The review notes that the second most commonly cited reason for exclusion after 'persistent disruptive behaviour' is 'other' and calls for the use of this category to be reviewed.[263] Interviewees for this project suggested that this category may be used when the reason for exclusion is a combination of the options presented (e.g. persistent disruptive behaviour and verbal abuse against an adult). Therefore, offering schools the option to cite multiple reasons for exclusion could be helpful.

263.   Department for Education (2019) *Timpson Review of School Exclusion*. [PDF] Available at: www. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_ review.pdf

Conclusion

We set out at the beginning of this project to understand the underlying causes of the rise in school exclusions over recent years and how this could be reversed; ensuring that our most vulnerable children are held by the mainstream education system. Through our research we identified the following system-wide causes of school exclusion:

- *Wider societal factors:* growing poverty, rising incidence of mental health, increasing numbers of children with a social worker.
- *Direct consequences* of deliberate policymaking: curriculum reform, real-terms cuts to school funding, reductions to funding for local authorities and public services working with children
- *Unintended consequences* of policy and practice decisions: perverse incentives caused by the accountability regime, fragmentation of the education system and a shift in behaviour management.

As well as looking down at the system from the top, we also looked out from the perspective of the pinball kids to understand the conditions that need to be present for them to remain and be successful in school. We identified the following five conditions necessary for change:

- Every child has a *strong relationship* with a trusted adult in school
- Every child's *parents or carers are engaged as partners* in their education
- Every child attends a school with an *inclusive ethos*
- Every child is *assessed for learning and other needs* throughout their school career and there is capacity to provide *appropriate support*
- We *know where every child is* in the system to ensure they can benefit from the four conditions above

Our recommendations broadly respond to these factors and conditions.

We welcome additional funding pledged through the high needs block to support pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.[264] However, we recommend a further investment via that funding block into the capacity needed for public services (including social work, youth services, mental health and criminal justice) and schools to work together to prevent exclusions. Any work should be informed by practice developed under the common assessment framework, which provides guidance on how to build a 'team around' a child or their family and was shown to lead to financial savings, as well as learning from practice such as the inclusion partnerships developed by Leeds City Council (discussed above).[265] The investment should be structured to enable schools to identify pupils at risk of permanent exclusion (e.g. top 10 percent behaviour points and history of fixed-term exclusions) and will create the capacity for schools to provide appropriate support in partnership with other services. This would meet the condition outlined above that every child should be assessed for learning and other needs and appropriate support should be provided to prevent the risk of them being excluded.

In order to ensure every child has a strong relationship with a trusted adult in school, we propose the development of a 'what works' fund to gather evidence on interventions designed to improve relationship-building and the extent to which

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264. Gov.uk (2019) *The national funding formulae for schools and high needs 2020-21*. [PDF] Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/838394/National_funding_formula_policy_document_-_2020_to_2021.pdf

265. Institute of Public Care (2012). *Early intervention and prevention with children and families: getting the most from team around the family systems*. [PDF] Available at: https://ipc.brookes.ac.uk//publications/pdf/Early_Intervention_and_Prevention_with_Children_and_Families_June_2012.pdf

they can contribute to reducing exclusions. This would ensure head teachers are armed with knowledge about how best to spend their limited budgets to build strong teacher-pupil relationships. Approaches to further explore include restorative practice; high-quality evidence from the United States shows that a structured restorative practice programme in Pittsburg schools led to stronger relationships between pupils and teachers and reduced fixed-term exclusion (suspension) rates compared with non-participating schools.[266]

We also recommend that the Department for Education (DfE) ensures that progression routes for school staff recognise the importance of pastoral work. This will support relationship-building between school staff and pupils and create the capacity for school staff to work in closer partnership with families. We also suggest key considerations for school leaders looking to strengthen their pastoral structures based on innovative practice from our case study schools.

In order to combat fragmentation in the education system, we recommend that the DfE issues new guidance on fair access that ensures every school locally fully participates in the process of placing pupils at risk.

We also recommend the coding of all moves at the point of exit from the school system to ensure we know where all pupils are in the system and limit off-rolling, which is incentivised by the current accountability system as discussed above.

We also note that the accountability system does not currently create the conditions for all school leaders to pursue an inclusive ethos. We recommend a renewed focus on inclusion within the Ofsted framework that will reward schools that create an environment where all children feel a sense of belonging and experience opportunities for success.

We do not make recommendations on every cause and condition detailed above. For example, we believe that reversing the trends described under wider societal factors is crucial to curb the rise in school exclusions, however we do not make recommendations on these in this report as they would go far beyond the remit of the education system.

We also make limited recommendations relating to recent policy changes, as we recognise that there is limited political appetite for further exam and curriculum reform in the short to medium term. It is also unlikely that another curriculum overhaul would be welcomed by a teaching profession that regularly reports feeling overworked.

Finally, we make no specific recommendations on school funding here as there are early signals that per pupil funding may further increase from the August 2019 pledges in the upcoming spending review.[267] We only note that these funding increases will need to exceed the pace of rises to teachers' salaries and increased pension contributions if it is to have a meaningful effect on the day-to-day running of schools.

The RSA is committed to working with the DfE and Ofsted to explore the possibilities of bringing about the changes we have recommended. We will also work in partnership with forward-thinking local authorities to test our recommendations to reduce school exclusions and we hope that our key considerations for school leaders – and the case studies provided herein – encourage them to pursue new approaches to delivering a better education for all children who have sometimes felt like pinball kids.

266.   Augustine et al. (2018). *Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions?* [online] Available at: www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html

267.   Gov.uk (2019) *Prime Minister boosts schools with £14 billion package.* [online] (updated 10 January 2020) www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-boosts-schools-with-14-billion-package [Accessed 20 February 2020]
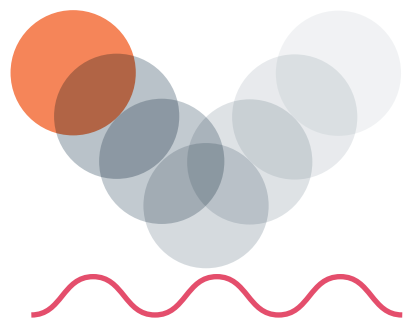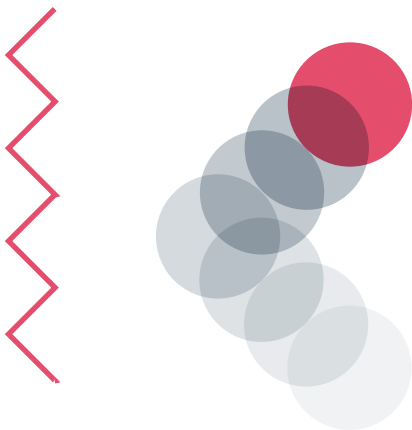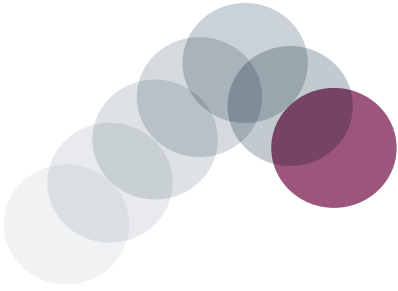
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