





REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

27 January 2020

Subject:	School Exclusions and Alternative Provision
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Joyce Underhill - Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life
Director:	Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger Director – Education, Skills and Employment – Chris Ward
Contribution towards Vision 2030: 	  
Contact Officer(s):	Moira Tallents, Group Head, Inclusive Learning Services, moira_tallents@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Scrutiny Committee:

1. Considers the report which provides an update on how the council, working with schools, manages exclusions of pupils and provides suitable alternative educational provisions where necessary.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on how the council works with schools in managing the exclusions of pupils and provides suitable alternative educational provisions where necessary.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 The report supports the desire of the council to focus resources on the specific needs and aspirations of the community. This contributes to the Council's Vision 2030 Ambition 1 – Raising aspirations and resilience, Ambition 3 – Young people to have skills for the future and Ambition 4 – Raising the quality of schools.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 All children are entitled to a full, well-rounded education. The aim of the council, and our schools and academies, is to ensure children are able to stay in school so that they do not miss out on their educational entitlement. Where possible this will be in our mainstream schools and, where appropriate, our special schools.
- 3.2 The council's overall aim is to continue to reduce the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions in our schools. However, there are times when an exclusion cannot be avoided and it is in these situations that we help schools find alternative provision for pupils. This may be through a fresh start in a new school, in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or in another suitable provider of education or training.
- 3.3 The council holds a directory of suitable alternative education providers for pupils. These providers are properly registered with OfSTED and the DfE and have been quality assured by our council teams.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Overall, the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions has decreased for the last four years. The percentage of pupils in Sandwell receiving a fixed term exclusion from school is less than the national and regional averages.
- 4.2 Secondary exclusion data over the last three years shows the following:-

Year	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
Category	Fixed	Perm	Fixed	Perm	Fixed	Perm
No. Exclusions	1,988	72	1,602	67	813	36
No. Pupils	1,130	72	995	67	582	36
Total Days	5,525	-	4,040.5	-	2,031.5	-
No. pupils with 3 or more	217	-	151	-	59	-

- 4.3 2018/2019 data shows the number of fixed term exclusions in Secondary schools has halved since 2017 / 2018. This has resulted in a reduction of over 1000 days lost learning days compared to last year.

- 4.4 Permanent exclusions also significantly reduced (by 31) in 2018/2019. The cohort experiencing the highest proportion of exclusions are Yr.10 pupils.
- 4.5 The Fair Access and Exclusions team have been working with schools through development days to improve recording of reasons for permanent exclusion. This has helped us to refine our support work with schools and also enabled us to work with police on specific prevention initiatives.
- 4.6 Primary school exclusions are lower than in the secondary sector and have remained low for a number of years. Data shows the following:-

Summary						
Year	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
Category	Fixed	Perm	Fixed	Perm	Fixed	Perm
No. Exclusions	429	11	323	16	304	10
No. Pupils	222	11	172	16	148	10
Total Days	896.5	-	643.5	-	645.5	-
No. pupils with 3 or more	50	-	45	-	36	-

- 4.7 Permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions reduced in primary schools in 2018/2019. The cohort experiencing the largest number of overall exclusions is Year 6. As with secondary schools, persistent disruptive behaviour is the main reason for exclusion in primary schools, followed by physical assault on an adult.
- 4.8 Schools receive support via the BLISS strategy (Behaviour Learning Improvement and Support Strategy) through the Fair Access and Exclusions team and Inclusion Support services.
- 4.9 **Local Authority Processes and Support**
- 4.10 The Fair Access and Exclusions Team supports pupils, parents and schools when pupils reach the point of permanent exclusion. The team will advise the school on different options to avoid permanent exclusion where possible as well as the statutory processes for permanent exclusion if it cannot be avoided. They facilitate Independent Reviews when parents challenge schools over the legality of a permanent exclusion.
- 4.11 In Primary schools, support is provided through the BLISS programme. If a school is considering a permanent exclusion they hold a multi-agency meeting with the Fair Access and Exclusions team and members of Inclusion Support to look at additional support to keep the child in school. This support could include alternative strategies to manage the child's challenging behaviour in school, involvement from the Preventing Primary

Exclusions team for a 6-week block, a preventative placement at the Primrose Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or a managed transition to another primary school (agreed by learning communities).

- 4.12 In Secondary schools, support is provided by the Fair Access and Exclusions Team, the independent chair of the Fair Access Panels and Inclusion Support. Alternatives to permanent exclusions are explored through a professional's meeting; these could include managed transition to another school through the Fair Access Panel or preventative placement at Sandwell Community School / Alternative Provision. Weekly family surgeries have been established by the Lead for Fair Access and Exclusions and the Independent Chair to support parents and pupils at risk of exclusion.
- 4.13 Fair Access meetings for both secondary and primary schools are held on a 6-weekly basis. All schools attend as well as the PRUs, representatives from the police and inclusion support and CME (Children Missing Education) team.

4.14 Preventative Work and further developments

- 4.15 There is a strong focus on preventative work within Sandwell schools using whole school approaches as well as targeted support. All schools have been offered free support to develop a whole school approach to supporting pupil's mental health and well-being which impacts on behaviour. The mental health and well-being charter mark and curriculum is now well-established within Sandwell schools. This year, all schools have also been offered free "Trusted Adult Training" to identify and support pupils with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties. This training has been developed and delivered by Inclusion Support and funded through the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). Sandwell is also part of NHS England trailblazer project for mental health in 2020, qualified mental health support workers will be supporting within 20 schools as part of the pilot.
- 4.16 A Managed Transitions Toolkit has been developed for secondary schools following a research study by an Educational Psychologist into best practice. All secondary schools made contributions to the toolkit through Fair Access development days for pastoral leads. A pilot is now being conducted using the toolkit to track success. It has been requested that all managed transitions are discussed at secondary Fair Access Panel so that they can be tracked.
- 4.17 The secondary Fair Access panels are currently considering job descriptions for 2 posts to support managed transitions across the borough, to replicate the Primary model by having a Reintegration Officer

as well as Family Support Worker. These roles will be funded by schools through the exclusion levy.

- 4.18 Funding through the High Needs Block has been agreed by schools to create a secondary equivalent of the Preventing Primary Exclusions team. This new team will focus on intervention work at KS3, especially pupils transitioning from primary to secondary school. This team should be established by September 2020.
- 4.19 Primary and Secondary Fair Access Management Boards have been established. Both boards review data and actions against strategic development plans and provide governance. Boards consist of head teachers and senior LA officers.
- 4.20 Both Primary and Secondary Fair Access panels now routinely review exclusions data to discuss and problem solve schools that have a high number of exclusions and share good practice.
- 4.21 Primary panels, as well as Secondary are now also being supported by the Special Advisory Teacher: SEMH team from Inclusion Support who are now fully trained in the use of the reporting modules for exclusions and are using the data to target and influence change in schools with high numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions. This data is also reported to the Quality Standards Board, this board consists of head teachers from each learning community and senior officers from the LA including school improvement and SEN.
- 4.22 Primary panels, as well as Secondary are now also being supported by the Police Service. There is a new process for identifying pupils at risk of exclusion with the Police. We are awaiting confirmation regarding new posts within the Police service to support the Fair Access and Exclusion Team with preventing primary exclusion meetings.

4.23 Alternative Provision Data

- 4.24 At the time of January Census 2019, 344 pupils were receiving education via alternative provision (AP) and 116 were educated in Pupil Referral Units (PRU).
- 4.25 Most pupils being educated in AP are in KS4. In Jan 2019, 262 pupils were either Yr.10 or Yr. 11. 184 pupil cases were closed by July 2019 due to students no longer requiring statutory education.
- 4.26 Students are placed within AP for a number of reasons including behaviour difficulties, newly arrived in the country at KS4 or for specific medical reasons.

4.27 Alternative Provision Developmental Work

- 4.28 Until recently pupils were placed at AP through a number of different routes: school referrals, fair access and exclusions team, Children Missing Education (CME) team and SEND team. In September 2019, a new process and panel was initiated to bring local authority referrals under a single referral route in order to establish transparency across the LA. This panel consists of LA officers but will be widened to include other agencies such as the police and social care to provide a holistic approach to support.
- 4.29 Schools can still place students independently within AP but maintain responsibility for the student's attendance, education and welfare. The responsibilities of placing pupils in AP under the new Ofsted inspection framework has been shared with schools at Fair Access Development days.
- 4.30 Attendance and progress of pupils placed by the Local Authority in independent alternative provisions is monitored by the CME team. The CME team also maintain and review the Sandwell AP Directory, which details locally approved independent Alternative Providers.
- 4.31 The Fair Access Team / CME team have introduced a quality assurance cycle for independent AP providers. They have developed a quality assurance framework for Alternative Provision with schools and local APs. This includes a quality assurance onsite visit by a team consisting of LA officers, senior leaders from Sandwell schools and the Independent Chair of the Fair Access panel.

4.32 Pupil Referral Units

- 4.33 Albright Education Centre (formally Whiteheath Education Centre) provides education for pupils who cannot attend mainstream school due to health difficulties and they also provide the home/hospital education service. Albright has made a successful transition to its new site in Tipton. They have seen an increase in pupils unable to attend school due to mental health problems. Due to this Schools' Forum has recently agreed to fund an additional 10 places.
- 4.34 Primrose Centre (Primary) have made many improvements in the last 18 months under their new Headteacher. They have improved the number of successful pupil re-integrations into mainstream and special school and the up-take of short term preventative places has increased. They work closely with schools as well as local authority teams such as the Fair Access Team to establish the correct support for pupils.

4.35 Sandwell Community School (Secondary). The school has recently reduced the number of sites it uses (to accommodate the new Albright site). Each campus has a specified role i.e. Assessment, KS3 provision. They offer preventative places to schools through joint work with the Secondary Fair Access Panel. The number of re-integrations back into mainstream school is starting to increase, plans to improve this are being developed with Fair Access Team.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

5.1 This is not applicable to this report.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 Not applicable to this report.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Schools Forum manages funding for excluded pupils, alternative provision and pupil referral units through annual allocations. Funding for these areas comes through the High Needs Block and is also supported through individual school budgets for pupils which they place in some alternative provisions.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 There are no direct legal and governance implications. The council has a statutory duty to ensure every child can access their full educational entitlement.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 The council monitors the number of exclusions taking in to account pupil characteristics and ethnicity.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 There are no data protection implications in this report.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 The council and schools work directly with the local community police to support programmes to reduce crime and disorder. Reducing exclusions is seen as a good long-term strategy to support this work.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 High Needs Block funding and school budgets can sustain the work of the support teams, costs of alternative provision and PRUs. There are no concerns that this funding will cease.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 The Albright Centre (PRU) provides high quality educational provision for pupils who cannot attend mainstream school due to health difficulties and they also provide the home/hospital educational service.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There is no direct impact in the report on any council managed property or land.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The report outlines the council's current performance with regard to exclusions and the subsequent provision for excluded pupils.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

17 APPENDICES:

None

Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger

Director – Education, Skills and Employment – Chris Ward