

Scrutiny Briefing Note

The Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel have asked to monitor progress on the following issues. This briefing contains the latest position as of January 2021.

Lead Officer: Jennifer Steel, Inclusion Lead Officer

Subject: Exclusions

BACKGROUND AND LOCAL CONTEXT:

The local authority has seen a reduction in school exclusions across both phases of education over a sustained period. This reduction can be seen in both the permanent and fixed period exclusion data for the last 5 years. The 2015-2016 academic year figures demonstrate the high point of these subsequent cycles of year-on-year decreases.

Permanent exclusion data

Academic Year	Primary	Secondary	Total
2015-2016	5	59	64
2016-2017	9	39	48
2017-2018	11	40 (+15*)	51 (66)
2018 -2019	5	25 (+5*)	30 (40)
2019-2020	4	27 (+7*)	31 (38)

*It is to be noted that secondary age permanent exclusions from further education academies that provide KS4 provision due to their FE status does sits outside of the local authority's statistical returns that are submitted to the Department for Education.

The general stabilisation of numbers around permanent exclusions indicates that the supportive mechanism of the BAC process (Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative*) continues to enable children and young people to be supported through a managed move process, thereby reducing permanent exclusion as the only option available to all headteachers.

(*The Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative is a weekly meeting of senior leaders at both the primary and secondary phases to look at a managed move for a pupil rather than an exclusion)

Fixed term exclusion data

Academic Year	Total number of fixed period exclusions issued	Total number of pupils receiving a fixed period exclusion	Total number of school days lost
2015-2016	1,706	760	3,768.5
2016-2017	1,886	825	3,489.5
2017-2018	1,221	666	2,348.5
2018 -2019	1353	645	2741.5
2019-2020	1134	584	2079.0

The downward trend of FTEs for 19-20 is due to the sustained period of school closure during the lockdown period. Data also indicates that that majority of FTEs is attributable to key stages 3 and 4, with the majority in years 8 and 9.

Whilst the stabilisation of permanent exclusion, and the reduction in fixed term exclusions is to be welcomed, there is still work to be done to reduce exclusion across the board, and maintain the success of the managed move process. It is worth noting though that ultimately, academies hold the final decision around the issuing of exclusions, both fixed and permanent, and whilst every effort is made to support academies in reducing exclusions, often they follow directives from their own Trust.



North East Lincolnshire remains an active participant in the regional exclusions group to share best and innovative practice and hosted the group in the summer of 2019. The Inclusion Lead Officer and the SEN Strategic Lead Officer also met with Cheshire West and Chester to examine their 'Averting Exclusions' Project Report and the range of innovative strategies and protocols they were deploying to reduce exclusions. This work has formed part of the new BAC working party, established in Autumn 2020.

KEY ISSUES TO NOTE:

Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and Alternative Provision Arrangements:

Wellspring Academy Trust provide the local authority's PRU provision. In addition to the trust's commissioned primary provision the local authority also directly commissions two primary resource based provisions at Western Primary School (local authority maintained school) and My Space at Eastfield Primary Academy (Enquire Learning Trust) and monitors these 2 provisions under their respective service level agreement and contract monitoring arrangements.

Arrangements are in place to monitor the Wellspring Academy Trust's Pupil Referral Unit places availability and commissioned alternative provision which includes:

- Data shared on a weekly basis between the trust and the local authority's Inclusion Team to track movement of the children and young people across the PRUs and the alternative provision commissioned by the trust.
- Termly update and evaluation meetings are held between the trust and the local authority to plan towards future need and demand; monitor any developing issues across the Wellspring provision and continued compliance with statutory obligations in relation to children and young people excluded from and/or educated outside of mainstream education.
- Evaluation of key indicators including academic attainment; value added achievement; school attendance; and Ofsted reports are monitored strategically by the local authority to ensure quality of provision is consistent and continues to offer the best possible educational outcomes for those children and young people placed in the trust's commissioned provision.
- All decisions around increments and/or changes in the level of provision provided by the trust and any strategic changes within the commissioning model are presented for discussion, consideration, and decision by a range of relevant forums i.e., primary, and secondary head teacher meetings; behaviour and attendance collaborative (BAC) working parties; Education Link Officers and Schools Forum.

Primary and Secondary Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative (BAC)

The primary and secondary BACs are a mechanism that enables schools and academies to work collaboratively in a mutually supportive environment; the mechanism holds collective responsibility for children and young people who face difficulties in responding appropriately within a school environment. The BACs are a voluntary, non-statutory arrangement which involves all primary and secondary schools/academies in North East Lincolnshire and are designed to promote 'sector-led' improvement in relation to children and young people who are the responsibility of participating schools/academies. Referrals to the BAC process can only be made in cases where the child or young person is registered on the roll of a school/academy.

There are separate fortnightly and weekly BAC panel meetings for the primary (fortnightly) and secondary (weekly) phase to reflect the different needs of the children and young people and the establishments in these phases. The core of each BAC's activity is a weekly panel meeting where school/academy representatives come together to consider referrals and propose appropriate outcomes for children and young people referred to the BAC.

The local authority's Inclusion Service facilitates and chairs the BAC meetings, which in addition to respective primary and secondary school/academy representatives includes representation from the Wellspring Academy Trust, Education Psychology, Special Advisory Teacher for Social, Emotional & Mental Health, the Education Mental Health Service (Compass Go), and Young People's Support



Service (post-16 based advice around career, apprenticeships etc). The BAC has also benefitted from attendance from both Early Help and Social Care management, offering an enhanced contextual insight and supportive mechanisms which may be afforded to the families of the young person involved. This has included a range of early intervention and prevention services such as family group conferencing services and specialist family practitioners. All referrals are supported against a clear model of process using the 'Six Models of Behaviour' document; this model indicates clear guidelines in relation to any referral made to the BAC and the range of interventions which should be sought prior to the referral. As part of work to manage both occupancy and sufficiency of places regular meetings are held with providers in order that supporting vulnerable students, and strategic planning supports the collaborative approach to the occupancy within the PRU/AP settings.

Within this academic year all children and young people outside of mainstream educational settings have had most of their educational time within settings that are close in nature to mainstream educational settings, thereby supporting educational progress and attainment. This has supported the increased emphasis for children and young people to return to mainstream educational settings and reduced placements in alternative education provision. Wellspring Academy Trust now place a significant majority of all children and young people on education packages that are primarily based in the PRU settings, with a small proportion having their education supplemented by placement in alternative provision settings enhancing educational outcomes.

PROGRESS TO DATE:

- During the Autumn term of 2020, the Strategic Lead for Special Educational Needs, and the Inclusion Lead examined a variety of regional models designed to support and reduce exclusions, with a view to remodel the current secondary BAC model. Analysis of the referrals made to the primary and secondary BACs indicated a range of complexity including high levels of SEND, a significant number of year 11 referrals with alternative provision the only route forward, long-term AP placements impacting on occupancy, the range of complexities with the referrals, parental understanding of the process, and year 7 transition which had been affected by the first lockdown period.
- A BAC working party was developed in Autumn 2020, with initial representation from five of the ten local secondary heads to give a strategic insight into their perception of the effectiveness of the current secondary BAC model; to develop the scope to further support young people at risk of exclusion, to strengthen its role in supporting children and young people to remain in mainstream settings and to consider the implementation of a secondary 'pre-BAC' model to align closely with one of the local authority's key priorities of early intervention. Secondary heads felt there were real strengths with the current model including the focus on collaboration, transparency within information sharing, and the continued increase in the well-established collaborative membership such as social care, careers and mental health services thereby offering effective multi-agency support for schools and the young people who were referred.
- Currently, a dedicated and experienced member of the senior leadership from each primary resource base supporting schools/academies with both pre-BAC measures (that supported schools/academies to manage children with increased levels of challenge) and support for schools/academies to transition their children back into mainstream settings. The effectiveness of this primary phase pre-BAC model and supportive approach has further strengthened the need for an equivalent to be developed within the secondary phase.
- Continued discussion at the secondary heads' meetings has supported the analysis of the level of pupil premium data and adjustments made to individual BAC allocations to support those with a high intake against this measure. This work started in September 2018 and will continue through the development of the strategic arm of the BAC working party. NELC officers report to both the secondary and primary heads forums on a termly basis in order that up-to-date information can be provided to head teachers as well as shaping the early intervention needed around emerging issues to foster the collaborative approach to supporting students across the area. This allows



academies with a high level of autonomy to work as collective to support the hardest to reach students in NEL.

Vulnerability factors linked to students at risk of exclusion or permanently excluded students

The evidence both locally, regionally, and nationally is clear that there is direct link between students who are placed outside mainstream settings for their education and increased vulnerability in relation to being linked to Child Criminal Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation or patterns of going missing. To support early identification and support, there has been a focus on:

- CCE/CSE training focused within PRU/AP settings as a priority and completed, with promotion of training for all phases as part of the work stream of the Safeguarding in Education Group.
- Regular updates provided to the secondary BAC members and secondary heads around key areas of vulnerability (CCE/CSE and Missing), as well as requests and advice around intelligence.
- Continued attendance at the Operational Vulnerability Meetings by the team, ensuring that key intelligence is shared with safeguarding leads in academies.
- Development of multi –agency focus of both the primary and secondary BAC meetings, including social care management and Compass Go, with one of its key foci of support; the mental health of young people who are at risk of exclusion.

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Exclusions 2020-21

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Current Context

- The local authority has seen a reduction in school exclusions (both permanent and fixed-term) across both phases of education over a sustained period from the high point of 2015-2016.
- The general stabilisation of numbers around permanent exclusions indicates that the supportive mechanism of the BAC process (Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative*) continues to enable children and young people to be supported through a managed move process**, thereby reducing permanent exclusion as the only option available to all headteachers.

*The Behaviour and Attendance Collaborative is a weekly meeting of senior leaders at both the primary and secondary phases to look at a managed move for a pupil rather than an exclusion

**change of school for a trial period

Secondary Comparative Data Analysis

Autumn 2020 to Autumn 2019

- 60% reduction in the number of cases presented to the secondary BAC.
- 9% increase in managed moves
- 11% decrease in alternative provision placements
- 10% decrease in Permanent Exclusions
- 24% decrease in the number of pupil premium pupils referred to the BAC

Primary Data Comparative Analysis

Autumn 2020 to Autumn 2019

- 47% reduction in the number of cases presented to the BAC.
- 33% decrease in managed moves.
- 50% decrease in alternative provision placements.

Whilst the number of managed moves has decreased, this is testament to the range of supportive mechanisms which have been embedded, including:

Pre-BAC support (early intervention using a range of strategies)

Multi Agency meetings with social care and the families involved

Person Centred / Video Interactive Guidance with Educational Psychology.

Challenges:

- Mixed-market approach with BAC referrals.
- Increasing demand on AP places at the start of the term
- Challenges with both partial closure of settings
- Inter-connectedness of cohort
- Parental understanding of the BAC: requesting places / turning down places

How did we respond:

- Co-produced a BAC leaflet for parents to explain the process
- Developed a BAC working party with the SEND Strategic Lead and Inclusion Lead with secondary heads to plan and formulate the development of this group
- Met with Cheshire West and Chester following the publication of their 'Averting Exclusions Project Report
- Collaborative membership extended to include both social care, and early help managers, Young People's Support Service and specialist teachers
- Embedded 'Compass Go' and the mental health education support team as part of their remit on vulnerable groups / BAC referrals

What do we need to do next:

- Establish the operational element of the BAC working party
- Collect intelligence around different models of exclusion management from a variety of local authorities
- Development of the inclusion officer role to ensure full coverage of caseload management including behaviour and education welfare officers
- Consider the development of a 'pre-BAC' (early intervention) process for secondary referrals to ensure all avenues of support are explored for a young person prior to the submission of a BAC referral