

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	School Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions
Meeting date	23 January 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>This report outlines the importance of a full-time education in the right education provision for children. It provides information on the current level of suspensions and permanent exclusions in BCP compared to both the South West and England.</p> <p>The Local Authority is concerned by the high rate of both suspensions and permanent exclusions for children in BCP and will be working closely with the Department for Education (DfE) and all schools to both understand and improve this position.</p> <p>Our focus now is to improve the rates of attendance and inclusion across the system with our partners. The aim being to reduce the number of children missing out on their learning. Actions regarding this are detailed in the report and includes details of the national policies that have been recently published. These actions illustrate how they will support the changes needed to reduce the number of children being suspended and permanently excluded.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Overview and Scrutiny understand the current position of vulnerable learners in BCP place. b) An update on the progress across the Education System throughout this academic year linked to the Education Improvement work is brought for your attention at the end of the Academic year.
Reason for recommendations	<p>a) It is vital that all our children access their full education entitlement and that they enjoy, thrive and achieve at school.</p> <p>b) Currently, too many of our children and young people are not accessing their full entitlement. All stakeholders within BCP place must understand and arrest this issue. Our developing Education Improvement programme of work means that we will work with our schools at each phase, which will allow us to understand what needs to change for the system and individual children to improve the current position.</p>

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

Background

1. Recent national guidance from the DfE have required local strategies for both alternative provision and attendance to be written. Both strategies expect local systems to be implemented which ensure that children receive a suitable full-time education.
2. In March 2023 the DfE released the national guidance 'Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan' (Background Paper 1). The document states that one of the reasons it is needed is due to 82% of children and young people in AP having identified SEN and therefore a requirement for a more inclusive system is needed. The guidance outlines a model for AP that is fully integrated with the wider SEND system and that will offer early, targeted support which will include time-limited places as well as longer term places and an opportunity to offer outreach that could include advice, guidance, coaching and modelling. This would support schools to keep children in mainstream education rather than permanently excluding them. The guidance also sets out the governments vision, national standards, additional finance, clear accountability, the introduction of a new leadership level qualification for SENDcos and a standardised EHCP process.
3. 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' was published in May 2022 (Background Paper 2). This outlines the importance of school attendance but also that improving it is everyone's business. It makes clear that securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation and is not the responsibility of one single person, school or service. The BCP Education strategy will outline how we will overcome the barriers to accessing education and link with the Alternative Provision and the Early Help strategy. These will detail how partners will work together to ensure the system for children allows them to access education.
4. This report provides an overview of children not currently accessing their education full entitlement. It should be noted that excluding children and young people from a school, whether it is permanently or for a certain period of time, results in a loss of valuable learning time. This is proven to have an impact on children and young people's results and outcomes. The definitions of permanent exclusion and suspensions is as follows:
 - a. **Permanent Exclusion** - *'A permanent exclusion is the most serious sanction a school can give if a child does something that is against the school's behaviour policy (the school rules). It means that the child is no longer allowed to attend the school and their name will be removed from the school roll.'* The permanent

exclusion rate is calculated as the number of permanent exclusions divided by the number of pupils (x100). A rate of 0.01 would be equivalent to 1 permanent exclusion for every 10,000 pupils.

- b. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide education for children that are permanently excluded. *“For permanent exclusions, the local authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin from the sixth school day after the first day the permanent exclusion took place. This will be the pupil's ‘home authority’ in cases where the school is in a different local authority area. The school should collaborate with the local authority when the pupil might be eligible for free home to school travel, arranged by the local authority, to the place where they will be receiving education”.* (Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Guidance September 2023 – Background Paper 3)
 - c. **Suspension** (previously known as a Fixed Term Exclusion) - ‘A child who gets into serious trouble at school can be suspended for a fixed period of time. Schools can suspend a child if: they have seriously broken school rules, allowing them to stay in school would seriously harm their education or welfare, or the education or welfare of other pupils’. The suspension rate is calculated as the total number of suspensions, divided by the total number of pupils (x100).
5. Children who are permanently excluded or suspended from mainstream education will lose learning time which can impact on their educational outcomes and potentially increase the likelihood of them becoming Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) in the future.

BCP Profile of Activity

6. Most children and young people within BCP are educated in mainstream provision or specialist schools. In 2022/23 the percentage of pupils placed in alternative provision funded by the Local Authority was 0.77%. Although this appears a relatively small proportion, it is significantly higher than the national average of 0.41%. As well as the percentage of pupils placed in alternative provision funded by the Local Authority being significantly higher than the national average, the number of pupils in such placements has increased from 302 in 2019/20 to 426 in 2022/23. Children in such placements are likely to study a reduced number of subjects at GCSEs when compared to a mainstream school which can negatively impact their outcomes and limit potential destinations for post 16 education.
7. The number of both suspensions and permanent exclusions of children and young people in BCP schools has increased since the pandemic. At the end of academic year 2022/23 the number of permanent exclusions exceeded pre pandemic numbers.

Number of Permanent Exclusions Bournemouth and Poole 2018/19	Number of Permanent Exclusions BCP 2022/23	Number of children that received one or more suspension Bournemouth and Poole 2018/19	Number of children that received one or more suspension BCP 2022/23
104	118	1278	1708

8. The table below shows the rate of permanent exclusions (PEX) and suspensions compared to the Southwest region and National data. This placed BCP **140 out of 152** authorities for the highest rate of exclusions. BCP was ranked **124 out of 152** authorities for the highest rate of suspensions.

	PEX (rate) B'mouth	PEX (rate) Poole	PEX (rate) BCP	PEX (rate) Southwest	PEX (rate) National	Suspension (rate) B'mouth	Suspension (rate) Poole	Suspension (rate) BCP	Suspension (rate) Southwest	Suspension (rate) National
2017/18	0.22	0.20		0.12	0.10	8.24	5.86		5.91	5.08
2018/19	0.29	0.17		0.11	0.10	9.67	6.07		6.45	5.36
2019/20			0.12	0.07	0.06			5.9	4.55	3.76
2020/21			0.09	0.05	0.05			5.68	5.46	4.25
2021/22			0.14	0.09	0.08			8.79	8.13	6.91

For 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and permanent exclusions were possible throughout the academic year, pandemic restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

9. The latest comparative data for autumn term 2022/23 shows that the overall exclusion rate was double the national average. However, this was not consistent across all phases. The comparatively high rate was a result of high rates of exclusion from secondary schools, with the rate of exclusion from primary and special schools being lower than the national average.
10. Numerous reasons have been suggested by stakeholders for the high and increasing rates of exclusion from BCP secondary schools. These have included: the increasing implementation of binary approaches to discipline within secondary schools; financial and staffing pressures eroding schools' capacities to provide support for children who are presenting behaviour that challenges; reduced flexibility on the part of schools to provide a varied and differentiated curriculum that includes vocational options; increasing parental pressure to remove disruptive pupils; children entering school without being adequately socialised as a result of the pandemic; the movement of resource from the Local Authority as a consequence of the academisation process resulting in a reduction in support services being provided by the Local Authority; a lack of high quality alternative provision and behaviour support services to enable early intervention; and the impact of wider family and societal issues and a lack of support for schools to address these.
11. It is likely that a combination of the above, rather than one single issue, are responsible for the high and increasing rate of exclusion from school locally and consequently, any strategy seeking to address this will need to consider a wide range of factors.

Primary

12. Over the last three years the rate of permanent exclusions for primary schools in BCP has followed the national and regional trend. In 2021/22 the rate was lower than the national and regional trend. When considering the rate of pupils receiving one or more suspensions, the trend for BCP follows both national and regional however the rate is higher than national although lower than regional.
13. BCP sees a positive picture for permanent exclusions in primary schools however any missed education due to permanent exclusions or suspensions can impact on a child's education because of missed learning. It can result in diagnosis of special

educational needs taking longer, limited interaction with peers and difficulties with transition to secondary school.

	National PEX (rate)	Southwest PEX (rate)	B'mouth PEX (rate)	Poole PEX (rate)	BCP PEX (rate)	National Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate)	Southwest Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate)	B'mouth Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate)	Poole Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate)	BCP Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate)
2017/18	0.03	0.04	0.00	0.05		0.62	0.74	0.70	0.63	
2018/19	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02		0.63	0.79	0.81	0.64	
2019/20	0.02	0.03			0.05	0.50	0.67			0.61
2020/21	0.01	0.01			0.02	0.52	0.70			0.63
2021/22	0.02	0.02			0.01	0.68	0.82			0.77

For 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and permanent exclusions were possible throughout the academic year, pandemic restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

Secondary

- The rate of permanent exclusions both pre and post Covid are higher than both national and regional trends. The rate of permanent exclusions over the last year has followed both the national and regional trend however the last reported year shows the rate at nearly double the national rate. This is alarming and an area where the local authority is concerned about, this means more children not accessing a full-time mainstream education that can lead to a limited GCSE outcome, a higher possibility of the children becoming NEET in year 12 and an associated higher risk of them becoming involved in criminal activity.

	PEX (rate) National	PEX (rate) southwest	PEX (rate) B'mouth	PEX (rate) Poole	PEX (rate) BCP	Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate) National	Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate) southwest	Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate) B'mouth	Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate) Poole	Pupil enrolments with one or more suspension (rate) BCP
2017/18	0.2	0.22	0.5	0.4		4.71	4.9	5.67	4.5	
2018/19	0.2	0.22	0.63	0.38		4.93	5.16	6.64	4.6	
2019/20	0.13	0.14	N/A	N/A	0.2	3.69	3.89	N/A	N/A	4.07
2020/21	0.1	0.1	N/A	N/A	0.18	4.38	4.81	N/A	N/A	4.25
2021/22	0.16	0.17	N/A	N/A	0.29	6.02	6.26	N/A	N/A	5.69

For 2019/20 and 2020/21, while suspensions and permanent exclusions were possible throughout the academic year, pandemic restrictions will have had an impact on the numbers presented and caution should be taken when comparing across years.

- The increase has led to the need to use more unregistered alternative provisions to provide education for children who are permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Unlike registered alternative provision, unregistered alternative providers are not schools and are not inspected by OFSTED. This has required a change in role for the Inclusion Officers in the Alternative Provision and Exclusion team, who now are required to monitor the attendance and curriculum of the provision whilst the pupil is attending so that we are reassured that the safety and outcomes of the pupil are of a high standard. They are then also responsible for supporting a

transition back to mainstream school. Where a registered alternative provider is used, they would undertake this role.

16. The cost of unregistered provision is significantly higher than that of the registered alternative provision places we commission agreed through the DfE. Full Time registered places cost £20,000 per year compared to unregistered which can cost up to £50,000 per year. This cost puts more strain on the already overspent Higher Needs Budget.

Protected Characteristics

17. In total there were 118 permanent exclusions in 2022/23 and the most prevalent reasons for this was persistent disruptive behaviour and physical abuse towards a fellow pupil.

BCP data 2022/23 – Permanent Exclusions

Secondary	Primary	Open to Social Care	Targeted Family support	Youth Justice Service	Children with and Education Health and care Plan (EHCP)	Children with SEN support	Male	Female	Highest Ethnic group – white British
94%	6%	22%	5%	8%	5%	42%	64%	36%	81%

18. The data above is taken from the BCP Council Inclusion dashboard (Appendix 1). This dashboard has been created to allow the Local Authority to monitor children who are missing out on education and work with partners to support children and families to attend school. The dashboard allows BCP Officers to understand patterns and trends and then work to improve the system accordingly.
19. We are currently working with the remaining 14 schools who have yet to sign up to our automatic import system that collects the data from schools. This should be noted when analysing the data above.

BCP data 2022/23 – Suspensions

Secondary	Primary	Open to Social Care	Targeted Family support	Youth Justice Service	Children with and Education , Health and care Plan (EHCP)	Children with SEN support	Male	Female
90%	10%	15%	3%	1.8%	14%	39%	65%	35%

20. The total number of suspensions at the end of 2022/23 were 5374 with 1708 children receiving one or more suspensions with a total of 9782 school days being lost. The most prevalent reason for suspending a child was due to persistent disruptive behaviour. This data is also taken from the BCP Council Inclusion dashboard.

21. Following chart shows the ethnicity of the child that was suspended. 507 of the 5374 suspensions in 2022/23 were issued to children defined in the school census as belonging to one of the minority ethnic groups shown below. This equates to 9.4% of suspensions. Pupils from these ethnic groups made up 14.4% of the school population which would suggest that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds were not disproportionately suspended. However, data would suggest that specific minority ethnic groups are disproportional suspended. These are specifically White and Black Caribbean pupils who represent 1.1% of the school population but received 2.3% of suspensions and White Gypsy and Roma pupils who represent 0.2% of the school population but received 1.2% of suspensions.



Current and Future Work – Focusing on Improving Outcomes for Vulnerable Learners

22. At the beginning of last academic year, The Education Entitlement Board (EEB) was set up to support the system in reducing the number of children missing out on education and reduce the number of permanent exclusions, this is a multi-agency board including members from: Targeted Family Support, Virtual School, Inclusion, SEND, EPS, schools (Primary and Secondary senior leaders), registered AP Headteachers and CAMHS. The Board looks at referrals that have been made by BCP Schools to the Inclusion team. looking for support regarding children who are missing out in education in some way or are at risk of doing so e.g. a permanent exclusion. The EEB offers advice and guidance and where necessary will use funding from the Higher Needs Block for alternative provision to support the school and pupil and prevent a permanent exclusion. Positively, last year less than 10% of the referrals that came to EEB resulted in a permanent exclusion. The Board is continuing this academic year.
23. We know that schools are currently reporting that the limited availability of alternative provision and limited budgets as being a contributing factor to the high number of exclusions. However, the use of Alternative Provision is too high, and we must work together with schools to understand how to arrest this position.
24. BCP currently commissions a total of 128 places for permanently excluded pupils at our pupil referral unit and two alternative provision academies. These places are currently all occupied, resulting in pupils having to be placed with private providers who are not Ofsted registered. Currently, there are 30 children who are accessing

education with such providers. If exclusions continue at the current rate, it is estimated that this will increase to over 100 pupils. Therefore, it is imperative that we work together across the school partnership to focus on early intervention strategies at both a local, school and individual child level to improve this position.

25. A Local Authority working group has been set up to focus on Alternative Provision, and the Local Authority is currently developing a new Alternative Provision Strategy. This strategy will be co-produced with schools. It is accepted that the Local Authority must ensure that it works in conjunction with schools, to both understand and investigate the reasons why children are being excluded and suspended. This work needs to happen by Primary and Secondary phase and will be focused on finding solutions to reduce the number of children receiving Alternative Provision. It is anticipated that this strategy will be published in March 2024.
26. Recently, BCP has been approached by two Academy Trusts to set up a unit attached to the school for children at risk of permanent exclusion. The Local Authority is committed to finding innovation solutions to build provision where needed but also to reduce the use of Alternative Provision through a wider focus on Inclusion.
27. At the recent Headteacher's Forum (4/12/23), Headteachers have been asked to approach the Interim Director of Education and Skills to discuss possible options for alternative provision. Next term every three weeks Breakfast Meetings will be in place with Head Teachers to discuss issues and themes affecting our children. These meetings will provide the Local Authority Officers and Head Teachers with thematic discussions and ensure that appropriate actions are in place to work together to address the patterns of exclusion within BCP. An Alternative Provision Group that will include schools is now being put into place and will be in place for the remainder of this Academic Year to look at ways to improve the system of our children that will allow all partners to find ways to keep our children in mainstream education or access the education provision that is right for them.

Launching the Inclusion Quality Mark across BCP Schools

28. In November 2023, the launch of BCP's Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM) took place where there was a strong attendance by schools in BCP. The IQM provides schools with a nationally recognised framework to guide their inclusion journey. The IQM team help schools to evaluate and measure how they are performing; empowering them to improve and grow. Using this quality mark allows schools to work together and find ways to ensure that all children can access mainstream education. It also provides local Authority with a way to understand how the system is working for our children who are being permanently excluded and suspended. This will focus on the changes need to be made by partners.
29. Educational Inclusion promotes equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, health, ability, disability, attainment, background etc. It pays particular attention to the provision made for, and the achievement of, distinct groups of pupils within a school and any pupils who are at risk of disaffection and exclusion.
30. The Local Authority Inclusion Service recognise the need for changes to be made within the system, its role and function as a system leader is to work closely with our partners to look at where those changes need to be made.

31. The specific Alternative Provision meetings (beginning in the new year) will be critical in our work. These meetings will allow us to work with multi and single Academy Trusts, DFE and Health to look at how we work together to improve our system. Continued use of the inclusion dashboard will allow the partnership to monitor children not accessing education by looking closely at attendance, suspensions, permanent exclusions, children that are electively home educated and children missing education. Alongside this, work is currently underway to improve how we monitor children in schools that are on part time timetables.
32. The implementation of the locality model and remodelled Early Help system will allow individual children to access the right support for them and their families from the system rather than schools feeling that they are the only partner that is offering support, which they reported feeling when the Early Help review began. This will happen through meetings often referred to as 'Team Around the Child' meetings (TAC) and the use of partnership documents, protocols and procedures.

Options Appraisal

33. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of financial implications

34. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of legal implications

35. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of human resources implications

36. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of sustainability impact

37. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of public health implications

38. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of equality implications

39. N/A as this report is for information only

Summary of risk assessment

40. N/A as this report is for information only

Background papers

- 1 - [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Alternative Provision \(AP\) Improvement Plan \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614441/Special_Educational_Needs_and_Disabilities_SEND_and_Alternative_Provision_AP_Improvement_Plan.pdf)
- 2 - [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614441/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)

3 - [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance September 2023
\(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Example of BCP Inclusion Dashboard