

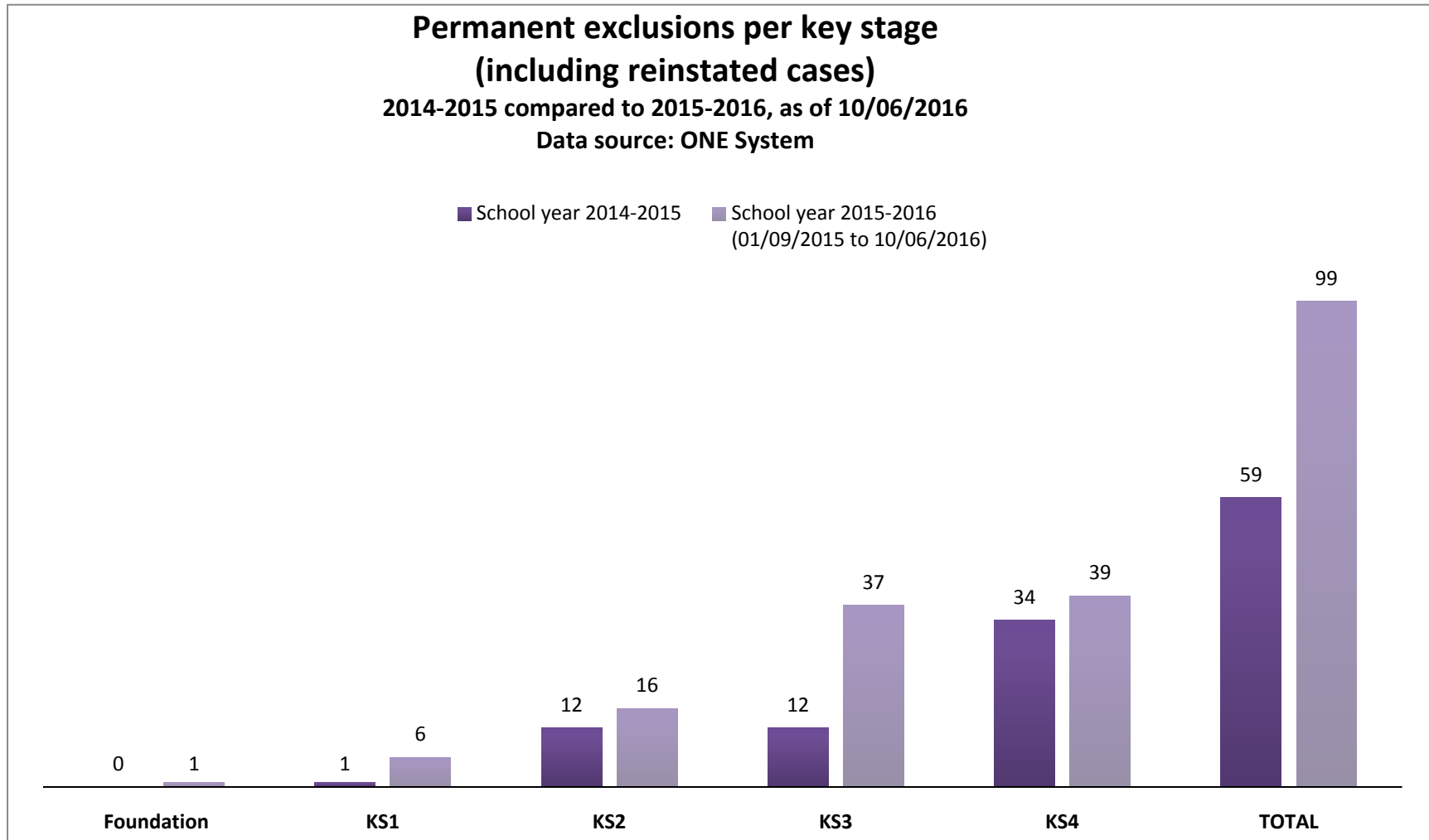
## **Task Group Review on School Exclusions in Devon: An Update**

The Educational Outcomes Task Group, comprising Councillors Hannan (Chair), Biederman, Dewhirst, Randall Johnson and Squires, presented its School Exclusions Review to the People's Scrutiny Committee on 21 March 2016, and made the following recommendations:

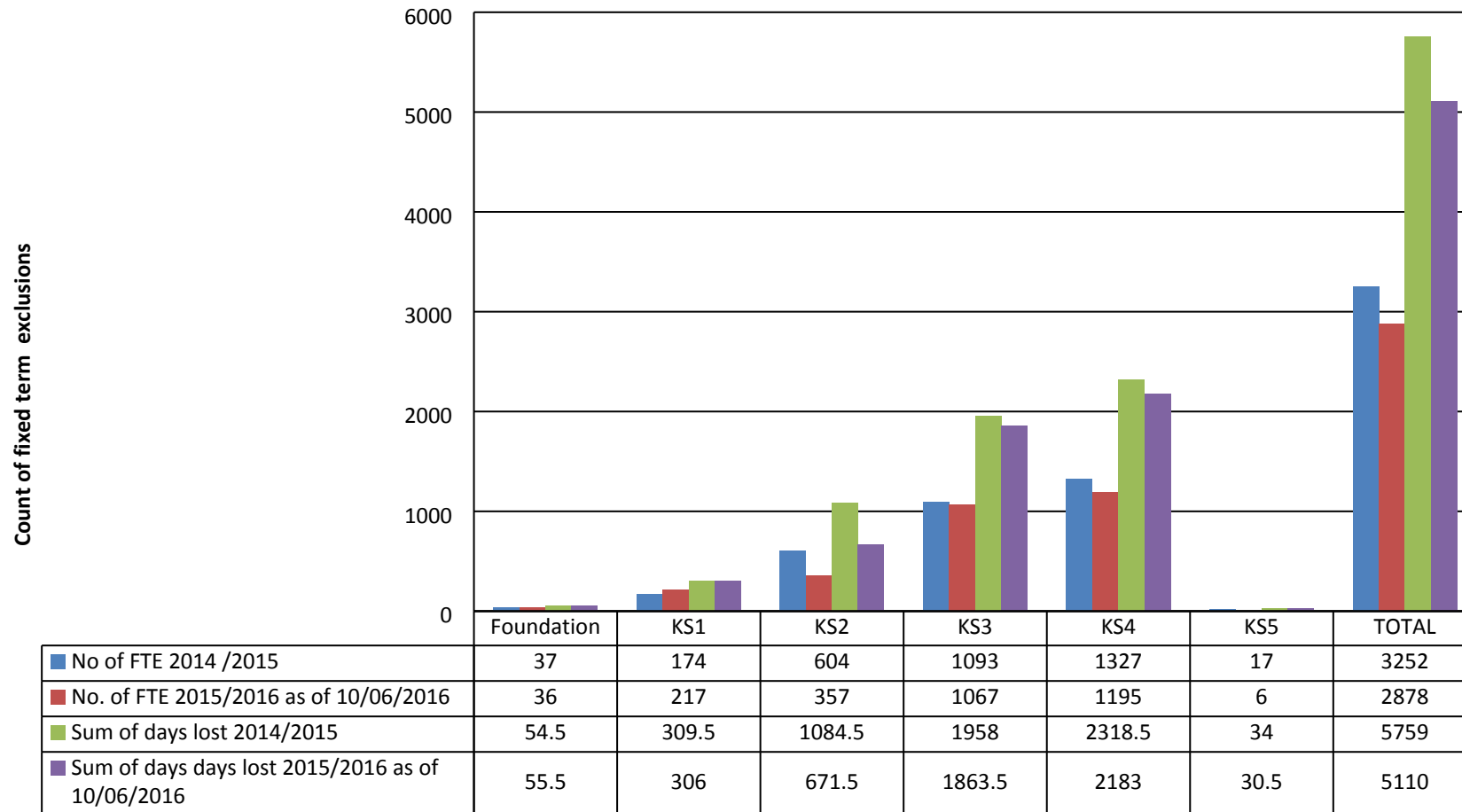
1. That the County Council in monitoring educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities pays particular attention to the extent to which these children are represented amongst those subject to permanent and fixed-term exclusions; any tendency for them to be more likely than others to be excluded should be investigated and measures proposed to address the issue. In addition, that the situation of black and minority ethnic children with particular regard to school exclusions be similarly monitored.
2. That the County Council and its Inclusion Officers, in partnership with Babcock LDP and in collaboration with schools who have outstanding practice in the field, further support schools in finding ways to become more inclusive by providing evidence-based knowledge and training about 'what works best'. From this review we conclude that there is a strong case for: fostering quieter classroom environments more conducive to work; teachers having a greater social awareness of their pupils and the problems they face; providing a wider curriculum to include vocational education.
3. That the County Council, in partnership with Babcock LDP and in collaboration with schools who have outstanding practice in the field, provides guidance and training to all schools with regard to emotional and social education.
4. That the County Council, in partnership with Babcock LDP and in collaboration with schools who have outstanding practice in the field, offers guidance and training to all schools on how effective pastoral support systems can be developed and provided for all pupils.
5. That the County Council asks its Inclusion Officers to investigate both the legality and effectiveness of the practice of providing 'late' and 'early' schools, and 'part-time timetables' in Devon schools, and issues guidance to all schools as a result.
6. That the County Council consults with other agencies and its various partners about how improvements could be made in the way schools provide for the needs of pupils who have mental health problems, with particular reference to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and its relationship to schools.
7. That the County Council establish a Task Group to investigate the impact of Elective Home Education on the education of children in Devon, to take up the points made in this report and in the briefing paper provided by Babcock LDP.

The recommendations of the Review were welcomed by Cabinet on 13 April 2016 and officers of the County Council were asked to take all appropriate action to take the recommendations forward. However, in May 2016 members were presented with the latest figures for Devon and agreed to meet again in order to investigate some alarming trends. On 27 June members met with David Archer and Marc Kastner (Inclusion Officers) to discuss the situation as described in an updated data set from a ONE System report run on 10 June.

## The Data



**Fixed Term Exclusions per Key Stage and sum of lost days  
2014-2015 compared to 2015-2016, as of 10/06/2016  
Data source: ONE system report run on 10/06/2016**



## **Permanent and Fixed-Term Exclusions in Devon: A Comparison of 2014/15 and 2015/16**

The above charts present the basic information comparing the whole of school year 2014/15 with part of 2015/16 (01/09/15 – 10/06/16), with respect to permanent exclusions (PEX) and fixed-term exclusions (FTE) for each key stage.

From these it would appear that permanent exclusions are rising substantially overall and to varying extents in each key stage. This is especially significant as the 2015/16 figures cover a period a month or so short of a full academic year. The situation for FTEs is almost the opposite, with a slight fall overall (measured by both number of FTEs and days lost) and in most key stages.

The Inclusion Officers were asked at the 27<sup>th</sup> June meeting for their explanations of these findings and to generally describe the situation as they experienced it. They made the following points:

1. Secondary schools can feel under intense pressure to get the best possible exam results as they are now assessed in terms of their performance with regard to Progress 8, a value-added measure based on pupils' GCSE results compared to their Key Stage 2 scores. Some schools may find it difficult to admit or retain children likely to lower their overall levels of attainment or who might disrupt other children's learning.
2. The Progress 8 measure was supposed to acknowledge the contribution of non-traditional and more vocational subjects but this has not happened, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum with an emphasis on academic attainment, thus alienating some students.
3. Some schools can be more concerned by Ofsted ratings and their overall exam results rather than the impact a permanent exclusion may have on a young person's future. High exclusion rates do not appear to be a significant factor in terms of an Ofsted judgement, and may be less of a concern to some headteachers than exam results.
4. Across every key stage schools now appear to be looking much more at the possibility of permanently excluding persistently disruptive children. Primary schools are making permanent exclusions. Officers are putting in extra support but the rate is going up.
5. One secondary school appears not to be offering places for children who in primary school had a record of difficult behaviour. At the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 secondary schools are making judgements about certain pupils, indicating that they will be unable to meet their needs.
6. Pupils who just about managed in primaries and move into secondary school without any plans being made to provide for their needs are a cause of great concern in terms of their being at risk of future exclusion.
7. Officers now have to do much more in the way of 'fire-fighting' rather than prevention.

## **Impact of Education Excellence Everywhere White Paper**

We do not yet know whether the policies relating to exclusion in the White Paper will be implemented. In the meantime evidence from other local authorities is that exclusions are increasing throughout the West of England. The White Paper sets out plans to require schools to take on more responsibility in terms of the consequences of permanently excluding a student, including having to pay for alternative provision. Whilst this should reduce the number of children permanently excluded, it is likely to lead to an increase in unofficial exclusions, use of part-time timetables and perhaps ultimately push more young people

towards the criminal justice system. There is also a possibility that primary schools will under-report problems with a child as they will be concerned that otherwise a secondary school will not take them. There are examples of primary schools that have not fully detailed and mapped the needs of some children (using the Devon Assessment Framework) prior to the move into secondary school.

### **Inclusion Officers**

The Inclusion Officers work to avoid permanent exclusions taking place. They do not feel that their relationship with academies is any different to that with schools in the maintained sector, as they have good relationships with all primary and secondary schools in Devon. Of the 99 permanent exclusions in 2015/16 to date Inclusion Officers have been involved with all but one of these cases; only very occasionally is a child permanently excluded who is unknown to them. A new member of staff in the Inclusion Team has a background working in CAMHS and whose role within the team will include specialist work to help schools in terms of thresholds and support for children with mental health issues. It is, though, increasingly difficult for the Inclusion Officers to get to all the school governor meetings that they should, as well as to be able to provide early support.

### **Supplementary Funding Pot**

On 66 occasions in 2014/15 the Inclusion Officers provided funding to a school for a pupil at risk of permanent exclusion at a cost of £38,000. Only 6 of the young people supported in this way failed to maintain their school placement. The supplementary funding is demonstrably effective, and yet its future is under threat. Extra money by itself though does not guarantee success, which also depends on the school adopting a culture of inclusive education.

### **SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**

More money is going into SEND in Devon than in nearby local authorities. Schools get at least two levels of funding. Element 1 is per capita funding (the Age Weighted Pupil Unit) designed to cover the learning needs of all children in the school, including those with SEND, and Element 2 is the notional SEND budget intended to cover the needs of children who require extra help costing up to £6,000 pa each. They may also be eligible for a third, which is known as Element 3 and is designed for those pupils with needs costing more than £6,000 pa each, the overall cost of which is met from the local authority's 'high needs block'. Schools are putting expensive interventions in place, but they are not always getting Element 3 funding as behavioural issues are no longer classified as SEND. Children now need to have an identified learning difficulty to support an application for high needs block funding. As a result the waiting list for an Autism assessment is between 18 and 24 months. Devon also has more special schools per head of school population than any other county and could possibly fill many more places.

### **Alternative Provision**

All young people who are permanently excluded are offered a place with SchoolsCompany (which runs what were previously known as Pupil Referral Units) and those pupils in Years 10/11 will tend to stay there until they have finished their GCSEs. It is a challenge moving pupils on from SchoolsCompany provision as many schools do not want these pupils. There is a reliance on those schools that do have a fully inclusive culture. It is much easier for schools to reintegrate a bright child than one who is lower achieving. There is an issue in terms of the cost of alternative provision given the rise in permanent exclusions. Currently when a young person is permanently excluded the school loses the Age Weighted Pupil Unit.

### **Domestic and Pupil Violence**

It would appear that there are now more parents who are less able to effectively raise and care for their children, with examples across the social spectrum. Anecdotally domestic violence appears to be a factor behind the level of violent incidents in Key Stage 1.