

UPDATE ON PROGRESS AGAINST RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS REVIEW TASK GROUP REPORT

Report of the Designate Head of Education and Learning

Recommendation:

To note the content, current status of progress and ongoing plans for action

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#### 1. Background/Introduction

The report provides an update on the progress made against actions identified in the People's Scrutiny School Exclusions Review. This report was completed by Educational Outcomes task and finish group.

#### 2. Main Text/Proposal

### Recommendation 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.

#### Update on progress:

Monthly Monitoring and annual reporting data has been revised to reflect the actions above. In relation to annual reporting original trend data (as reported on page 3 of the 2016 Annual Exclusion Report) outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those with special educational needs and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds are all now monitored as individual groups. The report additionally identifies the factor by which children and young people in these age groups are over represented. Data is benchmarked against the most recent National data.

Guidelines have also been updated and recommend that interim reviews should be held for any child with a statutory plan prior to considering a managed move or permanent exclusion. This allows for greater consideration and thinking about a child's needs. A tool kit is also being finalised which sets about identifying the suitability for any child considering a managed move and whether they have the capacity to change if they are provided with a new environment.

### Recommendation 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.

#### **Update on progress:**

In order to establish good practice a school research project was led by Babcock with support from the Inclusion officers to:

- Identify the situations/reasons why pupils behaviour becomes problematic and results in exclusion
- To seek information from schools highlighting strategies which are working well and to promote inclusion and reduce exclusion
- To identify difficulties that schools are facing in meeting the needs of pupils who have become excluded.

The report, which is in the process of being shared with schools and stakeholder groups including DAPH, DASH and SHAD, identified a wide range of strategies which can be helpful. However the report also acknowledged the link with many of the pupils having more complex social or emotional needs or challenging backgrounds.

The below provides a brief outline of some of the effective strategies identified:

- De-escalation in both primary and secondary schools emphasises pupils making good choices and learning how to avoid conflict when they become angry.
- The collection and analysis of data to pinpoint the type of incidents that trigger disciplinary measures. Interventions are then targeted at particular groups and particular behaviours.
- Work with pupils on self-esteem and anger management
- Providing pupils with a key adult or mentor who takes a close interest in their progress and personal development.
- Internally excluding pupils, or sending them to a partner school, enabling them to reflect on their behaviour while continuing to attend an educational setting.
- Improving transition between primary and secondary schools.
- Work with the community agencies, for example police, fire service and youth services to promote aspects of responsible citizenship.
- Close work with parents, identifying pupils at risk and building bridges with their parents before incidents happen.
- Providing praise/recognition for small achievements.
- Developing a personalised curriculum involving more practical learning and alternative provision.

In addition a process has been set in place where the inclusion officers are able to identify any child with a Fixed term Exclusion and immediately notify Babcock. The internal referral / access to support systems and Early Help within Babcock Learner Support has also been refined to ensure schools, settings and pupils are given timely, effective and targeted support from the appropriate professional. This will ensure there is no delay in getting identified support where needed but also creates conversations about inclusion and aims to encourage schools to think about the underlying cause of the behaviour and how the use of outside agencies and in particular how participation at Early Help Forums can garner new thinking and develop different strategies.

### Recommendation 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.

#### Update on progress:

- Emotional Literacy Support Assistant training has now been offered to all schools and this has been well received.
- Early Help for Mental Health (EM4MH) has empowered schools to understand 'mental health' issues and at what point a child may need a mental health intervention, rather than requesting an intervention in order to meet thresholds. The Education Wellbeing advisor has been effective in supporting primary school headteachers to identify the needs of individual children and how school can offer a more supportive environment. This has enabled schools to re-evaluate what and how they provide support and developed a greater understanding of the health issue and how they can impact in behaviour.

### Recommendation 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.

#### Update on progress:

An initial scoping project to understand what the issues are has been completed. This has identified which schools are high excluders, which schools are managing inclusion effectively and is in the process of being shared with key stakeholders such as schools, DASH, DAPH and SHAD.

Areas of good practice have been identified as well as some areas where there is a need for improved skills, training and management of resources. Key schools which manage inclusion effectively have been identified and will be used to provide models of good practice. An example is provided below.

*“Work with pupils on self-esteem and anger management, individually or in a small group withdrawal setting has been established in some schools. Provision may be in, or close to, the school. Some staff have been specially trained in this work and are having a demonstrable impact. All the pupils spoken to, including those attending special school and in the PRUs, recognised how being in a small group helped them to improve their work and behaviour. Several stated they had a better understanding of how their behaviour affected others.”*

The research has also indicated that often

*“the reason for the exclusion is not the original offence but the pupils subsequent response to authority that results in escalation and exclusion. For example a pupil may be sent out of the class for an infringement of class rules but then refuses to move to work in withdrawal room and is subsequently excluded.”*

*The success of this type of support is outlined in DFE: 2016 Mental health and behaviour in schools.*

Moving forward the next stage will involve a series of workshops across localities which will use identified schools to model and share good practice with an outcome of co-producing a set of good practice guidance materials, case studies and a Devon Charter for Inclusion.

A behaviour conference will take place in November with a focus on exploring some of the issues raised in the report. The conference will promote a range of practical approaches and interventions designed to meet the Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs of all students, support the most vulnerable, enable every child to engage with the curriculum in order to be more successful learners. It will enable attendees from Devon schools to explore practical strategies and ideas to improve children's readiness to engage and learn about a range of effective interventions and practices which will support vulnerable young people.

### **Recommendation 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.

#### **Update on progress:**

Late school was investigated by the Inclusion Officers with DfE and County Solicitor input. Whilst this practice was only ever implemented by a few schools comprehensive guidance was issued in Sept 16. We are not currently aware of any schools using 'early' or 'late' school.

In relation to Part-time time tables (PTTT) Devon is working within the OFSTED guidelines and now has a very robust system in place of which all schools are aware. This requires all schools to notify the LA of any pupil put onto a reduced timetable. Guidance is clear that it is only where the school can demonstrate a good educational reason to reduce a timetable that it may be considered. A move to a part time timetable is considered at a multi-disciplinary meeting, ideally with Educational Psychologist (EPs) input, and only when parents are fully supportive can it go ahead. Where there are safeguarding issues PTTs should NOT be considered. PTTT updated guidance is dated Sept 2016 and available on the website. Regular conversations take place between the Education Welfare Service/Educational Psychologists, the behaviour support team and Inclusion officers about any irregular school attendance

### **Recommendation 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.

#### **Update on progress:**

Clear pathways and support for pupils with mental health conditions is being addressed as part of work undertaken by the Children and Young Peoples Joint commissioning group. This group includes Devon and CCG Officers and also links with expert groups which include schools and front line officers.

The Early Help for Mental Health Group (EH4MH) is also providing valuable support to schools and young people. It additionally provides clinical supervision for schools on a regular basis. Schools welcome this as it supports staff to develop their practice and has provided increased inclusion.

### **Recommendation 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.

**Update on progress:** This was Educational Task Group action; however it is constrained by the Councils legal remit in this area.

### **Financial Considerations**

Whilst there are no direct costs from this report it should be noted that increased numbers of exclusion put further pressure on the High Needs Block. Schools would also note that Devon's lower than average per pupil funding rate means they have less resource available to support children in school. This situation is likely to worsen over the coming year with the impact of the national living wage, apprenticeship levy etc and the delay in the introduction of the National Funding Formula etc.

Dawn Stabb

**Electoral Divisions:** All

Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Skills: Councillor James McInnes

Chief Officer for Childrens Services: Jo Olsson

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

*Contact for Enquiries:*

Jo Olsson, Head of Service for Childrens Social Care and Child Protection

Email: [jo.olsson@devon.gov.uk](mailto:jo.olsson@devon.gov.uk)

Tel No: 01392 381093

Room: 130, County Hall