

People's Scrutiny Committee

School Exclusions Review: Educational Outcomes Task Group

Final Report

21 March 2016



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Preface

The Task Group — Councillors Andy Hannan (Chair), Frank Biederman, Alistair Dewhirst, John Hone, Sara Randall Johnson and Margaret Squires — would like to place on record its gratitude to the witnesses who contributed to the review. In particular thanks to those schools that the Task Group visited, who provided such interesting sessions for the members.

In submitting its recommendations, the Group has sought to ensure that its findings are supported with evidence and information to substantiate its proposals.

On 22 June 2015 People's Scrutiny resolved that the Educational Outcomes Task Group be reconvened for a discrete, time-limited piece of work reviewing school exclusions. The terms of reference for the review were:

1. To understand how the school exclusion process operates and the work undertaken to prevent exclusions.
2. To explore the reasons for exclusions, along with trends and incidence.
3. To assess the school based provision in place to reduce exclusion.
4. To consider alternative and offsite provision.
5. To examine the County Council's commissioning of and education offer from the Schools Company.
6. To evaluate how funding is used to support students at risk of exclusion, including therapeutic and specialist support.
7. To review multi-agency engagement with children and young people at risk of exclusion.
8. To report back to the People's Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Task Group.

Limited time has necessitated that this report provides no more than a snapshot highlighting significant issues relating to educational outcomes.

Glossary of Terms

EHCP - Education, Health and Care Plan: a statutory multi agency assessment with supporting actions and services. Similar to a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which it replaces.

EHE – Elective Home Education is the term used by the Department for Education to describe the parents' (or carers') decision to provide education for their children at home instead of sending them to school. This is different from home tuition or alternative provision by the local authority. Some parents may choose to engage private tutors, but there is no requirement for them to do so. Learning may take place in a variety of locations, not just in the family home.

FTE – Fixed-Term Exclusion (a child is temporarily suspended but returns to the same school). A fixed-term exclusion is always for a set number of days. During the first five days of a fixed-term exclusion it is the parents' (or carers') responsibility to make sure their child remains at home and is not present in a public place during school hours. For a fixed-period exclusion of more than five school days, the governing body (or local authority in relation to a pupil excluded from a pupil referral unit) must arrange suitable full-time education for any pupil of compulsory school age. This provision must begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion, although in Devon every effort is made to start such provision from day one. The maximum amount of time that any child can be excluded from school for a fixed term is 45 school days in an academic year. This may be either a single exclusion of 45 days or a number of exclusions, which together total 45 school days.

Managed Move – A system designed to allocate a child who is at risk of permanent exclusion to another school, usually on a trial basis in the first instance.

PEX - Permanent Exclusion (a child is expelled from his/her school). For permanent exclusions, the local authority must arrange suitable full-time education for the pupil to begin no later than the sixth day of the exclusion – in Devon every effort is made to arrange such provision from day one. Alternative destinations for those excluded include another school, a Pupil Referral Unit and (exceptionally) Elective Home Education.

SEN - Means Special Educational Needs whereas **SEND**, the new term, means Special Educational Needs & Disability. Either term describes the needs of children who have a difficulty or disability which makes learning harder for them than for other children their age. Around one in five children has SEN at some point during their school years. SEN covers a broad spectrum of difficulty or disability, including behaviour problems in some cases. It is unlawful to exclude children simply because a school cannot meet their special needs.

Statement of Special Educational Needs - A statement is a document which sets out a child's SEN and any additional help that the child should receive. The aim of the statement is to make sure that the child gets the right support to enable him/her to make progress in school. A statement is only necessary if the school is unable to meet a child's needs on its own. Only around two per cent of children need a statement. In Devon headteachers are urged not to permanently exclude children with such statements.

Virtual School - The Virtual School supports all children in care who are living in Devon or who are looked after by Devon but living in another part of the country.

Introduction



Many children don't like school, particularly secondary school. For 5-16 year-olds going to school is compulsory and those aged 16 to 18 must now be in some form of education or training, with or without employment, until the age of 18. As with any form of compulsion resistance is inevitable, and we keep extending the experience. My parents left school at 13. I did my PhD research in a Leicestershire upper school which had been established to take only students who wanted to stay on to 16 with a view to going on to 18, with the others staying in their high schools until they were 15. When I arrived the school leaving age was raised from 15 to 16, which meant that the upper school had to take all the high

school leavers, a significant proportion of whom resented this. Several 15 year-olds had to be dragged out of jobs and brought back to school. Not surprisingly it was a difficult year for that school, with an upsurge of troublesome behaviour from what were seen as 'unmotivated' students (Hannan, 1975).

Schools institutionalise children - they are socialised into acceptable forms of individual and group behaviour. In this country, although not in most others, they are made to wear school uniforms. Although no longer subject to corporal punishment they are disciplined in various ways, sometimes through a system of rewards designed to reinforce good behaviour, but more often through sanctions intended to punish them in other more subtle but sometimes more insidious ways, or through some combination of both. Some students resist this process and get in a good deal of trouble as a consequence. They are often those who do not respond well to an overly academic curriculum. If they don't succeed at their school work they often seek status in other ways, by being rebellious.

Education is, we are told, about enrichment, personal fulfilment, becoming cultured – about learning how to be a responsible and participative citizen. But it's also about social control, where the social order is reproduced, and where social inequality is legitimised. Schools are places which reflect the inequalities of the larger society. In terms of school exclusions, the same is true, as statistics to be given later will show.

What, then, are the 'causes' of school exclusion? Ofsted (2005, 2006, 2008, 2011) has identified these as inadequate policy and strategic management responses, the connection between poor learning and bad behaviour, and the lack of safe and encouraging environments to support vulnerable young people. The Children's Commissioner for England (2012) has claimed that schools use exclusion inappropriately and fail to listen to the voices of those in danger of being expelled. Cowie, Jennifer & Sharp (2002) have argued that conflict between teachers and pupils is to some extent generated by the way schools are organised and run, and by the dominance of particular pedagogical approaches. Research (including our own) shows that some schools are more inclusive than others; even those with similar intakes can have very different rates of both permanent and fixed-term exclusions. It is also true that some teachers experience more pupil misbehaviour in their classes than others, even when the pupils are the same. Tucker (2013) found (like we did) that, for pupils who were asked about their teachers, 'Understanding, tolerance and respect were perceived to be important qualities. Emphasis was also placed on the willingness of adults to listen and believe, and not to jump to premature judgments, hasty actions or rapid decisions' (p 285). It seems that pupils have rules for teachers, like taking them seriously, not having favourites, marking their homework on time, and helping them to learn (Furlong, 1976). If these rules are broken then pupils are more likely to misbehave. However, according to Tucker (2013), the intensification of teaching and learning through an increased emphasis on meeting performance targets has led to the marginalisation of the provision of pastoral care for students. Those who need help may not get it and may behave badly as a consequence, some badly enough to lead to their expulsion.

On the other hand, of course, some pupils need help more than others and some bring with them to school problems that have their roots outside it. Tucker (2013, p 286) quotes a behaviour co-ordinator in a Birmingham school who gave an example of this, 'you can't deal with education alone with her [a pupil] when she's anorexic with serious mental health problems'. Another of Tucker's interviewees commented, 'disruptive behaviour has its roots in much wider pastoral issues situated inside and outside the school'. In our own study school staff told us how children's misbehaviour was to a significant extent a product of their personal circumstances and mental health problems.

But what about the incidence of school exclusion – does it affect all pupils equally or do some experience it much more than others? In what follows we examine data that demonstrate significant differences according to pupil characteristics such as gender, special educational needs (both with and without a 'statement'), parental income, and care status. We also note how much the situation in Devon resembles that pertaining nationally.

In the report that follows we revisit some of these findings to consider their implications and explore further some of the themes I have already introduced. We shall attempt to understand how the schooling system operates in Devon with respect to exclusions, with particular reference to the role of the local authority, the different approaches taken by schools, the alternatives to exclusion and the perspectives of pupils. Also, of course, we shall be making some recommendations.

Given the limited time we had available we chose to undertake our research in the secondary rather than the primary sector as exclusions are more prevalent there, although there is now evidence of an increasing number of fixed-term exclusions in primary schools. We had three Task Group meetings in which we received evidence and gained insights from experts, predominantly those from the County Council who were involved in this field, and made half-day visits to four secondary schools, one Pupil Referral Unit and one alternative provider.

In writing this report we have tried to place you, the reader, in a similar position to ourselves. We present you with the statistical data, the evidence from the County officers, and the information we gathered from staff and students at schools and alternative providers. From all this we want you to come to your own conclusions and compare them to ours. This makes for a longer report than usual! If you want to save time you can, of course, just read the recommendations and the introduction along with the commentaries in the overview and the conclusions. If you do, you'll miss a lot but you'll get a reasonable impression of what it's all about.

We are, of course, very grateful to all who helped us without whom this report could not have been written, particularly to Dan Looker who contributed more than anyone except, perhaps, me.

Councillor Andy Hannan, Chair, School Exclusions Review: Education Outcomes Task Group, People's Scrutiny Committee

Postscript from Councillor Andy Hannan, Chair of Task Group

This report was in the most part finalised before Budget Day 2016, which is why the recommendations that follow give so much emphasis to the role of the County Council in bringing about improvements, working in partnership with Babcock LDP and in collaboration with schools. Clearly with the decision to force all schools to become academies by 2020 the future role of the local authority is now uncertain. We do not know how much part it can play in school improvement and encouraging best practice in terms of teaching, curriculum development and pastoral provision generally. Nor, more specifically, do we know how schools will be held to account in terms of how well they educate and include the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students. Local authorities are now acting as the champions of such children, attempting to ensure that their rights to full access to education are respected and that these are put into practice in terms of their admission to and full inclusion in their state-funded local schools. It seems to us that both maintained schools and academies have a moral obligation that comes with their full state funding, to provide a high quality of education to all their pupils, to meet their needs and be as inclusive as possible. However, the example referred to in this report of some academies being unwilling to sign up to the Funding Following Excluded Pupils Protocol, and thus being able to retain the money meant to support pupils who are taken on by another school so having a perverse incentive to increase the number of permanent exclusions they make, does not bode well for the future. It is difficult now to convince some schools that they should work with the local authority to reduce exclusions; the risk is that when they are all academies and all the funding goes directly to them they will have even less inclination to cater for students who are more challenging in their behaviour or whose educational needs are more complex or simply different from the norm.

Please bear these points in mind in reading what follows.

Recommendations

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Overview

Members of the Task Group have been provided with a wealth of statistics, which Dawn Stabb, Head of the Virtual School, has done her best to help us understand. Table 1 on the following page gives a comprehensive picture of the overall situation, from which the commentary below draws.

In 2013-14 in England as a whole, pupils classified as being in receipt of free school meals (FSM) on the grounds of low 'parental' income were 4.5 times as likely to receive a permanent exclusion (PEX) as those who were not FSM, and 3.6 times as likely to receive a fixed-term period of exclusion (FTE). In Devon in 2014-15 pupils classified as FSM were 10.1 times as likely to receive a PEX as those who were not FSM, and 4.5 times as likely to receive a FTE.

The situation for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), with and without statements, is also of interest.

- In 2013-14 in England as a whole, pupils with SEN with a statement were 5 times as likely to receive a permanent exclusion as those with no SEN, and 8.8 times as likely to receive a fixed-term period of exclusion.
- In that year nationally, pupils with SEN but without a statement were 8.3 times as likely to receive a PEX as those with no SEN, and 6.2 times as likely to receive a FTE.
- In Devon in 2014-15 SEN pupils with a statement were 8.4 times as likely to receive a PEX as those with no SEN, and 13.8 times as likely to receive a FTE. SEN pupils without a statement were 7.4 times as likely to receive a PEX as those with no SEN, and 7.5 times as likely to receive a FTE.

In 2014-15 in Devon no Children in Care (CiC) were subject to a PEX, but they were 7.7 times as likely as other children to receive a FTE. Unfortunately it is not possible to make a comparison nationally.

In terms of gender, nationally in 2013-14 boys were 3.3 times as likely to receive a PEX and 2.8 times as likely to receive a FTE as girls. In Devon in 2014-15 this tendency was only slightly less evident, with boys 3 times as likely to receive a PEX and 2.7 times as likely to receive a FTE as girls.

To summarise what these statistics have told us:

1. Those who receive free school meals on the grounds of low 'parental' income are significantly more likely to be excluded, either permanently or temporarily, than those who do not. This is true nationally but is even more evident in Devon particularly with regard to permanent exclusions.
2. Those who have special educational needs, both with and without statements, are also significantly more likely to be excluded both nationally and in Devon, although in Devon those with statements of SEN are particularly prone to both permanent and fixed-term exclusion.
3. Children in Care in Devon are nearly eight times as likely as other children to receive a temporary exclusion, although they are not subject to permanent exclusion.
4. Boys are around three times as likely as girls to be permanently or temporarily excluded, both nationally and in Devon.

TABLE 1: Permanent and Temporary Exclusions in Devon and Nationally

This section supports National PEX (1) Benchmarking

PEX (1) 2014/15	Number of Children in Devon PEX Cohort	Group as a % of PEX the cohort	Number on Roll for each group (Spring 2015 Census)	Group as a % of Devon Cohort	Group is over or under represented by a factor of	% of group population subject to a PEX		Times more likely than non-cohort		Times as likely as non-cohort	
						Devon 2014/15	England 2013/14	Devon	England	Devon	England
All	70	100.0	95503	100.0		0.07	0.06				
SEN with statement	9	12.9	3204	3.4	3.8	0.28	0.15	7.44	4.00	8.44	5.00
SEN without statement	35	50.0	14145	14.8	3.4	0.25	0.25	6.44	7.33	7.44	8.33
No SEN	26	37.1	78154	81.8	0.5	0.03	0.03				
Eligible for FSM	41	58.6	11776	12.3	4.8	0.35	0.18	9.05	3.50	10.05	4.50
Not eligible for FSM	29	41.4	83727	87.7	0.5	0.03	0.04				
CiC	0	0.0	474	0.5	0.0	0					
Male	53	75.7	49005	51.3	1.5	0.11	0.10	1.96	2.33	2.96	3.33
Female	17	24.3	46498	48.7	0.5	0.04	0.03				
Minority Ethnic Pupils	6	8.6	5493	5.8	1.5	0.11	0.07	0.34	0.00	1.34	1.00
White British Ethnicity Pupils	64	91.4	78584	82.3	1.1	0.08	0.07				

This section support National FTE (2) Benchmarking

FTE (2) 2014/15	Number of Children in Devon FTE Cohort	Group as a % of FTE Cohort	Number on Roll for each group (Spring 2015 Census)	Group as a % of Devon cohort	Group is over or under represented by a factor of	% group population with at least one FTE		Times more likely than non-cohort		Times as likely as non-cohort	
						Devon 2014/15	England 2013/14	Devon	England	Devon	England
All	3225	100.0	95503	100.0		3.38	3.50				
SEN with statement	627	19.4	3204	3.4	5.8	19.57	15.19	12.83	7.78	13.83	8.78
SEN without statement	1492	46.3	14145	14.8	3.1	10.55	10.79	6.45	5.24	7.45	6.24
No SEN	1106	34.3	78154	81.8	0.4	1.42	1.73				
Eligible for FSM	1243	38.5	11776	12.3	3.1	10.56	8.82	3.46	2.59	4.46	3.59
Not eligible for FSM	1982	61.5	83727	87.7	0.7	2.37	2.46				
CiC	120	3.7	474	0.5	7.5	25.32				7.75	
not CiC	3105	96.3	95029	99.5	1.0	3.27					
Male	2374	73.6	49005	51.3	1.4	4.84	5.10	1.65	1.79	2.65	2.79
Female	851	26.4	46498	48.7	0.5	1.83	1.83				
Minority Ethnic Pupils	174	5.4	5493	5.8	0.9	3.17	0.92	-0.17	-0.32	0.83	0.68
White British Ethnicity Pupils	3002	93.1	78584	82.3	1.1	3.82	1.36				

(1) The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) of each age in January 2014. (2) The number of fixed period exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) of each age in January 2014. With regards to the FTE figures, these are number of FTEs and not the number of children (one child may have multiple FTEs). The National benchmarking data is based on the number of FTEs (not the number of children) Note: SEN with statement are pupils with statements or EHCPs.

CiC - Children who were looked after child at the time of exclusion (from ONE). The cohort is taken from the number of CiC on the Virtual School Roll (474) on 16/01/15 (based on children on roll in Devon LA Schools). This date is in line with the date used in the DfE statistics. It should however be noted that the total number of children may exceed the denominator used as the cohort fluctuates greatly. If a child was in care and excluded in May but was no longer on roll on Jan 16th, the exclusion would count but the child would not be included in the cohort size. National 2015 data will be available in July 2016.

The times more likely column takes the **difference** between the two values and compares how many times greater the **difference** is than the comparative value. The times as column simply compares how many times greater one value is than the other. Both comparisons have been included as other publications use either of these figures indiscriminately.

Of course, the Task Group was interested in why these exclusions take place and whether there are any differences in such terms between different categories of student with regard to SEN status, FSM entitlement and gender. Tables 2, 3 and 4 below give such information as returned by schools in Devon since 2011-12.

Here 'Persistent disruptive behaviour' is currently the most popular reason given overall for both PEX and FTE, to some extent taking over from the 'Other' category in recent years, particularly for FTE. 'Physical assault' and 'Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour' against both pupils and adults are significant contributors. The patterns for pupils with SEN statements and for those receiving FSM and even for boys and girls are not dissimilar to the general trends. As noted elsewhere, 'bullying', 'racist abuse' and 'sexual misconduct' as reasons for exclusion are perhaps under-recorded as they are seen by schools as possible sources of bad publicity.

TABLE 2: Reasons for Permanent Exclusions in Devon

Permanent Exclusion Reason	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Bullying		1		2		1.35%		1.41%
Damage to school or personal property			2				2.04%	
Drug and alcohol related	8	2	8	9	10.96%	2.70%	8.16%	6.34%
Not Provided			1				1.02%	
Other	6	14	21	9	8.22%	18.92%	21.43%	6.34%
Persistent disruptive behaviour	30	37	29	71	41.10%	50.00%	29.59%	50.00%
Physical assault against a pupil	9	7	13	21	12.33%	9.46%	13.27%	14.79%
Physical assault against an adult	9	4	10	12	12.33%	5.41%	10.20%	8.45%
Sexual misconduct	3	1	1	1	4.11%	1.35%	1.02%	0.70%
Theft	1			3	1.37%			2.11%
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult	7	7	11	11	9.59%	9.46%	11.22%	7.75%
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil		1	2	3		1.35%	2.04%	2.11%
Grand Total	73	74	98	142	100%	100%	100%	100%

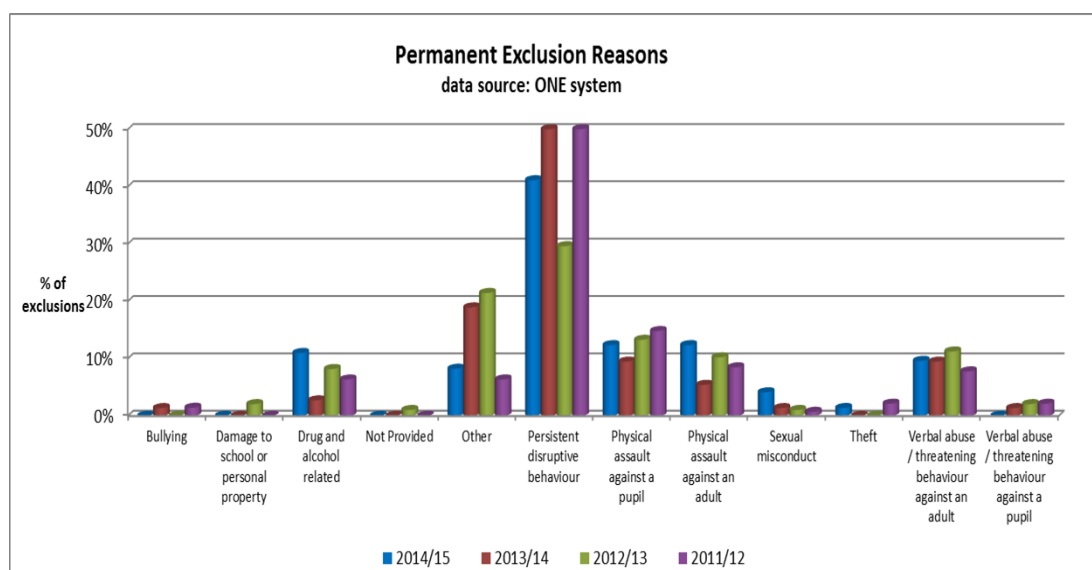


TABLE 3: Reasons for fixed term exclusions in Devon

Fixed-term Exclusion Reason	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Bullying	51	25	50	57	1.61%	0.84%	1.63%	1.5%
Damage	67	67	78	53	2.12%	2.26%	2.54%	1.4%
Drug and alcohol related	146	119	128	145	4.62%	4.02%	4.17%	3.8%
Other	412	549	608	989	13.03	18.53	19.79	25.6%
Persistent disruptive	741	689	719	696	23.43	23.25	23.40	18.0%
Physical assault against a	521	423	563	656	16.47	14.28	18.32	17.0%
Physical assault against an	380	308	215	287	12.01	10.39	7.00%	7.4%
Racist abuse	37	49	15	45	1.17%	1.65%	0.49%	1.2%
Sexual misconduct	18	15	16	25	0.57%	0.51%	0.52%	0.6%
Theft	31	36	39	46	0.98%	1.21%	1.27%	1.2%
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil	105	83	81	114	3.32%	2.80%	2.64%	3.0%
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult	654	600	561	744	20.68 %	20.25 %	18.26 %	19.3%
Not known				2				0.1%
Grand Total	3163	2963	3073	3859	3163	2963	3073	3859

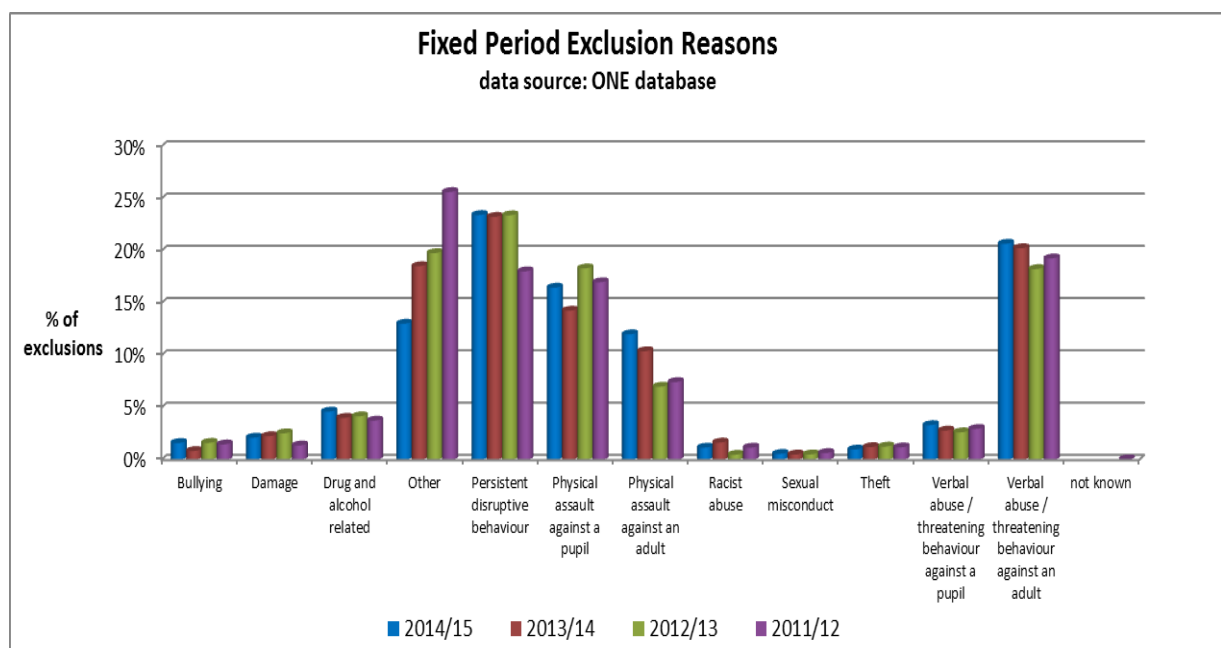


TABLE 4: SEN Statemented / Free School Meals Permanent Exclusions in Devon

Exclusion Reason	Permanent Exclusions - Statemented				Permanent Exclusions - FSM			
	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15*	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15*
Bullying							1	
Damage		1				1		
Drug and alcohol related		1		1			1	3
Other	4	5	1			11	7	
Persistent disruptive behaviour	18	6	5	1		10	12	12
Physical assault against a pupil	5	2	1	1		4	4	2
Physical assault against an adult	9	6		1		7	1	5
Racist abuse								
Sexual misconduct								
Theft								1
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil	2	1				2		
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult	2	4	2	1		8	4	3
Grand Total	40	26	9	5	n/k	43	30	26

TABLE 5: Male / Female Permanent Exclusions in Devon

Exclusion Reason	Permanent Exclusions - Male				Permanent Exclusions - Female			
	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15	2011 -12	2012 -13	2013 -14	2014 -15*
Bullying	2		1					
Damage		2		1				
Drug and alcohol related	9	7	2	4		1		2
Other	6	12	10	1	3	9	4	
Persistent disruptive behaviour	50	22	25	14	21	8	12	4
Physical assault against a pupil	14	11	5	5	7	2	2	1
Physical assault against an adult	12	10	4	2				3
Racist abuse								
Sexual misconduct	1	1	1					
Theft	3			1				
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against a pupil	3	2	1					
Verbal abuse / threatening behaviour against an adult	9	9	5	5	2	2	2	1
Grand Total	109	76	54	33	33	22	20	11

Data sources:

2011/12 Permanent Exclusions from Report on Exclusions from Devon Schools & Academies
Academic Year 2011-12 February 2013, David Archer & Marc Kastner

2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 Permanent Exclusions from ONE system, based on Exclusions
Information received direct from Schools (completion of Annex G forms)

We were also interested in how exclusions varied between areas. This is well illustrated by Tables 6 and 7, which follow. From Table 6 we know that Barnstaple Learning Community is on average the Local Learning Community with the highest percentage of permanent exclusions over the last four years, followed by Exeter Beacon, Newton Abbot, Exmouth and Exeter West Exe. Table 7 shows us that the situation regarding fixed-term exclusions is not very different as Barnstaple Learning Community is again on average the Local Learning Community with the highest percentage over the last four years, followed by Exeter Beacon, Exeter West Exe, Exmouth and Exeter Central & Chestnut.

Table 6: Permanent Exclusions by Learning Community

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 to date	Ranking (where 1 is highest % of exclusions)				Average Ranking (over 4yrs)
	%	%	%	%	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	
Axe Valley		1%				21			30
Barnstaple	13%	9%	9%	11%	1	2	1	1	1
Beacon	8%	16%	7%	11%	2	1	4	1	2
Bideford	5%	2%	7%	9%	7	16	4	3	9
Braunton	1%	2%	5%	2%	25	16	5	11	22
Central & Chestnut	4%	4%	3%	7%	8	7	6	6	7
Chulmleigh	2%	1%	3%	2%	13	21	6	11	20
Clyst Vale	1%			5%	22			8	23
Crediton	3%	3%		2%	11	10		11	16
Culm Valley	1%	3%	4%		22	10	5		19
Dartmouth	4%	1%	1%			21	13		26
Dawlish	1%	3%	1%		25	10	13		24
Exmouth	6%	5%	8%		4	5	1		4
Holsworthy	4%	2%	3%		10	16	4		13
Honiton	2%	2%	3%	2%	13	16	4	11	17
Ilfracombe	4%	4%	8%	2%	8	7	1	11	7
Ivybridge	2%	4%	1%	2%	13	7	9	11	13
Kingsbridge	1%	1%	3%		25	21	3		25
Newton Abbot	7%	8%	3%	9%	3	3	3	3	3
Okehampton	2%	2%	7%	2%	13	16	2	11	15
Ottery St Mary	2%	1%			13	21			26
Sidmouth	3%		1%	2%	11		6	11	12
South Dartmoor	6%	7%	1%	9%	4	4	6	3	6
South Molton	1%	1%	3%	2%	22	21	2	11	21
Tavistock	2%	1%			13	21			26
Teign Valley	0%		3%				2		
Teignmouth	2%	1%			13	21			26
Tiverton	1%	3%	8%	5%	25	10	1	8	17
Torrington	2%	3%	3%	5%	13	10	1	8	10
Totnes	2%	3%	1%	2%	13	10	2	11	11
West Exe	7%	5%	3%	7%	4	5	1	6	5
Free School (no LC)			1%						

Table 7: Fixed-term Exclusions by Learning Community

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 to date	Ranking (where 1 is highest % of exclusions)				Average Ranking (over 4yrs)
	%	%	%	%	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	
Axe Valley	3%	4%	2%	3%	9	10	17	13	13
Barnstaple	16%	11%	10%	10%	1	1	1	1	1
Beacon	7%	10%	6%	8%	2	2	7	2	2
Bideford	6%	4%	3%	4%	5	12	14	10	9
Braunton	2%	0%	2%	1%	21	31	15	27	25
Central & Chestnut	4%	4%	6%	6%	8	7	3	5	5
Chulmleigh	1%	1%	2%	1%	27	24	23	25	26
Clyst Vale	2%	1%	1%	2%	20	23	27	19	23
Crediton	3%	2%	3%	5%	12	16	12	7	11
Culm Valley	3%	3%	2%	2%	11	15	17	17	15
Dartmouth	1%	0%		0.2%	23	30		31	28
Dawlish	1%	2%	2%	2%	26	20	21	16	21
Exmouth	7%	7%	6%	5%	4	4	4	8	4
Holsworthy	1%	1%	2%	1%	25	25	23	26	26
Honiton	2%	3%	2%	1%	16	14	25	24	18
Ilfracombe	5%	5%	5%	3%	6	6	8	12	8
Ivybridge	2%	2%	2%	3%	18	17	16	13	16
Kingsbridge	1%	1%	1%	0.2%	28	28	29	32	30
Newton Abbot	2%	3%	4%	5%	15	13	9	6	10
Okehampton	1%	1%	3%	2%	31	26	13	22	24
Ottery St Mary	1%	1%	0.2%	0.5%	29	29	31	29	31
Sidmouth	2%	2%	2%	2%	13	21	26	19	18
South Dartmoor	2%	4%	4%	2%	18	11	10	15	14
South Molton	1%	1%	1%	1%	30	27	28	28	29
Tavistock	2%	4%	4%	4%	17	9	11	10	11
Teign Valley	0.1%	0.2%	1%	0.5%	32	32	30	29	32
Teignmouth	3%	2%	2%	2%	9	18	20	23	17
Tiverton	4%	4%	6%	5%	7	7	5	9	7
Torrington	2%	2%	2%	2%	22	22	19	18	20
Totnes	1%	2%	2%	2%	24	19	22	19	22
West Exe	7%	9%	6%	8%	2	3	6	3	3
DPLS (no LC)	2%	5%	6%	7%	13	5	2	4	6
Free School (no LC)				0.2%				32	33

Of course, exclusions, both permanent and fixed-term, vary by type of school, as the tables below show:

Table 8: Permanent Exclusions by School Type

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15 to date	
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%
Primary Schools	27	19%	24	24%	14	19%	5	11%
LA Maintained	24	17%	18	18%	10	14%	3	7%
Academies	3	2%	6	6%	4	5%	2	5%
Secondary Schools	109	77%	71	72%	57	77%	37	84%
LA Maintained	58	41%	37	38%	25	34%	15	34%
Academies	51	36%	34	35%	32	43%	22	50%
All Through School	5	4%	1	1%	1	1%		
Special Schools	1	1%	2	2%	2	3%	2	5%
Total	142		98		74		44	

The percentage of permanent exclusions in primary schools is on the decline but on the rise in secondary schools, with a greater percentage of these occurring in academy secondary schools (not surprisingly as these are increasing in number).

Table 9: Fixed-term Exclusions by School Type

	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15 to date		DfE 2012/13 % of fixed-term exclusions (5)
	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	No's	%	
Primary Schools	557	14.4%	508	16.5%	610	20.6%	434	20.7%	14%
LA Maintained	469	12.2%	453	14.7%	511	17.2%	337	16.1%	
Academies	88	2.3%	55	1.8%	99	3.3%	97	4.6%	
Secondary Schools	2954	76.5%	2185	71.1%	1968	66.4%	1375	65.6%	81%
LA Maintained	1774	46.0%	1267	41.2%	824	27.8%	700	33.4%	
Academies (inc Free Schools)	1180	30.6%	918	29.9%	1144	38.6%	675	32.2%	
All Through School	48	1.2%	15	0.5%			5	0.2%	not available
DPLS	156	4.0%	221	7.2%	236	8.0%	193	9.2%	not available
Special Schools	144	3.7%	144	4.7%	149	5.0%	89	4.2%	5%
Total	3859		3073		2963		2096		

Thus, two thirds of Devon's fixed-term exclusions occur in secondary schools, which is lower than the national figure. The percentage of fixed-term exclusions in primary schools has gradually been increasing over the years and is higher than the national rate (conversely the percentage of exclusions in secondary schools has been declining).

As noted previously, a decision was taken by us to focus on the secondary sector as this was where exclusions were mostly based.

The Task Group was also provided with data concerning individual schools which showed significant differences between them, even when their intakes were broadly similar. These statistics were used to help us select secondary schools for the case studies we undertook, which involved us in visits to interview both staff and pupils in different parts of the county (viz North Devon, Mid Devon, Teignbridge and Exeter).

The Views of Participants: Key Findings

County Council: Interviews with Officers

The following information is largely derived from meetings with Inclusion Officers David Archer (Exeter & East Devon), Keith Crawford (South & West Devon) and Marc Kastner (North & Mid Devon), and with Dawn Stabb (Head of the Virtual School) and Sue Clarke (Head of Education & Learning). It is intended to represent their understanding of the situation based on their professional knowledge and experience and is reported in terms close to those they used in our meetings.

Thresholds for Exclusions

Schools do not generally exclude lightly. Many schools will go to great lengths to work with the most complex of children and young people to avoid an exclusion. Inclusion officers work with schools to build pastoral capacity to help prevent them from making exclusions. Additional resources and temporary support are put in place to make this possible. A lot may come down to a school's ethos as to whether they problematize the children who are misbehaving or see them as vulnerable. There will quite often be a spike in exclusion rates when a new headteacher comes into a school, as he/she attempts to establish a new approach making the limits of behaviour and the range of associated sanctions clear.

Individual schools have different thresholds. Much depends on the quality of the teaching staff, with troublesome pupils offering less challenge to good teachers. It is important that teachers feel empowered, with the skill sets and confidence to deal with difficult behaviour. It is not clear that all teachers have been upskilled sufficiently to face the complexity of behavioural need and mental health issues that they are now encountering in the classroom. There is a common pattern where more exclusions take place when a class begins its GCSE studies, removing those young people who may not succeed at Year 11 or those who are disrupting the work of their classmates.

Unofficial Exclusions

It is the decision of the headteacher to exclude a pupil and not that of the local authority. However, the County Council in effect makes it difficult for schools to permanently exclude, ensuring through the interventions of the team of Inclusion Officers that other strategies have been fully explored. Unofficial exclusions by schools are, however, a major concern and have significant safeguarding implications, as schools can be less accountable for children out of education.

Historically there have been issues where a school is more inclined to take a pupil off role rather than permanently excluding them. The County Council's Missing Monday Panel, a weekly multi-agency meeting to review those young people missing from education and social care or at risk of being missing, is helpful in this regard and in terms of looking at schools' use of FTEs, Elective Home Education (EHE), part-time timetables and any backdoor exclusions.

The number of Key Stage 4 (KS4) EHE referrals is a particular concern. There appears to be a link with exclusions and students moving to EHE. Last year 116 Year 10/11 pupils left school to be electively home educated. Well over half of these young people have accessed colleges or FE providers. This would suggest that such late EHE in a young person's education is not necessarily due to it being down to a lifestyle choice. In 2014-15 there were 73 new KS4 EHE students. It appears that the majority of students that come off school roll at this stage are choosing home education for reasons other than the philosophical. These include: to avoid permanent exclusion; to avoid fines and prosecution for non-attendance; to attend FE college on a part-time basis. In some cases schools may be encouraging this to avoid certain students having a negative impact on a school's league table performance. The increasing number of vulnerable students coming off school roll presents a considerable challenge to the County Council as current legislation around EHE provides local authorities with limited powers and leaves children at risk of harm and possibly not receiving a suitable education.

Pupil Referral Units (now run by the Schools Academy)

Young people are in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) for far longer than they should be. While the County Council has a number of very good PRUs, they do have a detrimental effect on a child's education. There is unfortunately a lot of challenge and resistance in the system to reintegrating young people back into mainstream education.

Recording Exclusions

There are discrepancies in the way in which schools record exclusions. Officers encourage schools to drill down to specifics and use the DfE headings. Persistent disruptive behaviour is the biggest catch-all category. The term 'other' being used more for fixed-term exclusions than permanent exclusions, and deals with a lot of pupils who might be with another young person who is caught smoking or with drugs. Schools will on occasion also put sexual misconduct under another category as they do not want it on their records. Similarly bullying and racism are big issues for schools and Ofsted but are rarely recorded in the exclusions data as schools do not want these kinds of behaviour on their records and so place it under 'persistent disruptive behaviour' instead. Schools are unlikely to record racist verbal abuse unless a victim is attacked.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

It is important to separate behaviour issues from SEN.

External Support to Schools

External support is available from the County Council to schools. Packages of expertise are put in around children at an individual child level. The Education Inclusion Service provides a statutory but impartial service for parents and carers, school governors, headteachers, school staff and other agencies about inclusion, reintegration and exclusion. Early support from the team can help children to stay in school, or return to school after an exclusion and offer opportunities to help them achieve their full potential. The Educational Psychology Team does a lot of training and support around THRIVE (a specific way of working with children that helps to develop their social and emotional well-being) and behaviour management. The Behaviour Support Team is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant to support primary schools working with young people. There are also intervention partnerships, which work flexibly with schools to keep young people in education.

Given pressure on schools' budgets, there may be an issue with some schools waiting until crisis point before engaging with alternative education providers rather than working more proactively earlier. It is essential that support to young people is timely, and the County Council has a system whereby managed move funds can be allocated quickly to support those in need. Where a school does seek to make a permanent exclusion it can be due to a misplaced assumption that there is somewhere better to send a child when in actual fact there is not. More permanent exclusions are now going to independent review.

The Emotional Wellbeing Service provides intervention at Level 2 / 3 before higher end support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is required. Children's centres are working with families with regard to the behaviour management of young children.

Inclusion Officers

There are three Inclusion Officers in the County, as part of the Education Inclusion Service, whose role it is to:

- be proactive with early intervention in respect of persistent and disruptive behaviour;
- assist schools in accessing support services and resources;
- promote good practice such as restorative approaches and the use of outreach advisers from special school settings;
- assist parents including providing guidance about the legal process/procedures;

- work with the Improvement Teams and Learning Advocates in respect of Children in Care;
- prevent unofficial exclusions through such devices as part-time timetables.

The Education Inclusion Service is not chargeable to schools, either maintained or academy. The Inclusion Officers chair the Behaviour and Attendance Panels and usually are aware of the children at risk particularly from the secondary sector. In determining exclusion and integration into another school they take account of practical issues such as transport, vacancies in the relevant year group and mix of children, and undertake negotiation with the head teacher accordingly.

Inclusion Officers endeavour to inform the County about fixed-term and permanent exclusions in a timely way and any referral about unofficial exclusions is investigated by the officers and taken up with the school concerned. PEX are always challenged by the Inclusion Officers. Drug possession as a first offence will not necessarily mean a PEX depending on the school's policies. It is rare that a child has been permanently excluded from more than one school.

Managed Moves

A managed move entails a pupil being placed in an alternative school for six weeks. If the placement worked well, the pupil would remain at that school. Alternatively the child would return to his/her original school and other arrangements would then be considered. Options would include staying within the mainstream, moving to a special school or to a Schools Company / Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) setting, all in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice. Managed moves are discussed at a local Headteacher Panel, with PRU representation, where advice and support are provided.

Sometimes a new school can benefit pupils as they can have a fresh start. A child will undertake a trial at the new school and only where it works successfully will the child go onto roll and be permanently taken on.

Managed move data have been collected and monitored across the County since September 2014. Up until May 2015 there were 57 managed moves. The majority of these have occurred at secondary level with just six being in the primary phase. Overall 33% of managed moves in this time have been successful and the pupil has been admitted to the new school roll. In an attempt to improve this ratio since March 2015 the County has been trialling a system of providing additional support and funding for the receiving school. This has had a significant impact on the success rate. Up until June 2015 14 managed moves had funding allocated to support them and of these 13 were successful.

Funding Following Excluded Pupils Protocol

There were initially a small number of academies in Devon who refused to sign the Funding Following Excluded Pupils Protocol (in accordance with School Finance Regulations, England, 2012) relating to the financial arrangements when a pupil is excluded. Officers explained that there had been an omission in the contractual agreement with academies covering exclusions, which was subsequently rectified. There have been a number of objections from schools in terms of their lag funding, but the County Council has not taken away funding from pupils in Year 11. Some schools are still refusing to follow the Protocol and are thus not transferring funds to schools to which their students are transferred, but the situation has improved and it is hoped the problem will be solved in the near future.

School Visits: Case Studies

These accounts are based on half-day visits to schools by the Task Group, which involved meetings with senior staff, teachers and pupils, and largely reflect the views of our informants often in terms close to their own words. The names of the schools have not been given in order to allow us to present potentially sensitive information.

Case Study: School A

Use of Exclusions

School A is within one of the most deprived areas in the County, and overall academically pupils at the school are amongst the lowest in terms of average attainment level, although there are, of course, significant exceptions. The Headteacher tries to avoid permanent exclusions, and the school had a five year period without a permanent exclusion. School A works desperately hard to avoid any permanent exclusions, although it is difficult if there has been a very public incident. The Headteacher had to permanently exclude two pupils in 2013/14 and two pupils in 2014/15, the latter for persistent disruption. In the year before a Year 7 student was permanently excluded for violence and an assault on a member of staff. It is likely that the Headteacher will have to permanently exclude again this year. The school governors are, however, astounded by the extent of the interventions made by the school to prevent permanent exclusions. Fixed-term exclusions are normally just for a day, and tend to be for incidents involving physical violence.

Complex Needs

Some young people are entering the school at Year 7 with such complex needs they should not actually be in mainstream education. There are currently three of these children in Year 7. There is an increasing number of very challenging and vulnerable young people. There are lots of issues the school has to deal with in terms of both parents and young people with mental health issues. There are a number of children coming into the school who should be in special schools, as well as children who should in fact be in care. The school tries to be careful in terms of its handling of the most vulnerable young people. Many of these have esteem issues, and often feel that they have failed at school as well as at home. Permanently excluding young people is to further reject them. The Headteacher is mindful of the level of vulnerability and the way in which the school's use of exclusions can impact on a specific child. Every day the school tries to offer pupils the opportunity for a fresh start. There is no tariff system at the school in terms of grading incidents, but there are clear limits in terms of acceptable behaviour.

Late School

Late school provision from 2pm-6pm is effective for a particular cohort of young people, where the family is supportive. Late school is an option that is preferred to FTEs. There is also an 'internal exclusion' provision as part of a hierarchy of interventions. This is often an effective means of segregation, of taking a pupil away from their friends who may be a bad influence. This approach works well for many children, but for repeat offenders late school is a useful tool. The late school provision is staffed by a Higher Level Teaching Assistant. The great majority of young people are just in late school for a day or two, much the same as an internal exclusion. Late school operates more easily in summer than in winter in terms of pupils being able to walk home, and does rely on parental support. Pupils tend to prefer an FTE to late school.

Managed Moves

The Headteacher rarely sends children out on managed moves. It is largely the case that if school A cannot accommodate the young person given the inclusive nature of its approach, most other schools are unlikely to be able to.

Local Intervention Partnership

The school has a close relationship with the Local Intervention Partnership, and works flexibly to keep young people in education.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

There was a sudden rise in EHE last year. This was not because the school is trying to remove children from the school's roll, nor is it probably part of a particular trend. The Education Welfare Service is quite aggressive in terms of pupil attendance which can be counterproductive at times and may on occasion push families towards EHE, where some of the children will be educated and others unfortunately will not be.

Admissions / 0-25 Team

It is not clear that the Admissions Team is communicating as effectively as it might with the 0-25 Team as to when a child has been taken out of school. It would appear these teams based at County Hall are working very much in isolation.

Special Schools

There are significant delays in terms of getting a child into a special school.

Parents

There are parents who had negative experiences at the school in their own childhood. The school works hard to try to have as positive as relationship with parents as possible.

Inclusion Officers

The school has a positive relationship with the Inclusion Officer, discussing young people at risk of exclusion.

Alternative Provision at School A (APATH) Internal Provision

The school spends a huge amount of money on interventions and alternative provision with about 17% of the school's budget spent on welfare and inclusion work, where for most schools the figure is closer to 10%. The school recognises the vulnerability of a young person who is permanently excluded. While the school employs a raft of intervention strategies, it is not able to fund as many of these as it was previously. The school maintains a connection with a number of young people after they have left Year 11.

Vocational Routes

There are very limited vocational routes for some of these students. College courses of this kind do not count in terms of exam grades when it comes to an Ofsted inspection, and we have stopped funding these as a result. Some students still go to a local college on a vocational course, but this represents only a fraction of the need and it is therefore a struggle to support some of these young people. There are 17 students currently in college placements.

Curriculum Flexibility for Vulnerable Young People

Young people will be lost where a school is not prepared to sufficiently adapt the curriculum for certain vulnerable pupils. A range of outdoor activities are offered by School A to help boost confidence, including use of the Forest School.

Transitions

The school invests heavily in the transition of children from the primary sector, although this has been scaled back due to some funding issues

Additional Support

The County Council system for getting additional support is hugely laborious. The intention was that schools could buy into the Schools Company for additional support through Devon's PRUs for those pupils at risk of exclusion, but the school found it incredibly expensive, while the quality of the provision was far from clear.

Alternative Education Company

School A uses the Alternative Education Company as part of its portfolio of support, but it is still £150 a day and for some headteachers permanently excluding a pupil is a much cheaper option.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is much better than it used to be.

Children in Care

Legally a school can permanently exclude a child in care but the County Council will remove the child from the school before this can happen and place them in a PRU to ensure they are not categorized as a PEX.

Area Learning Advocates

It is a little unclear to schools as to what the new County Council Area Learning Advocates actually are.

Views from Young People at School A

These views were expressed by members of a group of six pupils who had a history of disaffection who were supported by an Assistant SEN Co-ordinator.

- Some children easily get annoyed and are then disruptive in class.
- Classrooms are too noisy.
- The support centre is highly valued particularly because it's possible to work in a smaller, quieter group.
- The curriculum is not targeted towards those pupils who are not going to get 5 A*-Cs. Few young people get the option to do a practical college course.
- The school should offer more design technology and PE options.
- Some lessons are boring, where it is just copying things off the board and the teacher is not giving enough support in a lesson.
- Teachers are not always interested in asking why a child is not getting on so well with a certain subject.
- One boy commented that he had been at other schools, and it was now at this school that he was getting the help he needs.
- All the young people reported feeling safe in the school environment.
- The Headteacher will swiftly deal with any issues of bullying.

Case Study: School B

Ofsted

The school received a 'Requires Improvement' rating at its last Ofsted inspection, in part due to its exclusion rates being too high. Since then the school has been able to significantly reduce the overall number of pupil days lost to exclusions. However, the school's approach to behaviour was classed as 'Good' by Ofsted; it missed out on an 'Outstanding' rating for this aspect due to the high number of fixed-term exclusions. Compared to neighbouring schools it has a low number of permanent exclusions.

Use of Exclusions

Processes have been put in place before there is a FTE or PEX to ensure that the school is more systematic in its approach to behavioural management. This is a fundamental strategy to reduce exclusions. Emotions are not involved with discipline sanctions. An FTE is a useful sanction for some young people, but for others they see it as a holiday. It is important to deal with each issue on a case-by-case basis to establish which sanction will be the most appropriate. 'Supported schooling' is an alternative the school provides to FTEs. It runs from 9.30am – 12.30pm. Key to the school's approach

is the need to be systematic and consistent based on rational processes that the whole school understands.

Complex Needs

The school has a number of complex young people, who at times exhibit some extreme behaviour. There has been a significant change in the last 10 years in terms of the number of young people in mainstream schooling with mental health issues. There are a lot of pupils with emotional anxiety type issues, where children appear to have been damaged by marital splits and domestic issues within the home. There are not, however, so many young people who are close to the child protection level of need.

Managed Moves

The school has been involved in a number of successful managed moves. The school is prepared to take on managed moves and is currently working well with a girl who had been permanently excluded.

Parents

Generally parents tend to be supportive of the school's approach to behaviour management and support the sanctions deployed. The school pays for a Parent Support Officer to liaise with parents and facilitate work with the child and the school.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The lack of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support is a huge issue, and it currently represents a grave misunderstanding that CAMHS are offering schools support.

Multi-Agency Support Hub (MASH)

The school has a good relationship with children's social care and also buys into Babcock services on safeguarding. The school works closely with the police. The MASH is working better now after a severe dip. The developments to 'early help' are positive, but the level of outside support available to the school is somewhat limited.

Pastoral Work

The pastoral support that the school offers is not separate, but very much at the heart of its work, allowing students to continue with their academic studies. Key to pastoral work is having positive relationships and communication with parents. The school deploys a counsellor as well as a learning mentor. The school tracks pupils academically but also monitors their emotional intelligence. Work is undertaken through the Emotional and Social Skills Centre to look at the issues at play causing misbehaviour. It is important there is both understanding and a rational approach.

Vocational Routes

There is a group of six Year 11 students who do part of their timetable at a nearby college.

Emotional and Social Skills Centre

The Emotional and Social Skills Centre promotes inclusion through early intervention and increasing pupil attendance. There are currently 42 young people in the Centre as part of a raft of pastoral support measures deployed to help young people achieve at the school. The Centre runs 6-week courses on self-esteem and behaviour to help young people overcome their barriers to learning. Pupils are at the Centre for an hour a week typically. Through the support of the Centre young people's attendance and performance is improving. The school holds a fortnightly meeting to discuss this cohort of pupils.

Social Media

Social media have had a significant impact on pupils at the school in terms of issues such as cyber bullying. The school regularly has to deal with issues on social media that have occurred over the weekend. The school works hard to address any issues of bullying.

Transition to Secondary School

There is an issue with young people being secondary-school ready. The primary sector is not always dealing with children's issues before they start at secondary school. It would be hugely helpful to identify and support children much earlier in the school system.

Views from Young People at School B

The Task Group met one-by-one with three unaccompanied young people who had a history of disaffection

Pupil A (Yr 11)

- There had been some issues amongst her friend group, and she was now going to the Emotional and Social Skills Centre for support in dealing with these issues.
- Felt much more confident now as a result of her time in the Centre both in terms of her friends and in her class work. Felt able to now really achieve.

Pupil B (Yr 10)

- Transferred to the school through a managed move. Since arriving at the school, she had completely changed and had been in no trouble whatsoever.
- The smaller, quieter classes helped. The previous school was much bigger and pupils were much more poorly behaved.
- The Emotional and Social Skills Centre had helped a lot in being somewhere where she could talk through issues with staff.
- The school and its teachers take time to focus on the pupils, and as a result it was much easier to learn. Previously it had been difficult, but now she was learning lots and wakes up every day looking forward to the day ahead.

Pupil C (Yr 10)

- Previously had behavioural and anger issues, and found it difficult to concentrate. Had FTEs in the past but had settled down now and felt so much happier at school.
- Using the Emotional and Social Skills Centre since Year 7. Earlier work in the Centre greatly helped in terms of behaviour, and further support on anger issues. Occasional sessions at the centre are really helpful. There is a real sense of trust with the staff.
- Previously had a few internal exclusions/isolations/FTEs but had settled down now and felt so much happier at school compared to times in the past when he dreaded school.

Case Study: School C

Use of Exclusions

School exclusions are falling because of the volume of work and early interventions at the school. There should be a drastic reduction in exclusions this year, partly also because of the difficulties with last year's Year 11. The children not only accept the school's policy on behaviour but welcome it. Pupils recognised that it is part of an approach to driving up educational standards and can see the benefit of this in terms of their exam results. Exclusions have been reduced partly also through the way exclusions have been used; pupils know the rules and tend to stick to them. Children want a clear fair policy and that is what they have. The headteacher will PEX where there is a physical assault on a member of staff, and give an FTE for a verbal assault on a teacher.

Sanctions Ladder

The school operates a sanctions ladder leading up to FTEs and PEX. However, it undertakes a huge amount of proactive work to prevent sanctions having to be taken with only three FTEs this year. The school has an individual and flexible approach to addressing pupil needs.

Alternatives to Exclusions

The inclusion centre is at the heart of the school so pupils do not feel that they have been in any way excluded. Last year the school had a very difficult Year 11 cohort; 10 of whom had to be placed in alternative provision. This year there is currently not a single pupil being educated off site. The decision was taken to run a GCSE Studio School – effectively an inclusion centre where some of the more challenging pupils are based and supported.

Late School

The school had to close its late school provision as the practice was deemed to be illegal. The lack of flexibility in not being able to offer this option is restricting, as late school worked well for some young people. Late school would run from 2.30pm – 5.30pm, with pupils not behaving kept behind until 6.00pm. The DfE insists on schools providing two sessions of schooling per day attendance wise, and the late school contravened this.

Pupil Funding Issue with County Council

There has been a disagreement with the County Council about when money follows a student with the issues being around the timing and the lagged funding.

Culture and Ethos

The culture and ethos of the school is very important. Children like clear rules, so the Head works with this in mind. The school is clear and organized about its approach to the school uniform. There is no ambiguity for the pupils here. A large body of over 100 prefects ensure the uniform is strictly adhered to.

Pupil Rewards

Pupil rewards are given a great deal of attention and are personalised, while sanctions are given little prominence. The school has incredibly high expectations of its pupils and there is much more of an ethos akin to a grammar or private school.

Pupil Ownership

Pupils buy into the school ethos, where it is cool to succeed and cool to care about each other. There is an ethos of ownership amongst the pupils, making the college somewhere you want to be. The school offers a safe and fun place for children to learn. The prefect cohort has now increased to over 100. A quarter of the prefects have an anti-bullying focus.

Bullying

The anti-bullying scheme is effective, and the use of prefects is one tool the school has at its disposal. There are a number of other approaches deployed as part of its zero tolerance approach to bullying including a function on any computer for pupils and staff to report issues in confidence.

Parents

The school works hard to have positive relationships with parents to try to make them feel as included as possible in their children's schooling. All staff should also have an open door policy to the young people and their parents. Part of the school's approach to building that relationship with parents is to not just phone home when there are problems but instead to call to tell them about positive work their child has been involved with to build trust. This is an amazingly effective approach.

Youth Workers

The college uses youth workers as pupil advocates.

Elective Home Education

There was one child last year at the college whose parents chose for them to receive EHE. The school tried repeatedly to keep this child at the school but the parents had disengaged. Concerns about the welfare of this child were flagged up to the County Council.

Proactive Approach to Interventions

There is a big focus on proactive work with Year 8 and 9 pupils, working hard to build capacity in order to cope in class. The school provides further interventions on anger management, as well as THRIVE and anxiety issues. Staff will continue to work to challenge behaviours and provide pupils with strategies to cope. It is important to try to identify issues early at a low level from Year 7 working alongside parents, before the issues escalate, and the school is able to provide a huge range of options to intervene. Staff and pupil mentoring is one approach that works well.

Vocational Routes

There are vocational options for some students. There are pupils in Year 11 doing vocational courses along with English and Maths. The school tries to ensure any of these students are well integrated and are kept to a mainstream timetable as much as possible. As a rule the school does not use part-time timetables, but will re-arrange timetables to try to meet a young person's needs. There is for instance a girl doing an equine course and the college is trying its very best to keep hold of her.

Student Intervention Meetings

At these meetings child protection issues are discussed so that staff know exactly what is going on. The college also makes sure that it has a representative at every Looked After Child and Team Around a Child meeting to show its commitment to that child.

Chances (off-site alternative provider)

Chances works well when there is a strong link with the school. The school will however only make a referral to Chances where there is a particular task they can be used for.

Views from Young People at School C

The Task Group met with a group of five young people from Years 11 and 12 with a history of disaffection who were accompanied by the headteacher.

- Found it hard to deal with mainstream classes. Responded to being placed last year in the inclusion centre for the GCSE Studio School and having two teachers between six pupils. It was this additional support that really helped. Also the centre allows pupils to work at a pace they can cope with rather than being rushed along.
- Teachers treat the young people like adults, as a result pupils are willing to put in more effort and get more out of their school experience. It is much easier to respect someone who is respectful, than someone who is condescending.
- Staff are very good at treating pupils as individuals, which is so important.
- The Inclusion Centre helps to support achievement. One young man did not ever believe he would progress as he has been able to. He never thought he'd be able to succeed in the way that he has and the centre has really helped in allowing that to happen.
- It is not helpful at all where a young person is labelled or compared to a sibling.
- Some young people at Chances take poor behaviour to extreme levels. One young person commented that they had not learnt anything while at Chances, and claimed to have behaved worse as a consequence.
- Teachers need to have a greater understanding of what is going on in children and young people's home lives.
- Teachers need to show passion for their subjects as pupils respond to that.
- It is very difficult for children where teachers have clear favourites.
- The Inclusion Centre feels like a safe place to be.
- Any violent incidents are much more likely to happen outside the school grounds than on them.
- One young man had now become a prefect – he had never imagined that having previously been to Chances he could become a prefect and help set good standards of behaviour in the school

Case Study: School D

Student Behaviour

There has been an issue with challenging pupil behaviour at the school. A clear sanctions and rewards system has been created, e.g. swearing at a teacher is a one day FTE, swearing at the Headteacher is a two day FTE. The system is under constant review to maximise its effectiveness. There is a small cohort of current Year 9 students, whose behaviour is challenging and disruptive, with 26 students identified as being at risk of a FTE before sitting their final examinations at the end of Year 11. The school collates strategies and pointers for each individual young person in their teaching profile to help in supporting them. The school deploys 5 keyworkers on social, emotional and mental health issues. There are 2 dedicated rooms to enable intervention in terms of behavioural issues; one to teach students excluded from lessons and the other to work with them on the issues affecting their behaviour, such as self-confidence. Issues with behaviour tend to be driven by over/under challenge or factors in a young person's home life.

Use of Exclusions

The school does have a high current rate of PEX and will permanently exclude for drugs, weapons or assaulting a member of staff. When making an FTE, the school will take into account students' home situations. Once a student has had a FTE they receive a pastoral support plan. The school works hard to find alternatives to making exclusions. 'Phoenix' isolation is one of the alternatives. Another is working with other secondary schools to allow students to be 'hosted' with them instead of on a FTE. This is better than a FTE and tends to work well, if the parents support it. 'Hosting' by another school is not for the most vulnerable children, but it is effective for some young people. Where the student does not attend the school and has an unauthorised absence, the placement will have failed and an FTE will be issued. It is a challenge to support some of the struggling young people quickly enough to help them access their education. There has to be a balance in terms of the level of support the inclusion centre provides, to avoid over-supporting. The inclusion team is now bigger than the science department.

Complex Needs

There has been an increase in the mental health needs of the students over the last 10 years. Some children are coming into the school from the primary sector with a range of very complex needs. These students would previously have been educated in special schools. The school has received some grant funding for CAMHS support, but has yet to realise the expected impact from this work.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

SEND is a priority for the school to address and meet those students' needs from their arrival at the school in Year 7.

Additional Support

The type of support that schools need is actually not easily available or the cost prohibits the school from buying this in. There are probably few schools able to adequately provide for all the children and young people with the complexity of SEND and medical/mental health issues. Due to financial pressures, there is a lack of options available to meet the needs of all young people in terms of alternative education and interventions. The school currently has two students for whom they are struggling to know how to support their particular needs when they return from Chances. The school uses support from Babcock on working with young people to address the type of behaviour that leads to PEX.

Inclusion Officers

The Inclusion Officer is very supportive. The Local Area Partnership meets fortnightly to discuss students' managed moves with other schools.

Inclusion Unit

The Inclusion Unit supports those young people at risk of exclusion through early identification and helping to put a number of interventions in place. The Inclusion Centre is there to support the students in their mainstream class, although some are there for longer than others. There are students with mental health issues, issues with attending and one student on a part-time timetable. There can be friction at times between the Inclusion Unit and some teaching staff who are less progressive and do not understand the value of emotionally supporting these quite often very vulnerable young people. For the young people who spend time in the unit, there is typically a decrease in their behavioural issues and increase in their attainment. Staff in the Inclusion unit also may in some cases provide the only positive relationship in a young person's life. They are able to connect emotionally with the child and provide them with invaluable support.

Early Help Teaching Assistant

The Early Help TA is very useful, but it would be good to have more of these working with identified students.

Managed Moves

Managed moves get discussed fortnightly at the Local Area Partnership meetings. It is not always clear whether it is the school or the new start that makes the difference in terms of a successful managed move, or the child choosing also to do better. Certainly managed moves allow a change in dynamics by taking a young person out of a potentially stressful environment that the school may well now represent.

Vocational Routes

There are limited vocational options available for up to two days a week on hair & beauty, construction, outdoor education, etc. at a local college. There is a huge cost involved to the school and, therefore, it is currently not an option to expand this programme. The Government has put the focus in terms of school performance almost entirely with academic subjects, not with vocational courses. The vocational courses the school offers have to also be balanced with the demands of their core subjects so that students do not get further behind with these.

Chances

Chances works well with the school. The focus is on reintegration, but this is expensive.

Teachers

Teachers have not been upskilled sufficiently to face the complexity of behavioural needs and mental health issues that they are now encountering in the classroom. Teachers are no longer just able to teach their subject as would have been the case before.

Education Psychologists

The school is spending money on additional Education Psychologists as they are not allocated enough support.

Children's Social Care

Most social workers are doing a good job, but continuity and communication (some cases have been de-escalated without consulting with the school) is an issue, with some looked-after children (LAC) having a number of different ones. The MASH has improved a lot in the last 18 months and is delivering more than it used to.

Views from Young People at School D

The Task Group met with a group of nine young people who were accompanied by various support staff from the Inclusion Unit.

- The school is getting better.
- In the Inclusion Unit teachers treat you like adults. Staff give both emotional and educational support without which students would be permanently excluded.
- The 1-to-1 support from the Inclusion Unit means you can cope with the behaviour and then concentrate on school work.
- Every day in the Inclusion Unit is a new day, rather than being labelled for previous incidents. Some teachers in the school are very good and are willing to give students a fresh start, others less so.
- There is not much other support outside of the unit as the counsellor at the school is always so busy.
- It is hard to concentrate in normal classrooms as it is just too noisy.
- You don't always get a chance to explain yourself as part of the sanctions system which is frustrating. The rewards element is a great idea but is not yet as well organised as it should be. Students often aren't aware if they have received an e-praise point, although it is made much clearer where you get a de-merit.
- Chances had some good teachers, but others were not. (Reference was made to difficulties with a particular member of staff.)
- One young person came to the school after three managed moves and was much happier now. There is very little bullying at the school and where there is it is dealt with swiftly. There are though issues with social media and online bullying.
- The school feels a safe place, with much less violence than there used to be.
- Some of the young people like the school uniform, while others are less happy and particularly the use of FTEs if you don't have all the right items. There is also now a strict approach to earrings, nose piercings etc.

Alternative Provider Visits: Interviews with Pupils / Staff

These alternative providers are each close to being unique and thus too easily identifiable to attempt to anonymise them. The Task Group met with senior staff and teachers in both institutions, but only had a brief chat with two students at the PRU. At Chances members met with a group of students.

Again, the statements below are those made by our informants, sometimes given nearly verbatim.

Schools Company North Devon Academy, Barnstaple

Schools Company North Devon Academy is legally a PRU, set up for any child out of school either for medical reasons or a permanent exclusion. There are 70 children currently at the academy; 35 of whom have a medical need. Four of these are looked-after children (LAC). More children tend to be excluded from mainstream schools as the school year continues so the numbers may rise. There are 110 children at the Central PRU and 67 at the South & West Devon unit, with typically 10-20% of these LAC. Places cost £18,000 a year for a medical-need young person and £20,000 if permanently excluded. Previously the County Council did not have a top number in terms of putting children in its PRUs but now Schools Company North Devon Academy is commissioned up to 70 and additional places would need to be purchased. Children attend from reception age onwards, with around 80% in Key Stage 4. KS1 – 3 are in a separate block to those in KS4 as they will be going back to school – the majority to special schools. For KS4 there is an emphasis on getting ready for Petroc College. PRUs seek to establish a baseline in terms of young people's learning as they have often regressed in their schooling. Progress once at the PRU is often rapidly made.

There is no uniform at Schools Company North Devon Academy as many of the children that attend have been in battles with their school about uniform compliance so that it would seem counterproductive to continue with this; rather the focus is firmly on learning. The aim here is to remove the barriers to learning, getting children to be more reflective and helping them to achieve as best as they possibly can. There is also an emphasis on young people learning to do things for themselves.

PRUs do not have to teach the same as a mainstream school and do not report to the DfE in the same way. They do not offer modern languages for instance, but do English, maths, ICT etc as well as a lot of vocational options with BTECs in hospitality & catering, construction, hair & beauty and mechanics. Class sizes are four to six. There is a raft of additional support offered to the children including counselling, and family intervention work with the parents.

The Schools Company North Devon Academy has three sites and is therefore able to separate to a large extent those with medical needs with those with behavioural issues. An increasing number of the medical-needs young people are girls with mental health issues, and problems around depression and anxiety. Schools do not know whether to go down the ill health route or permanently exclude. All schools have a nurture type provision but schools are not keen to hold onto pupils who are at risk of self-harming through the day and the level of vigilance required supervising them – these young people need specialist support. Most of the physically unwell medical-needs children can be cared for at home.

Devon has a high number of permanent exclusions. There are less permanent exclusions in the South and West of the County, where it is a different demographic that has a higher number of children with medical needs. North Devon has fewer children with medical needs, but has about three times the national average in terms of permanent exclusions

There are some small rural schools that claim not have the infrastructure to deal with more extreme behavioural issues and are not equipped to meet the needs of the most complex young people. While

permanent exclusions from primary schools tend to represent the most challenging pupils. These children often having had abusive early years, child protection issues at home and lower level SEN. Children in PRUs tend to come from difficult backgrounds. Where a family presents well then the problem is likely to either be a bereavement or domestic violence – these two issues transcend class.

Devon PRUs are not set up as part of an intervention strategy, but as the last resort. The Inclusion Officers have undertaken some work to encourage partnerships between PRUs and schools, but the County Council has yet to see the results it wanted in terms of outcomes. The idea was for schools to work in partnership holding pupils from KS1-3 employing their own specialist staff with the PRU just for KS4.

The County Council use managed transfers into the PRU for young people on the verge of a permanent exclusion. The issue with this is that many of these children feel as though they have been permanently excluded. It is unclear how well managed transfers serve the young person or whether it is more about the data not showing up as a permanent exclusion against the County Council.

Chances, Newton Abbot

Devon Youth Service operates Chances an alternative education provision for secondary age children at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream school. Young people who attend Chances remain on school roll and staff work to try to resolve their problems and overcome barriers to learning, so that that they are stable enough to return to their school. A large amount of work at Chances is supporting young people in building their self-esteem, confidence and resilience and plays a pivotal role in getting the young people to re-engage in education and their schools. The majority of young people that attend Chances have low self-esteem and confidence as well as poor social skills. Young people are often angry with their school and considerable work is undertaken to look at these issues. Chances seeks to address the barriers to learning and build resilience. Young people have a key worker who helps to support them in overcoming social and emotional issues. It is vital to find coping strategies to deal with problems as they arise.

It is the responsibility of schools to send work across for pupils. It is invaluable in terms of their reintegration back into school that the young person remains up to date, or catches up with their work. Positive relationships are being built with the schools to ensure pupils sent to Chances are still on their radar. Where a placement at Chances is longer than six weeks, a review is undertaken. Communication about and evidencing of work at Chances has now improved. Chances provides a weekly report to each school on pupil progress, as well as a more detailed half-termly report. Chances provides a timetable that includes math, science, English and PE for all students, with history and geography for Key Stage 3, as well as a range of vocational courses.

The Junction, where Chances is based, does not have to be registered with Ofsted and currently is not, but an agreement has been made that it will be shortly. The Junction was however inspected as part of Coombeshead school's Ofsted. Chances looks at best practice from other schools to try to be outstanding.

Transport is the main barrier in terms of young people's attendance. Attendance though at Chances rarely dips below 90%. Intensive outreach work is undertaken with those not attending. Chances links in with the Head of Education & Learning's Missing Monday meetings. Staff are well aware of the vulnerability of young people missing from schools and the risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE).

The young people enjoy the BTEC course in food that Chances offers. There is something very positive for the children cooking, and bringing home food for their parents.

Chances has a proactive approach to working with parents, and will often call home to report on good progress. This is an important part of trying to stop the perpetual cycle of negativity both at home and at school.

A significant change in the last 10 years is the move from behavioral to mental health issues affecting the young people.

Given pressure on school's budgets, there is an issue with schools waiting until crisis point before engaging Chances rather than working more proactively earlier in the piece. Chances provide some open access youth work, which is useful in terms of given young people the opportunity to reconnect with staff and also in terms engaging in positive activities, including in the school holidays.

Following a Babcock inspection, it was determined that Chances could not provide full-time education with the resources at its disposal. Chances recognises that if a young person is at the facility for too long it may be at the detriment of their schooling. The average length of stay is 6-8 weeks. The focus is on the young people being still part of their existing school and a reintegration back to that school once the appropriate support has been provided so that they are able to engage again with their studies. There are eight members of staff at Chances; six youth workers and two teachers. Chances takes pupils from secondary schools from a wide area including Exeter, Teignbridge and the South Hams. Chances currently has a 70/30 split of boys to girls. It is currently expanding to offer provision in Dawlish, which will make access easier for the Exeter schools.

Views from Young People at Chances

The Task Group met with a group of nine young people accompanied by a member of staff, who made frequent interjections.

- One pupil had two managed moves. The first of these was very sudden. The transport had not been arranged properly and he felt it was set up to fail. He was now at another school, and feels much better. He can now concentrate in class and is as a result getting much better grades. The extra support that Chances provides to him, for two hours a day, is really helpful. He now felt he had learnt how to control his anger.
- Smaller classes so less distractions. Staff connect much better and offer individual support, which does not happen in the same way in mainstream schools.
- Learning loads at Chances, so hope to be able to impress teachers with progress when returning to main school again.
- Get on better with teachers at Chances.
- Feel happier at Chances as it is a better atmosphere, and more fun.
- Bullying is an issue in mainstream schools which does not happen in the same way at Chances. Social media is also a big problem at school.
- Chances helps to make you less likely to misbehave.
- Teachers respect pupils at Chances more than in mainstream schools. Staff at Chances try to understand things from a young person's perspective, where in school you might often get labelled and blamed.
- NB Some of the students who were present refused to contribute to the discussion and others took a stance that contradicted the largely positive view that dominated.

Conclusions

The evidence we have presented above tells some very different stories, partly, of course, because it comes from a range of sources. The statistical data certainly show that exclusions are not evenly distributed amongst the school population. The summary given earlier includes some worrying findings:

1. Those who receive free school meals on the grounds of low 'parental' income are significantly more likely to be excluded, either permanently or temporarily, than those who do not. This is true nationally but is even more evident in Devon particularly with regard to permanent exclusions.
2. Those who have special educational needs, both with and without statements, are also significantly more likely to be excluded both nationally and in Devon, although in Devon those with statements of SEN are particularly prone to both permanent and fixed-term exclusion.
3. Children in Care in Devon are nearly eight times as likely as other children to receive a temporary exclusion, although they are not subject to permanent exclusion.
4. Boys are around three times as likely as girls to be permanently or temporarily excluded, both nationally and in Devon.

From these results it would seem that those children who might be considered as being most in need of high quality, stable and continuous education (those from low-income families, those with special educational needs particularly those with statements, and, with regard to FTEs, those in care) are those most likely to be excluded from it. There are clearly big problems and challenges here and the more general policies currently in place such as pupil premium and SEN funding, do not seem to have had a significant impact with regard to school exclusions. This situation needs to be addressed urgently as a high priority.

From the County Council officers we know that there are systems in place to support schools in their efforts to become more inclusive, and to prevent exclusions taking place by devising various schemes to cope with disaffected and troublesome pupils. The Inclusion Officers offer a valuable service much appreciated by schools. The support provided by Babcock LDP and the County generally is referred to by schools in most instances in positive terms - the MASH is acknowledged to be improving, the 'early help' approach is welcomed.

Our case studies show that schools are trying various methods to address the problems they face. Their efforts to be more inclusive include specific units intended to provide for the needs of disaffected and troublesome pupils, highly developed pastoral systems designed to meet the needs of all students and thus prevent the problems from developing, the provision of special curriculum options for those more vocationally and less academically inclined along with more personalised and practical pedagogies. The strategies adopted vary between schools – with a somewhat bureaucratic method adopted by some built on clear guidelines with defined rewards and sanctions for various kinds of behaviour, whilst others prefer a more individualised therapeutic approach. We know from statistics that compare Devon schools that there are significant differences between them in terms of numbers of both permanent and temporary exclusions, not all of which are explained by differences in catchment area or pupil intake. However, there seems to be little systematic knowledge on what works best in terms of evidence-based inclusive practice.

Staff at both the schools and alternative providers made strong statements about what they saw as a worsening situation with regard to the mental health of a significant and growing minority of their

students. They felt that CAMHS was not helpful enough and that they were under-resourced and under-trained to be able to cope. Members of the Task Group were told several times about children from 'problem families' who had little chance to do well at school. There is, though, a need to better understand disruptive pupil behaviour. There is a tendency to see this solely in terms of the characteristics of the pupils involved, often as an aspect of their special educational needs or with reference to mental health issues. However, it should not be forgotten that misbehaviour may also be the product of poor teaching or an inadequate curriculum or a pastoral care system that does not meet the needs of pupils. Of course, both individual and contextual aspects often interact.

The wider education system plays an important part in all this. Inclusion officers struggle to combat various forms of unofficial exclusion when schools are under so much pressure to improve both their scores in terms of pupils' academic progress and achievement, and their PEX and FTE statistics. Elective Home Education is seen by parents on behalf of their children and even, so we are told, by some schools, as a way of squaring this particular circle. For pupils who are not succeeding at and not enjoying school why not stay at home, especially as this has the added bonus of saving their schools from the impact of their poor performance and disaffection? Internal exclusion is a half-way house, cheaper than paying for alternative providers but still very expensive in terms of staff time and resources, and of doubtful effectiveness. Other options include late or early school, part-time timetables and FE college courses.

Senior school staff tell us that they have limited scope for action given restrictions on their budgets and the downgrading by the DfE of the qualifications provided by the vocational courses many of their students wish to take.

However, the success of 'managed moves', particularly those supported with extra funding, shows that disaffected and troublesome pupils can re-start their school careers in other schools, especially, it seems, in those that have a more inclusive curriculum and a more well-developed pastoral support system.

Also, of course, the pupils who spoke to us had stories of redemption, of finding their way to acceptance and success because of some important intervention, sometimes provided internally and at other times involving a move to a new institution. Failure is not, it seems, inevitable providing those opportunities are available. Other pupils told us of the causes of their disaffection – the poor teaching they experienced, the lack of help they got in lessons, the noisy classrooms, the disrespectful teachers who, they felt, were all too ready to see them in terms of their label, the unavailability of the sort of vocational courses they wanted to take. Put these things right then perhaps the number of misbehaving pupils on the verge of exclusion of one kind or the other would reduce significantly?

Alternative providers are in the privileged position of being able to change the environment they offer to better accommodate the pupils who have been excluded from their schools. The Schools Company North Devon Academy simply removed what it saw as one of the barriers to learning – the rule that students should wear a school uniform. This was seen as an unnecessary obstacle to good relations between staff and students and the cause of endless friction where applied. Certainly in one of the schools we visited, the tightening up of rules on uniform had become a big issue with strong resistance from both pupils and parents, as evidenced by a large petition.

PRUs and places like Chances also have a better staff:student ratio and are able to give students smaller classes and more individual attention. They are also very expensive for the County or the schools that pay for their services – money that schools say they need to make their provision more inclusive. Our Task Group was given differing accounts of how successful such units were in turning things round for the pupils who were sent to them, and of their ability to prepare students for reintegration into the mainstream. The staff we talked to at North Devon Academy and Chances were very positive, the DCC officers less so. There was a similar contrast between the positive views expressed by most of the students we spoke to at Chances and the more negative feedback from most of those we spoke to at their schools who had been there.

Overall, then, a highly complex and problematic situation. Of course, the recommendations we offer are meant to address this.

In the meantime the problem of pupil misbehaviour that sometimes gets so bad that it leads to exclusion continues to plague the education system. Those who suffer most from this may well be those pupils who are not the perpetrators themselves, but their victims. This may be directly, through bullying, verbal abuse or physical attack, or indirectly as the disruption they cause disturbs them, their teachers and their schools so taking time and resources away from their learning. Solving the problem would thus be of great benefit to the whole school population.

Councillors

Andy Hannan (Chair)
Frank Biederman
Alistair Dewhirst
John Hone
Sara Randall Johnson
Margaret Squires

Copies of this report may be obtained from the Democratic Services & Scrutiny Secretariat at County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD or by ringing 01392 382232. It will be available also on the County Council's website at:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/democracy/committee-meetings/scrutiny-committees/scrutiny-task-group-investigations/>

If you have any questions or wish to talk to anyone about this report then please contact:

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Appendix 1 - Task Group Activities

- A1.1 The first meeting of the Task Group took place on **16 July 2015** to discuss the scoping of the review and receive an overview from the Head of Education & Learning; Senior Accountant (Schools) and the Virtual School Headteacher & School Improvement Strategy Manager.
- A1.2 On **3 September 2015** members met with the 3 Inclusion Officers (Education) for Devon.
- A1.3 On **7 October 2015** the Task Group received evidence from the Head of Education & Learning; Inclusion Officer (Exeter/East) and the Inclusion Officer (North and Mid Devon).
- A1.4 On **13 November 2015** members visited School A and School B.
- A1.5 On **16 November 2015** the Task Group visited Chances and School C.
- A1.6 On **20 November 2015** members visited Schools Company North Devon Academy, Barnstaple and School D.
- A1.7 On **12 February 2016** the Task Group met with a member of Westleigh Parish Council, following which the Group discussed its draft findings and recommendations.

Appendix 2 – Bibliography & References

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