

Managing Exclusions in Worcestershire

**Report of the Managing Exclusions
in Worcestershire Scrutiny Task
Group**

April 2007

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the final report of the Managing Exclusions in Worcestershire Schools Scrutiny Task Group.

The majority of the young people in our primary, middle, special and high schools are conscientious, hard working and well behaved. For them school is a rewarding and educating experience that equips them with the skills and knowledge that they need to embrace adulthood and pursue the career of their choice.

A small number of young people, however, for a variety of reasons cause problems in school by their unacceptable behaviour. This sometimes has an adverse effect on the ability of others to learn and take full advantage of the opportunities that school offers them and also causes huge levels of stress amongst teachers and parents/carers.

Schools have a variety of mechanisms for dealing with poor behaviour and when they have all been exhausted, the ultimate sanction for the school is to use fixed term or permanent exclusion. We have found that this is always a very last resort and used reluctantly by schools.

Government targets are set to reduce exclusions from school to a minimum and so schools must explore and develop coping strategies to manage behaviour. This scrutiny was set up to examine the historical and current statistics about exclusions and to look at the success or otherwise of the various methods that are in place to keep pupils in school and whether the support being offered by the Local Authority is helping schools in this endeavour.

The Task Group examined the exclusion statistics and the current situation in the Pupil Referral Units. The provision of the alternative curriculum and managed moves process was investigated to see if it was successful in behaviour management control and the support given by the Children's Services Directorate to headteachers was examined to see if there is any more that can be done by the Local Authority to aid schools in managing pupil behaviour.

The Task Group visited a number of primary, middle and high schools and most of the pupil referral units in Worcestershire. The schools were chosen because of their high or low numbers of pupil exclusions and thanks are given to headteachers and staff for the honest and helpful way they have welcomed us and answered our questions and taken time to show us around their schools.

Officers from the Exclusions Team at Birmingham City Council and Warwickshire County Council attended a meeting to inform us of the exclusions process in their authorities and a visit was made to Kirklees Metropolitan Council to investigate how they have managed to reduce permanent exclusions to zero. Thanks go to the officers of these authorities who took time to share with us their experiences.

Sincere thanks go to officers of Worcestershire County Council who have been helpful and willing to answer questions and share concerns with us in an open and honest way. Alan Gaunt former Head of Learning Support and Behaviour Support, Chris Golbourn, Service Development Manager, Vulnerable Children and his team, Charles Matthews, Principal Education Psychologist, Kim Thorneywork, former VIP Co-ordinator, Julie Elliott, Service Development

Manager for Looked after Children and Richard Hubbard, Director of Children's Services have all assisted in this way.

Further help and assistance was received from Mr Roberts, Headteacher of Prince Henry's High School and Mr Corbett, Headteacher of Pershore High School who came to share the concerns of Worcestershire Association of Secondary Heads about behaviour support, exclusions and the managed moves process. A visit to King Charles High School to meet with Mr Gulliver, Chair of The Wyre Forest Managed Moves Panel, gave a valuable insight into how a successful managed moves panel can work and we are grateful for the time given by all of these headteachers and the patience and care with which they treated our enquiries.

Several very important points were raised by the Teacher Association Representatives, these helped us to realise the concerns of those teachers at the front line of teaching and who are often most affected by both positive and negative pupil behaviour. Many thanks are given for their time and help.

The discussion with representatives from Worcestershire Association of Governors who represented both primary and high schools was welcomed by both sides. It gave an interesting view of the challenges which poor pupil behaviour can present to governors and we are grateful to them for attending and sharing their opinions with us.

Finally our thanks go to those parents/carers and pupils who shared with us their very personal feelings and experiences about exclusions. This expanded our understanding of the issues that they face and helped us to see the situation from their point of view.

My personal thanks go to the members of this Task Group who have given many hours of their time visiting schools, attending meetings and working hard to collate the findings of our investigation and formulate the recommendations. Thank you for your ideas and hard work.

The scrutiny officers have once again proved to be first class. Without the support and hard work of Samantha, Alyson and Suzanne this report would have been the poorer. I am very grateful for their originality, patience and good humour, which has provided immeasurable help at visits, meetings and in the writing of this final report.

Jo Hodges
Lead Member of the Managing Exclusions in Worcestershire
Scrutiny Task Group

April 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Terms of Reference

The agreed terms of reference were as follows:

To review the current arrangements for managing pupil behaviour in Worcestershire schools and their effectiveness by examining:

- *Fixed term exclusions;*
- *Permanent exclusions;*
- *Managed Moves;*
- *Trends of fixed term and permanent exclusions; and*
- *Alternative strategies for managing behaviour.*

Key Findings

- Permanent exclusions in Worcestershire are continuing to rise although figures are relatively low in comparison to near neighbour authorities;
- Pupils' general behaviour and attitude to school is heavily influenced by the level of parental skill and involvement;
- Early acknowledgement of potential problems could be of long term benefit to the school and the child;
- Many elements of good practice and innovative solutions to behaviour problems in schools have been found;
- Some schools are working collaboratively to solve behaviour problems and we were pleased to see the positive results this can bring.

Recommendations

Local Authority Support for Schools

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Authority develops a system whereby schools and service users can provide feedback to assist the Authority to monitor and evaluate the support given to them by Local Authority officers. This feedback should be provided in a user-friendly form, electronically and in hard copy.

The Educational Psychology Service

Recommendation 2

We recommend that schools be given extra delegated funding to develop their own solutions to problems and decide at which stage to buy in the services of Educational Psychologists, either via the Local Authority if available or from elsewhere if there are resource issues. This should enable schools to access this kind of support in a timely manner to assist with earlier diagnosis of problems in order to avoid costly intervention later on.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Local Authority looks at supporting appropriately qualified staff to train as Educational Psychologists, possibly in conjunction with the University of Worcester.

Multi-Agency Support

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at the availability of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Recommendation 5

We look forward to seeing the improvements that the integrated Children's Service will bring from 1 April 2007 and recommend that there be one point of contact for schools to access the multi-agency services that they require, recognising the importance of such a role.

The importance of early intervention and preventative strategies

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Local Authority considers ways in which support could be focused on identifying and tackling behavioural problems at an early stage focussing on more formalised outreach work at Foundation Stage/KS1/2 with the aim of avoiding more serious problems at a later date.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Local Authority supports clusters of schools working collaboratively to resource inclusion units and take advantage of economies of scale, and that it assists with the dissemination of best practice.

Training for Teachers

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Local Authority undertakes an audit of training to ensure that all schools have sufficient teachers and staff trained in behaviour management techniques and looks into the possibility of holding joint courses with the Teacher Associations.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Local Authority investigates and approves a recognised method of restraint and control for use in all LA schools.

Working with Parents and Carers

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Local Authority investigates ways in which further support can be offered to parents/carers to encourage them to get involved in their children's education.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Local Authority provides training to support schools in implementing their new powers under the Education and Inspections Act in relation to parenting orders.

Other Behaviour Management Strategies

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Local Authority facilitates the sharing of best practice in the area of behaviour management possibly via the County Council website or via joint Teacher Education Days.

Managed Moves

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Local Authority encourages all schools in the county to work together in a spirit of cooperation to ensure the Managed Moves system works successfully and to its full potential.

Collaboration/Schools Working Together

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Local Authority monitors this development and, if its results prove to be positive, the County Council should investigate whether groups of schools elsewhere in the County could be encouraged to set up similar units.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Local Authority looks at ways to provide incentives to schools to work together.

Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1/2 PRUs

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the outreach services of Foundation Stage/KS1/2 PRUs be formalised to have a rolling programme of behaviour management courses in primary schools, which are not dependent upon the occupancy of the PRUs. We would also suggest that this pattern should be extended to KS3 and KS4 PRUs where outreach services could be used to prevent exclusions and support reintegrated pupils to avoid the breakdown of a placement.

Reintegration

Recommendation 17

We recommend that in order to provide best value, PRUs should continue to develop links with schools particularly involving headteachers in the admission and integration issues of the PRUs whilst focusing on preventative work and successful reintegration.

Receiving Schools

Recommendation 18

We are very concerned about the number of surplus places in particular schools which forces them to take a disproportionate number of excluded pupils and thus undermines parental confidence in the school. We recommend that the Director of Children's Services reviews this situation and makes recommendations where appropriate.

The Increased Flexibility Programme

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the Local Authority should work with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to ensure that all colleges have appropriate exclusions and appeals procedures which are in line with those used in schools. We recommend that colleges should be encouraged to move pupils to another course rather than permanently exclude them.

Our findings

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the Local Authority encourages all schools to continue to participate in the Vocational Inclusion and Participation (VIP) Programme. The project should be evaluated at regular intervals to ensure it continues to contribute to the reduction in the level of permanent exclusions. Schools should be encouraged to work together to offer a wider variety of vocational and alternative courses to local pupils. In addition, the Authority should ensure that providers are giving a good quality of education and courses are duly accredited. New and existing providers should be approved and monitored by the Authority.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that the Local Authority actively seeks alternative forms of funding for the VIP project well before ESF funding is withdrawn.

Funding

Recommendation 22

We recommend that where a school or number of schools has a successful strategy for preventing permanent exclusions, the Local Authority should recognise its value and make it sustainable.

MANAGING EXCLUSIONS IN WORCESTERSHIRE SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

Section A: Background to the scrutiny exercise

Exclusion of a pupil is a school's most powerful disciplinary tool. It can be for a fixed period, or in extreme cases, permanent. The DfES suggests that exclusion should be the first response to one off cases of serious violent or threatening behaviour, sexual abuse or assault, supplying illegal substances and carrying an offensive weapon. Other behaviours that can lead to exclusion are bullying and racist and homophobic activity. Exclusion can have an impact on a young person's educational outcomes and carry a cost for the school and local authority. For these reasons it is important that the number of exclusions - especially permanent exclusions - is kept low, and that there is good educational provision for excluded pupils.

In July 2004, Worcestershire County Council's Education Scrutiny Panel carried out a scrutiny exercise 'to examine the achievement of excluded pupils, including the effectiveness of projects similar to Euro K4¹ in this'. The Panel concluded that there needed to be a culture change in the way schools dealt with pupils at risk of exclusion and in communication between schools and the LEA to ensure that alternatives to exclusion could be explored in order to make exclusions a very last resort, reintegrating pupils back into mainstream school as quickly as possible where it is appropriate.

At the April 2006 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee (OSSC) the issue of school exclusions, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Managed Moves was raised as an area for possible future in-depth scrutiny. Members raised ongoing concerns that, although at first glance the number of permanent exclusions was reducing, the reality of behaviour management in schools, including the number of fixed term exclusions, showed a different picture. Members wished to explore the background to this and to find out whether excluded pupils were getting an appropriate education, whether the current system, including the role of Pupil Referral Units and the Managed Moves system, was working and whether it could be improved. Members also wanted to be reassured that the financial investment in VIP (the successor to Euro K4 and Project 19²) represented value for money.

In May 2006, the OSSC agreed to establish a scrutiny task group to explore the issue of exclusions from schools.

¹ Euro K4 was a project funded by the European Social Fund and supported by the Learning and Skills Council which provided 14-16 year olds with an opportunity to experience alternative learning through individual education packages. It aimed to increase participation and raise attainment of identified groups of young people, including those at risk of exclusion from mainstream and special schools.

² Project 19 was a part time alternative vocational learning opportunity for pupils in mainstream Key Stage 4 education. It aimed to re-engage pupils into making positive choices post-16 by giving them a head start on a training pathway appertaining to their career options. The project targeted pupils at risk of disaffection from education, self exclusion or sporadic attendance.

Terms of Reference

The agreed terms of reference were as follows:

To review the current arrangements for managing pupil behaviour in Worcestershire schools and their effectiveness by examining:

- *Fixed term exclusions;*
- *Permanent exclusions;*
- *Managed Moves;*
- *Trends of fixed term and permanent exclusions; and*
- *Alternative strategies for managing behaviour.*

Methodology

A full schedule of the task group's activity is included at Appendix 1. In summary, the task group has gathered evidence from a wide range of interested parties. Members have carried out an extensive programme of visits to schools of all types, including Pupil Referral Units. In total five primary/first schools, two middle schools, ten high schools and most of the County's Pupil Referral Units were visited. The questions that were asked when visiting schools and PRUs are attached at Appendix 2.

We have also spoken to officers who work in the areas of exclusions, educational psychology, the 14-19 curriculum, behaviour support and social inclusion. The task group has visited Kirklees Metropolitan Council, heard evidence from colleagues at Warwickshire County Council and Birmingham City Council, and met with representatives of the Worcestershire Association of Secondary Heads and the Worcestershire Association of Governors. In addition, we have spoken to pupils and parents/carers who have experienced the exclusions process. Members have also considered research and reports on the issue by national agencies.

The situation in Worcestershire

There are two types of exclusion: fixed term and permanent. The data shown below has been provided to us by the Social Inclusion and Behaviour Support Team and gives a general idea of the trends in numbers of exclusions. It is however worth remembering that trends can obviously be influenced by a number of factors, including differences in tolerance levels of behaviour between schools, an incident involving a number of pupils or even the size of a particular year group to name but a few.

Permanent Exclusions

The following table shows the level of permanent exclusions in Worcestershire in recent years.

REASON	2005-6	2004-5	2003-4
Persistent Disruptive Behaviour	32	8	30
Physical Assault against Pupil	15	12	13
Verbal abuse against Adult	14	4	13
Physical Assault against Adult	13	3	7
Bullying	7	0	0
Drug/Alcohol Related	4	3	8
Damage	3	1	3
Verbal abuse against Pupil	2	0	3
Theft	1	0	1
Racist abuse	1	0	0
Sexual Misconduct	0	0	2
Total	92	31	80

The figures can be broken down by gender, ethnicity and year group as follows.

GENDER	2005-6	2004-5	2003-4
Male	68	22	73
Female	24	9	7
Total	92	31	80

ETHNICITY	2005-6	2004-5	2003-4
White British	85	31	69
Black Caribbean	0	0	2
Black Other	0	0	0
Pakistani	1	0	2
White European	0	0	0
White/Black Caribbean	2	0	2
White/Asian	1	0	0
"Unclassified"	0	0	0
"Any other mixed background"	1	0	2
"Roma/Roma Gypsy"	0	0	1
"Any other white background"	1	0	2
"Refused"	1	0	0
Total	92	31	80

YEAR GROUP	2005-6	2004-5	2003-4
R	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	2	0	0
3	2	0	2
4	2	0	2
5	4	1	2
6	3	1	7
7	8	4	5
8	16	5	10
9	23	3	22
10	20	13	22
11	12	4	8
Total	92	31	80

The statistical evidence shows a dramatic decrease in the number of permanently excluded pupils in 2004/05 to 31, which we explore further later in this report (paragraph 3.3).

Worcestershire's rates of permanent exclusions are relatively low when compared to other local authorities. In 2004/05 (the latest available figures) the rate of exclusion in Worcestershire was 0.03% of the school population compared with a national rate of 0.12% of the school population. In 2003/04 the figures were 0.10% for Worcestershire and 0.13% nationally. The table below gives more detail and a comparison with Worcestershire's statistical neighbours in the West Midlands.

	Primary (2)		Secondary (2)		Special (3)		Total (1)	
	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population (4)	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population (4)	Number of permanent exclusions	Percentage of the school population (4)
2002-2003								
Dudley	10	0.02	50	0.24	#	#	60	0.12
Herefordshire	#	#	30	0.26	0	0.00	30	0.13
Shropshire	10	0.02	20	0.11	#	#	30	0.06
Solihull	10	0.02	20	0.15	#	#	30	0.08
Staffordshire	20	0.03	80	0.13	10	0.33	100	0.08
Telford and Wrekin	#	#	30	0.25	#	#	30	0.11
Warwickshire	10	0.02	50	0.16	#	#	70	0.08
Worcestershire	10	0.03	100	0.25	0	0.00	120	0.14
2003-2004								
Dudley	9	0.03	80	0.38	#	#	90	0.18
Herefordshire	4	0.03	27	0.26	0	0.00	30	0.13
Shropshire	#	#	32	0.17	0	0.00	30	0.08
Solihull	0	0.00	18	0.11	0	0.00	20	0.05
Staffordshire	12	0.02	109	0.17	6	0.30	130	0.10
Telford and Wrekin	4	0.03	37	0.35	#	#	40	0.16
Warwickshire	7	0.02	84	0.25	#	#	90	0.12
Worcestershire	10	0.03	70	0.17	0	0.00	80	0.10
2004-2005								
Dudley	8	0.03	81	0.39	#	#	90	0.18
Herefordshire	4	0.03	23	0.22	0	0.00	30	0.11
Shropshire	#	#	33	0.18	0	0.00	40	0.09
Solihull	#	#	54	0.35	#	#	60	0.16
Staffordshire	12	0.02	123	0.20	9	0.45	140	0.11
Telford and Wrekin	6	0.04	31	0.29	#	#	40	0.15
Warwickshire	15	0.04	128	0.37	3	0.30	150	0.19
Worcestershire	0	0.00	26	0.06	0	0.00	30	0.03

less than 3, or a rate based on less than 3

- (1) Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. There may be discrepancies between constituent items and total as shown.
- (2) Includes middle schools as deemed.
- (3) Includes both Maintained and Non-Maintained Special Schools.
- (4) The number of permanent exclusions expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) pupils in Primary, secondary and Special schools, excluding dual registered pupils in special schools in January 2003.

Fixed Term Exclusions

Fixed term exclusions can last between ½ and 45 days in any one year. Any fixed term exclusion which results in the pupil being excluded for more than 5 school days (singly or cumulatively) in one term must immediately be reported to the Governors and the Local Authority.

Fixed Term Exclusions for each Academic Year 1 September – 31 August

	No. of Exclusions	No. of Pupils	No of Days
2000-2001	2803	1729	11199
2001-2002	3170	1882	12666.5
2002-2003	3322	1958	13120.5
2003-2004	3331	1982	12544.5
2004-2005	3665	2095	13532.5
2005-2006	3520	2000	11831

Duration of Fixed Term Exclusions 2005-06

No of Days	Number	% of Total Number of Fixed Term Exclusions
1	808	23
2	949	27
3	719	20
4	226	6
5	446	13
6	53	2
7	49	1
8	38	1
9	22	1
10	91	3
>10	119	3
Total	3520	100

*Average length of exclusion per pupil is 5.91 days
Part days counted as whole days*

Section B: Evidence and Recommendations

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Throughout our extensive evidence gathering we heard many stories of individual pupils who, for one reason or another, were displaying challenging behaviour which meant that, in the interests of their teachers and fellow pupils, it was not possible for them to continue to attend their current school.
- 1.2 A headteacher's decision to permanently exclude a pupil must be confirmed by the school's governing body within 15 working days. Parents/carers also have the right to appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel and the hearing must be held within 15 school days of the appeal being lodged. Following this there may be a period of time before a child is placed in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – something that worried both parents/carers and the PRUs. As a result of this system there may well be a period of some weeks when a child is not in education and this could make settling into a PRU more difficult.
- 1.3 There is no standardised level for exclusion across the County. The decision to exclude is taken by individual schools and is wholly dependent on what the school believes is an excludable offence.
- 1.4 In the overwhelming majority of cases, permanent exclusion was, for the school, very much a last resort. It was often a course of action that was taken reluctantly after months, and in some cases years, of poor behaviour and breaking of school rules. All schools took the decision to exclude very seriously and we commend schools for their hard work, patience and imagination in devising strategies to manage pupils' behaviour in an attempt to allow all pupils to continue with their education and avoid permanent exclusion.
- 1.5 We were very pleased to hear from the Director of Children's Services that he was in discussion with secondary headteachers about setting a collective target of zero permanent exclusions. We acknowledge that this will be very challenging but agree with the Director that no other target would be appropriate.
- 1.6 It is clear that no single initiative or process prevents exclusions, rather a whole raft of measures and techniques are needed. These are outlined below.

2. BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Local Authority support for schools

- 2.1 The Local Authority has recently undergone a reorganisation of its Children's Services and from 1 January 2007, Social Inclusion and Behaviour Support became a joined up service headed by the Service Development Manager, Vulnerable Children. As part of this service there is a Behaviour Outreach Team in each area of the county consisting of two full time equivalent teachers and two teaching assistants. These teams work in schools to assist staff with classroom management and to work with individuals and some small groups of pupils on behaviour management.

The amount of time allocated to schools via the outreach team is calculated by the application of a formula, which is weighted according to certain factors (for example social deprivation). If all allocated support time is used there is a contingency provision for emergency cases.

- 2.2 We heard from the Worcestershire Association of Secondary Heads (WASH) that, in the recent past, the Local Authority perspective on exclusions has not always matched that of the county's headteachers. We were pleased to hear that WASH and the Local Authority were now working together to improve the situation and that a protocol for dealing with challenging pupils was now being developed.
- 2.3 Some schools commented to us that it would be really valuable if there could be a system of evaluating the support that they are given by the Local Authority.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Authority develops a system whereby schools and service users can provide feedback to assist the Authority to monitor and evaluate the support given to them by Local Authority officers. This feedback should be provided in a user-friendly form, electronically and in hard copy.

The Educational Psychology Service

- 2.4 The County Council's Educational Psychology Team offers support to schools in managing challenging behaviour. The Task Group met with the Principal Educational Psychologist to gain an insight into how the service works and what services schools are able to access.
- 2.5 The service covers children from birth to 19 years and is delivered through three area teams managed by an Area Senior Educational Psychologist (ASEP). All schools have access to the team, but help is targeted at the schools with the highest level of need. These schools are identified using a range of indicators of need including level of Free School Meals, number of pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs or English as an Additional Language and attendance data. Schools with the highest level of need are allocated one session per week, whereas schools judged to have less need have one session per term. All schools are entitled to a termly School Support Team meeting. This meeting is attended by an Educational Psychologist, Behaviour Support Teacher and/or Learning Support teachers and school representatives. It is designed to help schools manage problems more effectively and plan necessary interventions for the term. The educational psychology service also plays an important role in helping schools to design appropriate behaviour policies, which is the first step in reducing exclusions.
- 2.6 We heard from the Principal Educational Psychologist about the service's involvement in the exclusions process. Once an exclusion has happened a receiving school or a PRU may ask for advice on how best to manage a child's needs. The service may also be asked for advice about a child's mental health needs and has close links with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), although we were told repeatedly that a

referral to CAMHS is a lengthy process. For some children it may be difficult for the school or the PRU to disentangle challenging behaviour from mental health issues. The termly meetings with schools are designed in part to assist schools in identifying pupils who may be at risk of exclusion and put in place a programme of preventative work with the Educational Psychologist.

- 2.7 In some cases it is also the educational psychologist's role to mediate between the school and parents/carers, acting as an advocate for the child. We were told that the vast majority of parents/carers want their children to succeed at school. However, they may have had a negative history of involvement with the school or a bad experience of school themselves and this can make relationships difficult. It was suggested to us that it was important for schools to give positive messages to parents/carers about their children.
- 2.8 Although the majority of schools were positive about the support they received from educational psychology, many told us that the amount of support was insufficient or was too slow in responding to a school's needs due in the main to a lack of resources. A number of schools told us that the service could identify or define a problem but not always provide the strategies and support to solve it. One headteacher was concerned that, although his school was now admitting an increasing number of asylum seeker/refugee pupils from areas of conflict, there was no additional funding to enable the school to deal with the pupils' emotional difficulties. Clearly there is a role here for CAMHS as well as educational psychology. We discuss CAMHS further in the next section.
- 2.9 It seems clear to us that the Educational Psychology Service provides a valuable service to schools and is an essential part of the Local Authority's support to schools in developing their behaviour management strategies and managing exclusions. However, we have learned that, as a result of staff shortages and resource limitations, from the school's perspective this support can appear very limited.
- 2.10 We were told that, in theory, schools are able to buy in extra hours of educational psychology support. However, in practice, there is a national shortage of Educational Psychologists and buying in extra hours is not a possibility due to staff shortages.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that schools be given extra delegated funding to develop their own solutions to problems and decide at which stage to buy in the services of Educational Psychologists, either via the Local Authority if available or from elsewhere if there are resource issues. This should enable schools to access this kind of support in a timely manner to assist with earlier diagnosis of problems in order to avoid costly intervention later on.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Local Authority looks at supporting appropriately qualified staff to train as Educational Psychologists, possibly in conjunction with the University of Worcester.

Multi-Agency Support

2.11 Through our investigations we have learned that often pupils who display challenging behaviour and are in danger of being excluded would benefit from emotional support in the form of intervention from mental health or social work professionals. Although the Educational Psychology Service has links with the CAMHS the evidence we heard from schools was that they find it difficult and time consuming to access these services. A number of schools have said to us that quicker access to professional support may have enabled them to deal with a pupil's challenging behaviour within the school rather than resort to exclusion. The Worcestershire Association of Secondary Heads also confirmed that schools find it difficult to access CAMHS services.

2.12 Although we recognise that resources are scarce and available funding does not always match demand for services, we hope that better links with mental health professionals can be developed to support schools in accessing available services.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at the availability of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

2.13 PRUs also told us that better 'joined up thinking' between education and social care officers would assist them in dealing with challenging behaviour. For example, during a visit to a PRU we were told about an incident in the previous week when one child had experienced a traumatic event at home which had required the involvement of social services. Social services staff did not inform the Unit of this event and staff were required to deal with the child's deteriorating behaviour without understanding the reasons behind it. Both schools and PRUs have suggested that a single contact number to access the range of Local Authority support in relation to exclusions would be helpful.

2.14 We are confident that the new Integrated Children's Services Directorate effective from 1 April 2007 will help to improve the links between the Local Authority's education service and support in the area of children's social care, and enable schools to more quickly access the support they may need from social care professionals. We were pleased to hear that headteachers are being closely involved in discussions on how best schools might interface with support services.

Recommendation 5

We look forward to seeing the improvements that the integrated Children's Service will bring from 1 April 2007 and recommend that there be one point of contact for schools to access the multi-agency services that they require, recognising the importance of such a role.

Behaviour Management Strategies in Schools

- 2.15 In addition to the support offered centrally by the Local Authority, schools have over time developed a wide range of behaviour management strategies in response to local needs and all schools are expected to have a Behaviour Policy. We found that many schools were retaining pupils who may have previously been excluded and were aiming ultimately for zero exclusions.
- 2.16 During our visits to schools we were able to see for ourselves the enormous amount of hard work and imagination that schools have dedicated to managing challenging behaviour in an effort to keep pupils within the mainstream educational experience. Many of the schools we visited told us that it was their aim to keep all children within the school and, for them, any exclusion was a failure. We heard reports from headteachers, particularly in primary schools, that the experience of excluding a pupil had been 'harrowing' and 'traumatic'.

The importance of early intervention and preventative strategies

- 2.17 Our programme of school visits covered all types of schools including first and primary. A message that we heard time and again from schools at all levels and in all areas of the county was the importance of early intervention in preventing even greater problems later in a child's life. Children's centres, the Integrated Nursery Project (where skilled workers help children through play to deal with tantrums and other challenging behaviours), nurture groups and inclusion units all provided a place where pupils received specialist input.
- 2.18 Middle and high schools reported to us that they felt that a child's behavioural problems could have been identified in their first years at school, but that Key Stage 1 teachers may have put these problems down to a child's age or immaturity. It was suggested to us that if behavioural and emotional problems were correctly identified and tackled at an early age many more complex and difficult to resolve problems could be avoided.
- 2.19 This was also something that staff in Pupil Referral Units brought to our attention. They suggested to us that very often class teachers in Reception and Year 1 are aware of early indications of a problem but there is a tendency to 'see how things go', very often waiting until KS2. They felt that an early acknowledgement of potential problems could only be to the long-term benefit of both school and pupil. We also heard from officers at Kirklees Metropolitan Council that they had made a major investment in early intervention in order to reduce the level of exclusions, and permanent exclusions were on course to be reduced to zero.

2.20 The key message that we heard most consistently throughout the scrutiny exercise from across the range of people that we spoke to – from schools, PRUs, Local Authority officers and parents/carers – was that early intervention was key to successfully managing poor behaviour and, therefore, reducing the level of exclusions. We strongly believe that the Local Authority's focus should be in supporting preventative work.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Local Authority considers ways in which support could be focused on identifying and tackling behavioural problems at an early stage focussing on more formalised outreach work at Foundation Stage/KS1/2 with the aim of avoiding more serious problems at a later date.

Transition between primary and secondary schools

2.21 As our visits to schools progressed we became concerned about transition from primary to secondary schools and the apparent lack of acknowledgement of work done in earlier phases. We were told that young people's behaviour often regressed when moving to secondary school. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children's Services told us that she hoped the culture shift to individual child based thinking would help to encourage schools to acknowledge the prior achievements of all children.

Learning and Support Units within schools

2.22 Many schools that we visited had set up special units within the school as part of their behaviour management strategy. Schools had many different names for these units and used them in different ways depending on the type and nature of the school.

2.23 In primary schools we heard about nurture groups and special classrooms which aimed to help some children gain the social and life skills required in order to develop their learning skills. In one first school we saw a special classroom within the school grounds, which was self contained with its own toilets and outside play area. This unit was designed to mimic a home environment and included items not normally found in a classroom such as a dining table and chairs, sofas and a toaster for making breakfast. Children who use the unit are identified following the school's own assessments and they attend usually for one term. Throughout this time children are encouraged to maintain links with their own class, in order to facilitate reintegration. The unit is managed by skilled teaching assistants and had had a marked effect on the school's level of exclusions.

2.24 In middle and high schools, special units are also used as a place for pupils to 'cool off' or have 'time out' following an incident of poor behaviour. These units give children a chance to reflect on their behaviour and give the classroom teacher an opportunity to carry on uninterrupted with the planned lesson with the rest of the class. Schools reassured us that the units were not used for unofficial or internal exclusions and usually pupils were expected to carry on with their lessons while they were there. It was suggested to us that the simple act of isolating a pupil from his/her peers was an effective and sufficient punishment for many pupils. One school

also told us that its unit was used to reintegrate pupils following a fixed term exclusion and to offer behaviour management courses to pupils who were at risk of fixed term exclusion. Another school uses its unit as a place where pupils at risk of permanent exclusion can follow an alternative programme of work and access counselling support provided by a trained counsellor employed by the school.

2.25 Schools reported positive results from the various behaviour management/inclusion units that they had set up and we would commend the hard work that teachers and school managers have put into these initiatives. However, it is important that the units do not simply become 'sin bins' and while pupils are in the units, the opportunity is taken to address their challenging behaviour before they return to the mainstream classroom.

2.26 In hearing about the many and various behaviour management units that schools have set up, one point was made to us many times. Often the school had had to make sacrifices elsewhere in order to pull together the funding for the unit. In one school we were advised that the cost of running such a unit was between £60,000 and £100,000 per annum. As a result, although all schools reported positive results in reducing the rate of exclusions, future funding was often felt to be insecure. One middle school told us that funding for its on-site learning support centre had recently been lost, something which concerned the headteacher greatly as she did not find it easy to access places in the Pupil Referral Unit. A high school headteacher told us that his school's inclusion unit was very expensive.

2.27 Although we acknowledge that often local ownership of local solutions can make them more powerful, we feel there is scope for the LA to encourage greater collaboration between schools. It is also particularly important that, where schools are developing effective solutions, this best practice is disseminated across schools.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Local Authority supports clusters of schools working collaboratively to resource inclusion units and take advantage of economies of scale, and that it assists with the dissemination of best practice.

Non-teaching behaviour management staff

2.28 We heard about a number of schools in the county who have employed non-teaching behaviour or pastoral managers who are able to have ongoing contact with pupils, take a neutral stance and react to incidents as they occur. The Educational Psychology Service is looking to provide additional training for these managers to support them in their developing role. Although this initiative is still in its early days, generally we heard very positive comments about the projects, both from the schools themselves and from the Educational Psychology Service.

Training for teachers and other staff

2.29 Where a school has an issue with challenging behaviour but cannot afford to employ specific non-teaching behaviour management staff, it is essential that staff are sufficiently trained to deal with difficult situations. Our discussions with the Teacher Associations were particularly useful on this point. It was suggested that schools may wish to have one or two members of staff fully trained in dealing with difficult situations, in the same way as first aid training might be organised. The representatives also suggested that there was potential for the Local Authority to work together with the Teacher Associations to provide behaviour management courses. The Director of Children's Services confirmed to us that the Service offers behaviour management training to schools (to teachers, non-teachers and governors) as part of its support and advisory role. We feel however that it is important to audit schools' access to this training to ensure that all schools are sufficiently supported.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Local Authority undertakes an audit of training to ensure that all schools have sufficient teachers and staff trained in behaviour management techniques and looks into the possibility of holding joint courses with the Teacher Associations.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Local Authority investigates and approves a recognised method of restraint and control for use in all LA schools.

Working with Parents and Carers

2.30 A common theme emerging from our visits to schools was that pupils' behaviour and general attitude to school was, of course, heavily influenced by the level of parental skill and involvement. In a recent letter to all headteachers³ to launch the government's strategy for parental support *Every Parent Matters*, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills said that 'The evidence that good parenting plays a huge role in educational attainment is too compelling to ignore. It outstrips every other factor: including social class, ethnicity or disability – in its impact on attainment.'

2.31 Our findings show that many schools are developing strategies to involve parents/carers more closely in their children's education. We heard of one high school which had offered evening classes in parenting skills. Another high school headteacher told us about his ambitious plans to develop an area exclusively for parents/carers to come to when they visited the school. His aim was to enhance the partnership between the school and the parental community which the head felt was an essential basis for any successful behaviour strategy. Other schools were also attempting to make school a less threatening place for parents/carers who may not have had a

³ Letter from Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP, Secretary of State for Education and Skills to headteachers, Local Authorities and other agencies, 15 March 2007

very positive experience of school themselves. This was a strategy that had proved very successful in a number of the county's Pupil Referral Units, where coffee mornings and barbecues were regularly held as a way of bringing parents/carers into the building to be part of their child's educational experience.

- 2.32 In involving and engaging parents/carers in their child's education in a positive way, schools and PRUs reported very welcome results in terms of improved behaviour and felt that the effort was appreciated by parents/carers. We would very much support the various initiatives that schools are undertaking in this area and would hope that the development of Children's Centres around the county, with their focus on supporting families, will also further strengthen the links between schools, parents/carers and the wider community.
- 2.33 We feel that there are some common sense strategies which could be adopted at primary school level which could be effective in improving long term outcomes but do not carry a huge cost implication. For instance we were told that although absence was not the cause of challenging behaviour, attendance was very often an issue for those with behavioural problems. One solution could be for schools to routinely chase up absences before the problem gets serious enough to involve the Education Welfare Officer. This could avoid more serious problems later on and would also open the lines of communication with parents/carers and help them feel more involved in their child's education and more comfortable speaking to the school. This approach may be especially useful with hard to reach parents/carers.
- 2.34 We understand that the Education and Inspections Act will, from September 2007, enable behaviour-related parenting contracts to be offered as an earlier intervention by schools and LAs well before poor behaviour in school deteriorates to the point of exclusion. Parents/carers who will not act to improve their child's behaviour can be made subject to a court imposed parenting order. This compels the parents/carers to attend parenting classes and comply with any other conditions set out in the order. Currently, only Local Authorities can be granted such orders but from September 2007, schools will be able to apply for such orders where a pupil has seriously misbehaved or been excluded for serious misbehaviour. The task group understands that such extreme measures may be necessary in some cases but we would hope that in the majority of cases other strategies would be used at an earlier point to avoid things getting to this stage. Such measures are also expensive: it has been estimated that 200 parenting orders and 100 exclusions would cost around £350,000 p.a.
- 2.35 The Director of Children's Services explained that there was a lot of good practice happening in schools in respect of engaging parents/carers but that it was key to get a coherent approach established to support parenting. The Directorate is also targeting particular groups of parents/carers as a means of communicating with hard to reach groups, for example teenage parents/carers, single parents/carers, foster parents/carers and those receiving support from specialist services.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Local Authority investigates ways in which further support can be offered to parents/carers to encourage them to get involved in their children's education.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Local Authority provides training to support schools in implementing their new powers under the Education and Inspections Act in relation to parenting orders.

The impact of the inclusion agenda on behaviour management in schools

- 2.36 Since 1997 central government policy has been to encourage local authorities to include as many pupils as possible in mainstream education rather than educate them separately in special schools. As a result of this commitment to inclusion, greater numbers of pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems are being educated in mainstream schools and this has in turn had an impact on schools' behaviour management strategies.
- 2.37 When gathering our evidence we heard from several schools, which had particularly high levels of pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Anecdotally some schools felt that the number of challenging youngsters had increased in recent years and they attributed this to the inclusion agenda. We were concerned to hear from one middle school headteacher who told us that she felt her school had a number of pupils on roll whose emotional and behavioural problems meant that, in reality, they were beyond being able to cope within a mainstream school without a substantial level of one to one support that was simply not available given current resource levels. A further concern to us was the suggestion that high schools are being forced to create behaviour management/inclusion units in order to deal with pupils who are unable to cope with mainstream school.
- 2.38 The Director of Children's Services told us that he considered inclusion should mean how young people are included in opportunities to learn and achieve, not simply being included in mainstream education. The focus, he felt, should be on identifying the best way of meeting an individual's needs.
- 2.39 Generally, schools appear to be supportive of the inclusion agenda and are keen to open their doors to all children. However, they also feel there needs to be a recognition that some children may not be able to cope with mainstream school and the education it provides. These children may be more willing and able to learn in specialist provision. Schools are keen to be inclusive but do not feel that this should be at the expense of the majority. We witnessed the success that many pupils experience in PRUs and this may reflect that they are much more suited to education in a special environment with fewer pupils.

Other behaviour management strategies

2.40 Schools also told us about other ways in which they maintained good pupil discipline. One head said that good, engaging teaching and involving pupils in every aspect of school life, including curriculum development, had given pupils a feeling of ownership and a sense of pride in the school, and improved standards of behaviour. Another told us about lunchtime activities run by teachers on a voluntary basis, which had reduced incidents during the lunchbreak by keeping pupils occupied. One school also told us about the successful courses they had undertaken at Malvern Outdoor Education Centre. The courses had been very popular with pupils and had been successful in developing better self-esteem in underachieving pupils.

2.41 These are just some examples of the types of strategies that schools are employing to maintain good standards of behaviour. Although we acknowledge that pupils' behaviour is, in the main, a matter for individual schools to manage, the Local Authority is well placed to facilitate the sharing of good practice amongst schools, perhaps via the County Council website.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Local Authority facilitates the sharing of best practice in the area of behaviour management possibly via the County Council website or via joint Teacher Education Days.

Looked After Children

2.42 Children who are in the care of local authorities are described as 'looked after children'. We heard from the officer responsible for Services for Looked After Children that, as a result of their difficult start in life, these children often have emotional difficulties and can be very vulnerable. There is an understanding within the Authority that this particular group of children has a high level of need in comparison with their peer group and, as a result, a proactive approach is taken with Looked After Children being given priority for Educational Psychology Services and access to the VIP project. Schools are contacted twice yearly to discuss individual children's cases and any emerging problems. Every school has a designated teacher and governor for Looked After Children and schools also receive specialist training in dealing with managing children with complex behavioural problems.

2.43 We were very pleased to note that this proactive approach seems to be working well in the area of exclusions with the level of permanent exclusions among Looked After Children falling from six in 2002/03 to zero in 2005/06. No school that we visited felt that they had a particular problem in relation to the needs of Looked After Children. Both the schools and the Local Authority officers involved are to be commended for the successful work they have undertaken in this area.

3. MANAGED MOVES

- 3.1 A managed move is a transfer between schools of a pupil who may be at risk of permanent exclusion, with the agreement of the pupil and parents/carers. Schools receiving a pupil on a managed move take the pupil for up to ten weeks. At any time during this period the move can be judged by the receiving school to have failed and the child returned to the home school. Schools receiving a child on a managed move claim £1000 to assist with the process. After ten weeks, if the move is deemed to be successful, the child is transferred to the receiving school.
- 3.2 At each school visit, members asked whether the school had been involved in the Managed Moves process and, if so, whether they thought it was an effective system. The responses were varied. In Worcestershire, Managed Moves are arranged by one of four Managed Moves panels which consist of headteachers (and/or their deputies) from local schools. The panels meet once a month and are also attended by the Local Authority's Area Behaviour Co-ordinator and Pupil Exclusion and Mediation Officer.
- 3.3 Initially schools were using the Managed Moves system to transfer pupils into PRUs rather than permanently excluding them. This no longer happens, hence the increase in the number of permanently excluded pupils to 92 in 2005/06.
- 3.4 We met with the Chair of the Wyre Forest Managed Moves Panel to hear his views on the strengths and weaknesses of the system. We were encouraged to hear about the success of Managed Moves in Wyre Forest but were advised that it can take several attempts to achieve a successful move.
- 3.5 It appears that the success of the system very much depends on all schools in the area fully participating both on a moving and receiving basis, with no one school receiving more than its fair share of transferees. From what we have seen, where schools are able to develop supportive relationships based on mutual trust and respect (as in Wyre Forest) the system can work well. Further factors in determining the success of a move are the individual support package designed for the pupil and the willingness of the young person and their family to attend the chosen school. Of course, choosing a receiving school can prove difficult in the more rural areas of the county where the nearest alternative high school may be many miles away from the pupil's home and transport may be a problem. In this context we were pleased to hear of the cross-border cooperation being explored by Tenbury High School with two Herefordshire schools.
- 3.6 It is important to note that some schools were less than enthusiastic about the Managed Moves system. One school said that the system was 'a sticking plaster' rather than a solution and another felt that it was for each school to put in place systems for dealing with disruptive pupils rather than pass them on to other schools. We would agree that schools should not view Managed Moves as a way of 'off loading' difficult pupils. However, we do feel that for some pupils the opportunity to make a fresh start in a different environment and away from their existing peer group would be beneficial.
- 3.7 A further concern that some schools raised with us in relation to Managed Moves was the issue of pupil records and the administration of the process.

When the system is working properly a receiving school will have full and up-to-date information and files relating to the young person well before the pupil arrives at the school. In practice, we were told, this was not always the case. The authority assured us that this would not occur in the case of a Managed Move but could be likely in the case of an 'encouraged transfer' (informal agreement between parents and carers and headteacher to transfer a child to another school) when records could take longer to reach their destination. Some heads also expressed concern that the system placed a further administrative burden on already overworked headteachers. Also, one headteacher suggested that, if the system was working with some success, there was a danger that the Local Authority would see this as sufficient to solve all behaviour problems and leave schools to their own devices. The LA needs to be aware that, even when the system works well, not all Managed Moves are successful.

3.8 Overall, we feel that the Managed Moves process has the potential to provide a useful tool to the Local Authority in its work on managing school exclusions. Indeed we heard from WASH that there were in the region of 24 Managed Moves currently underway and these have undoubtedly prevented a number of permanent exclusions. We have seen that in some areas of the county the system is already working very well and has provided a number of young people with the chance of a new start to continue their education. We acknowledge, however, that there are issues in relation to transport and administration and we would wish to encourage schools to see Managed Moves as something to consider once all other behaviour management strategies have been exhausted.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Local Authority encourages all schools in the county to work together in a spirit of cooperation to ensure the Managed Moves system works successfully and to its full potential.

4. COLLABORATION/SCHOOLS WORKING TOGETHER

4.1 As part of the County Council's Managed Moves policy, a grant of £40,000 (2006/07) has been provided to each area panel. We heard that three schools in the Malvern area had used the funding to form a centre in Malvern to which each school could send two pupils per half term for intensive teaching and behaviour management. After this time the pupils return to their own school. Whilst this is a new initiative, first indications have been encouraging.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Local Authority monitors this development and, if its results prove to be positive, the County Council should investigate whether groups of schools elsewhere in the County could be encouraged to set up similar units.

4.2 This collaboration between the Malvern area schools is one of several examples we came across of schools working together to develop behaviour management strategies and ways of managing exclusions that are of benefit

to all. We were pleased to hear that instead of seeing each other as rivals, many schools are collaborating for the benefit of all their pupils. Of course, schools will be more likely to collaborate if they can see clear benefits for their individual school.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Local Authority looks at ways to provide incentives to schools to work together.

5. THE EDUCATION OF EXCLUDED PUPILS/PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS (PRUs)

5.1 Currently, a pupil's education continues to be the responsibility of the school during all fixed periods of exclusion and until a permanent exclusion is finalised (up to six weeks after the initial exclusion). After that the pupil's education is the responsibility of the Local Authority, which has a duty towards permanently excluded pupils to:

- a. Provide a suitable full time education; and
- b. Reintegrate pupils as quickly as possible, where practical into a suitable mainstream school.

5.2 On speaking to schools we were concerned that the system for supporting and educating pupils in the time between exclusion and reintegration is not always effective. It is the school's responsibility to set work for the child and the parents/carers responsibility to collect the work. Schools reported to us that parents/carers did not always collect work. In some cases this could be because parents/carers themselves had experienced difficulties in their school life. Coupled with this parents/carers told us about the difficulties of motivating a child to carry on with schoolwork once they have been excluded. This situation becomes increasingly difficult the older the child is.

5.3 From September 2007, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 will place a new duty on parents/carers of excluded pupils. They will be required to ensure that their child is not in a public place during school hours for the first five days of any exclusion. From the sixth day the local authority or school will arrange full time education. If the parents/carers fails in this duty they commit an offence, the liability for which may be discharged by paying a penalty notice of £50.

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

5.4 The Local Authority provides full time education via a Pupil Referral Unit 15 days after the headteacher's decision to permanently exclude a pupil. This is in line with government guidance.⁴ In this context, 'full time' means supervised education delivered for the following number of hours:

⁴ The DfES is currently consulting on revised Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupils Referral Units. This proposes that the LA becomes statutorily responsible for ensuring that suitable full time education is provided from the sixth school day of a permanent exclusion. The consultation runs until May 2007. Revised guidance will be published in July and will come into force in September 2007.

KS1	21 hours
KS2	23.5 hours
KS3/4	24 hours
KS4 (Yr11)	25 hours

- 5.5 The task group was told that all PRUs in Worcestershire offer access to core National Curriculum subjects, Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), Citizenship and Information Communication Technology (ICT) . Ofsted reports confirm that they are all caring environments, which focus on strengthening pupils' emotional literacy to enable them to be reintegrated into mainstream schools.
- 5.6 To ensure minimum disruption to the pupil's education, the local authority aims to identify a 'receiving school' during the 15 days following the Headteacher's decision to exclude and prior to entering the PRU. This gives the PRU a school to work with and helps the development of an exit strategy. Finding a receiving school is the responsibility of the Pupil Exclusion and Mediation Officers (PEMOs) and Reintegration Officers.
- 5.7 As part of the scrutiny exercise, members visited most of the County's PRUs and were also fortunate enough to meet with some parents/carers of pupils attending PRUs. In total there are nine PRUs within the authority: three Foundation Stage/KS1/2, three KS3 and three KS4. The cost of the PRUs for 2006/07 is £2.799m, with additional transport costs of £470,954. Each PRU has some base line similarities but allows for the development of individual culture and some local practice.

Foundation Stage/Key Stage 1/2 PRUs

- 5.8 The three Foundation Stage/KS1/2 units, Habberley PRU (Kidderminster), Ipsley PRU (Redditch) and St John's PRU (Worcester) deal with pupils from five to eleven years of age and serve the primary schools in their general area. In addition to preparing permanently excluded pupils for re-integration into mainstream school, they aim to offer an outreach facility to support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. In extenuating circumstances they also take children who are going through the SEN statementing process, or are awaiting a special school place or a place on a behaviour management course.
- 5.9 Some schools, especially at Key Stage 1, access the outreach services of the Foundation Stage/KS1/2 PRUs. Staff from the PRU go into schools to suggest strategies for handling challenging behaviour or work with small groups of pupils and staff to deal with particular issues. This service is popular with schools but we are concerned that it is dependent upon how many pupils are at the PRU at any given time. When the PRU is full, outreach work has to be cut back.
- 5.10 The Director of Children's Services told us about a relatively new initiative, which was proving successful where pupils were temporarily given dual registration at the PRU and their mainstream school as a way of avoiding permanent exclusion. We would be very interested to hear how this initiative develops.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the outreach services of Foundation Stage/KS1/2 PRUs be formalised to have a rolling programme of behaviour management courses in primary schools, which are not dependent upon the occupancy of the PRUs. We would also suggest that this pattern should be extended to KS3 and KS4 PRUs where outreach services could be used to prevent exclusions and support reintegrated pupils to avoid the breakdown of a placement.

Key Stage 3 PRUs

- 5.11 The County Council runs three Key Stage 3 PRUs which deal with pupils between the ages of 11 and 14: Holyoakes Field PRU (Redditch), Martley PRU and the Park Gate Centre (Kidderminster/Wolverley). Pupils have a learning package built around their individual needs and capabilities, which in addition to the academic curriculum may include a more flexible curriculum based around vocational or work-based learning.
- 5.12 At this stage we found there was a strong emphasis on the reintegration of pupils within six weeks. We were advised that in most cases there is a 'window of opportunity' for reintegration with six weeks being the earliest stage at which pupils could successfully reintegrate into mainstream school. In many cases this took much longer. If however the opportunity is missed, we were told that it becomes increasingly difficult to reintegrate the pupil as they become used to the routines, methods and special atmosphere of the PRU, and increasingly unable to cope with mainstream school. As at Foundation Stage/Key Stages 1 and 2, we found that the PRUs spend time teaching pupils how to deal with their emotions and providing them with strategies to manage their behaviour in order to equip them to cope back in mainstream school.

Key Stage 4 PRUs

- 5.13 At Key Stage 4, Kidderminster PRU, Oakfields PRU (Worcester) and St Mary's PRU (Redditch) serve their local areas and cater for pupils aged 14-16 years. These PRUs aim to reintegrate year 10 pupils by the end of the second term of Year 10. If unsuccessful after this time, the pupil would complete their education at the PRU. There is a varied curriculum on offer, enhanced by courses at outside providers such as local colleges and work placements. GCSE subjects are offered and pupils in some instances will complete GCSE examinations at the PRU. There is an acknowledgement that for a small number of pupils mainstream school and its curriculum is impossible and access to the alternative curriculum works really well and gives the pupils focus.

Our findings

- 5.14 There was no doubt in our minds that generally the County's PRUs are good at what they do and the low pupil/teacher ratio and nurturing environment were key contributory factors to improving the life chances of the pupils they serve. However, we did hear concerns from high schools about the long-term outcomes the PRUs were able to achieve and whether

six weeks was long enough for them to turn around very challenging behaviour. One school felt that, as a result of the pressure on places in the PRUs, there was sometimes a desperation to move pupils on before they were ready.

- 5.15 In many cases pupils attending the PRUs have complex difficulties including medical, social, behavioural and family problems. As well as following an academic curriculum, staff focus on developing children's self esteem and social skills in an attempt to increase their chances of returning to mainstream education. We found that the staff at the PRUs have excellent relationships with pupils and parents/carers and the pupils flourish in the very caring and nurturing environment.
- 5.16 Members were told that PRUs are expensive institutions to run and maintain but can be highly effective in the work that they do.
- 5.17 During our visits to schools we heard from a number of headteachers that access to PRU provision could be difficult, as the PRUs were usually full. This was supported by the Service Development Manager – Vulnerable Children. However, when visiting PRUs we were told that this perception was not the case. The apparent mismatch between the perceptions of schools and the reality in the PRUs is of concern to us.
- 5.18 The Headteachers we talked to suggested that they would like to be more involved in the management of the PRUs and have a greater say about admission to the PRU. The Authority explained that as from September 2007 Managed Moves Panels would be allocated a number of PRU places, giving greater flexibility to the Managed Moves process. We hope that this will ensure that schools in all areas of the county have equal access to PRU provision.

Parents and Carers

- 5.19 We were fortunate enough to meet with four parents/carers who had been through the traumatic process of their son or daughter facing a permanent exclusion and whose children were now attending a PRU. The exclusion very often came after many other strategies had been tried and failed. Although the parents/carers regretted that their child had been excluded, they were pleased with their progress since being placed at the PRU. They thought that the smaller work groups were a big advantage and were very pleased with the level of communication and parental involvement, with all parents/carers receiving regular updates on their child's progress and development.
- 5.20 Interestingly three out of the four children had underlying medical problems, which they had suffered for a number of years. The situation only improved following permanent exclusion when the various support services were more easily accessed. This strongly reinforces our view that early intervention is key (see paragraph 2.20).

Reintegration

- 5.21 Following a permanent exclusion each child is assigned a Reintegration Officer who assists with the referral to the PRU and reintegration, when

appropriate, from the PRU to a mainstream school. The Reintegration Officer works with the parents/carers and the child. All pupils entering a PRU are interviewed with parents/carers and a Parenting Contract agreed. Parents/carers are also able to receive advice from Behaviour Support Teachers. The PRUs aim to phase in a return to mainstream school for six weeks after the child starts full time in the new school. We were told of the importance of maintaining links with mainstream schools as, for teachers, seeing pupils in a positive environment was helpful and for pupils, the contact aided their return to school. We heard that Key Stage 4 pupils are least likely to reintegrate into mainstream school.

- 5.22 The parents/carers that we spoke to had nothing but praise for the Reintegration Officers, one in particular saying that the officer took a lot of the stress out of a very difficult situation and generally smoothed the way. However, we also heard that support given to schools for reintegration was patchy.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that in order to provide best value, PRUs should continue to develop links with schools particularly involving headteachers in the admission and integration issues of the PRUs whilst focusing on preventative work and successful reintegration.

Receiving Schools

- 5.23 The Reintegration Officers work with families to try to find another school that suits the needs of the child. With many popular schools already full, finding another school can be a challenging task, although Members were informed that no children are sent out of county as a result of being permanently excluded. All Worcestershire secondary schools have agreed to admit two pupils in excess of their Published Admission Number (PAN) to take excluded pupils, but still there is a perception that some schools take more than their fair share of excluded pupils. We have found that this perception is particularly strong in the Worcester area where one headteacher told us that he had repeatedly requested that his school's PAN be reduced to avoid the school being used as a 'dumping ground' for difficult pupils.
- 5.24 We raised this issue with the Director and the Cabinet Member and were told that the Director did not feel that reducing the PAN would solve the problem. The LA had a duty to ensure that there were sufficient school places and to ensure that all schools were successful. He was concerned that reducing a school's PAN would have a detrimental effect on confidence in the school, leading to parents/carers choosing other schools, exacerbating the problem. He believed that the best solution was local agreements between all schools in a particular area setting out how many excluded pupils each would take. However, we were not convinced that leaving a high number of surplus places in a particular school to be filled by pupils excluded from other schools would necessarily do anything to increase parental confidence. We would ask the Director of Children's Services to continue ongoing monitoring of this situation.

Recommendation 18

We are very concerned about the number of surplus places in particular schools which forces them to take a disproportionate number of excluded pupils and thus undermines parental confidence in the school. We recommend that the Director of Children's Services reviews this situation and makes recommendations where appropriate.

6. CURRICULUM ISSUES

- 6.1 We heard from schools that in order to maintain a pupil's interest in education and harness their energies in a positive way it was essential to offer a relevant and appropriate curriculum. For some pupils the national curriculum does not provide this and schools and the Local Authority are looking at ways to create a more diverse curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. We met with the County Council's 14-19 Director to discuss how the Local Authority supports schools in this area and, in particular, discussed with her the Vocational Inclusion and Participation (VIP) programme.
- 6.2 We were told that the provision of a curriculum that meets the needs of the learner can in some cases be the single most powerful intervention, which can ensure the social inclusion of a young person in danger of disengagement from school and ultimately society itself. We were informed of the results of an evaluation of the project and shown six case studies to illustrate the potential of curriculum diversification.⁵ However, we were also told that a tailor-made curriculum is not a panacea to engage every learner in our schools.
- 6.3 During our investigations we were also told that the concept of an 'alternative curriculum' was no longer current in schools as many pupils were encouraged to follow different curriculum structures, not just the less able or those at risk of exclusion.
- 6.4 The aims of curriculum diversification are threefold:
- To retain young people in learning;
 - To raise the achievement of all learners; and
 - To enable the progression of qualified learners into meaningful employment and adult life.
- 6.5 There are two principal curriculum diversification initiatives in Worcestershire: the Vocational Inclusion and Participation (VIP) programme and the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP).
- 6.6 In total, we were told, approximately 3000 young people were involved in these schemes – 24% of all 14 to 16 year olds in the county. It was suggested to us that in two years time 40% of the cohort could be involved in these schemes.

⁵ Worcestershire County Council's Vocational, Inclusion and Participation Project Evaluation Report 2005-2006

The Vocational, Inclusion and Participation (VIP) programme

- 6.7 The VIP programme is the current version of a programme that was started in 1994 by the Hereford and Worcester Training and Enterprise Council. Over time this evolved into two main projects - Project 19 and Euro K4 – and in 2002 these were amalgamated to form the VIP project. The project is currently funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) which will maintain operation at its current level until July 2008. We were advised by the Authority that future funding for the project could be cut by 50%. In future funding would only be available for schemes with clear educational outcomes. The Local Authority will need to competitively tender for further funds later this year. In addition, schools using the project make a contribution to the costs.
- 6.8 The VIP programme has now become a mainstream activity involving students from across the county in Years 10 and 11. It is administered by a small central team and a network of Diverse Curriculum Coordinators (DCC), coordinated by the Area Curriculum Coordinators. The DCC's aim is to ensure that the placement is successful and to look after the young person's interests while they are out of school. The project also includes a number of data administrators who arrange courses and monitor their quality. Courses are monitored using the usual quality assurance processes, ie Service Level Agreements are drawn up and inspectors visit regularly. The team was confident that the project was not second rate provision when compared to education in school.
- 6.9 The project works mainly with 14 to 16 year olds who have been identified by schools as being disaffected and at risk of exclusion. Working with colleges, employers and training providers, VIP provides an alternative curriculum for approximately one day per week. While on the VIP project the young person remains the responsibility of the school. Each High School in the County has at least 30 places on the project – 15 for Y10 and 15 for Y11. Some schools are allocated more places depending on their particular circumstances. We were told that many schools were now buying in additional places and the project now covered 1700 young people across the county. All learners are on an accredited course leading to a whole qualification which will contribute to their GCSEs and, in turn, to the school's position in the DfES performance tables. Young people will often need extensive guidance on their future careers and to aid this the project runs 'taster courses'. A young person might do three term-long taster courses followed by a full course in Y11.
- 6.10 We were told that the project had recently been the subject of an evaluation when feedback had been sought from schools, young people and providers. Feedback had generally been very favourable and, in particular, the young people themselves were very positive about the scheme. Headteachers were also very positive which was evidenced by the fact that they are putting their own money in and buying an increasing number of places.

The Increased Flexibility Programme

- 6.11 The Increased Flexibility Programme is now in its fifth year of operation. Through it funding is made available to local colleges of Further Education, via the local Learning and Skills Council, in order to provide access to vocational courses within those colleges. Schools make no contribution for this service. The courses available include the new Vocational GCSEs,

courses leading to NVQ qualification and other courses approved by the DfES as appropriate for 14-16 learners.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the Local Authority should work with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to ensure that all colleges have appropriate exclusions and appeals procedures which are in line with those used in schools. We recommend that colleges should be encouraged to move pupils to another course rather than permanently exclude them.

Our findings

- 6.12 As part of our school visits we asked High Schools for their views on the various curriculum diversification projects. The majority of schools were very positive about the impact of the projects on their pupils' learning, behaviour and engagement with school and reported that the courses were generally very popular with pupils. One school commented that the projects allowed pupils to be proud of their achievement and gain recognition for their individual successes. However, the same headteacher felt that all pupils should be encouraged to succeed in the academic arena as well, by taking GCSEs (recognising that a Grade F or G was an achievement to be celebrated for some pupils) or other academic certificates. One concern expressed by a number of schools about the VIP project related to the level of funding. Although the project was felt to be successful, one school felt that limited resources meant that it was not always possible for all pupils who might benefit to be involved. Another school asked that more Local Authority money was made available to support the project.
- 6.13 One school told us about the BTEC diploma that it offered its Y10 and Y11 pupils. The diploma was proving to be very successful and pupils were coming from other local schools to access the course. We also heard of a curriculum consortium in the south of the county which included two high schools and two further education colleges and was aiming to develop new government sponsored vocational courses for the 14-16 age group. It was suggested to us that this model of schools working in a consortium to offer a variety of vocational courses was very successful and could be replicated in other areas of the county.
- 6.14 Overall we feel that the various curriculum diversification projects – and in particular the VIP project - are doing extremely valuable work in helping those young people who are danger of permanent exclusion and in preventing others from reaching this point. However we feel that the quality of teaching is vital to engage pupils even with alternative curriculum.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the Local Authority encourages all schools to continue to participate in the Vocational, Inclusion and Participation (VIP) Programme. The project should be evaluated at regular intervals to ensure it continues to contribute to the reduction in the level of permanent exclusions. Schools should be encouraged to work together to offer a wider variety of vocational and alternative courses to local pupils. In addition, the Authority should ensure that providers are giving a good quality of education and courses are duly accredited. New and existing providers should be approved and monitored by the Authority.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that the Local Authority actively seeks alternative forms of funding for the VIP project well before ESF funding is withdrawn.

7. FUNDING

7.1 Throughout our investigations one consideration that kept cropping up was the thorny issue of funding and the uncertainty associated with much of the funding that was currently available. Although, on the whole, schools were supportive of the role of the Local Authority, we heard many requests for increased funding to support the various school-initiated behaviour management projects. Schools recognise that resources are limited but feel that often current funding levels are not sufficient for them to feel that the projects have a secure future. Often standards fund money is allocated for the set up of an initiative but funding does not extend to the revenue required to sustain them.

7.2 Schools also felt that more funding should be allocated to the Pupil Referral Units to ensure that there are enough places for the number of pupils that need them and also sufficient resources to enable outreach and preventative work to be carried out.

7.3 We heard from the Director of Children's Services that the authority was looking to develop a system of commissioning of services. This would enable good behaviour management initiatives in local areas to be commissioned.

Recommendation 22

We recommend that where a school or number of schools has a successful strategy for preventing permanent exclusions, the Local Authority should recognise its value and make it sustainable.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Several issues have emerged from our scrutiny. It is clear that early intervention is essential if later problems with behaviour and exclusion are to be minimised. We found it was particularly important that Foundation and Key Stage 1 teachers felt able to tackle behavioural and emotional problems

right at the start. To do this they will need support and, as discussed in paragraphs 2.17-2.20, we strongly believe that the Authority should focus on supporting early intervention and prevention strategies.

8.2 We found many examples of good practice and innovative solutions to behaviour problems in schools. The Authority has an essential role in helping schools share best practice and our recommendation 12 aims to encourage this.

8.3 We would also like to highlight the numerous examples of positive work we found being carried out by schools working together. As we noted in paragraph 1.6, there is no one solution to reducing exclusions and improving behaviour and it is difficult for a school to solve these problems on its own. We consider that it is essential that schools work together, and that the Authority provides what support it can in this, if exclusions are to be kept low.

Schedule of the Task Group's Activity

Proposal to OSSC	Thursday 18 May 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusions in Worcestershire: the current situation - Alan Gaunt, Head of Learning Support and Behaviour Support 	Tuesday 25 July 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background discussion on visits to schools (who will visit which schools, agree questions to ask, what would the expected outcome be) 	Monday 4 September 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with other authorities (Birmingham and Warwickshire) 	Thursday 21 September 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charles Matthews, Educational Psychologist Kim Thorneywork, Coordinator VIP project 	Friday 13 October 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit to Kirklees 	Tuesday 17 October 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with officers from Children's Services 	Tuesday 7 November 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with Alan Gaunt re visit to Kirklees Discussion with WASH 	Wednesday 29 November 2006
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with Teacher Association Reps Discussion with Julie Elliott, Service Development Manager, Integrated Service for Looked After Children 	Tuesday 9 January 2007
Meeting with Chairman of Wyre Forest Managed Moves Panel	Monday 29 January 2007
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss initial findings/draft report 	Tuesday 20 February 2007
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with representatives of the Worcestershire Association of Governors (WAG) 	Monday 26 February 2007
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion with Cabinet Member/Director of Children's Services 	Tuesday 13 March 2007
Meeting of Task Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discuss final report 	Thursday 29 March 2007
Agenda for OSSC sent out	Tuesday 4 April 2007
Final scrutiny report to OSSC	Monday 16 April 2007
Final scrutiny report to Cabinet	Thursday 24 May 2007

Other meetings that have contributed to the exercise:

- School visits to all types of schools, including PRUs
- Meetings with parents of excluded pupils

Managing Exclusions Scrutiny Task Group

Suggested Questions for School Visits

A. Questions for all schools

1. Please could you provide the data on how many fixed term exclusions and how many permanent exclusions there have been each year for the last three years?
2. What reasons do you exclude pupils for?
3. Other than exclusion, how do you manage behaviour?
4. What support do you receive from the County Council when dealing with pupils in danger of fixed term or permanent exclusion?
5. How effective do you feel this support is?
6. What influence do you think parental support has on pupil's behaviour? What could be done to strengthen parental support?
7. Have you been involved in the 'Managed Moves' scheme? If so, how effective do you feel it is?
8. Have you ever had need to transfer a pupil to a Pupil Referral Unit? If yes, how do you feel the system works? How successfully was the pupil reintegrated into the school?
9. Do you consider the alternative curriculum is effective?
10. Do you know of any examples of schools working together to manage exclusions in their area?
11. Do you feel that there are inconsistencies in the way in which different schools manage pupil behaviour and if so how do you think this could be rectified?
12. Do you exclude on a fixed term basis and if so do you believe it is effective as a strategy for avoiding permanent exclusions?
13. What support in practice do pupils on fixed term exclusions get?
14. How likely are you to exclude a pupil for a one off serious offence?
15. How likely are parents/carers to appeal against a decision to permanently exclude? What is the success rate of those appeals?
16. Have you ever had a decision to permanently exclude overturned by a governors' panel?

17. How likely are you to send a pupil home for a minor infringement (eg uniform)? If you do, is this recorded?
18. Do you ever exclude unofficially and if so why? And how would the school support the pupil?
19. What more could the County Council do to help the school in managing exclusions?

B. Questions for schools with a high number of permanent exclusions

20. Can you identify reasons for the relatively high number of permanent exclusions in your school?
21. Could the County Council do anything more to help the school to reduce its rate of permanent exclusions?

C. Questions for primary schools which have permanently excluded a pupil in the last 3 years

22. It is relatively unusual for a primary school to permanently exclude a pupil. Why did the school feel that there was no other option open to them in this case?
23. Could the County Council have done anything more to help when this situation arose?

D. Questions for schools with no permanent exclusions in the last 3 years

24. Can you identify reasons for the school not having excluded any pupils in the last 3 years?
25. What other strategies does the school use to manage pupil behaviour?
26. How do you handle serious misbehaviour, which in other schools may have led to permanent exclusion?

E. Questions for pupil referral units

27. How effective is the system for referring pupils to a PRU?
28. How effective is the system for reintegrating pupils into mainstream school?
29. What does the PRU offer in terms of an alternative curriculum?
30. What happens after a pupil has spent six weeks in a PRU?