

Managing Exclusions – Response of the Cabinet Member

Children these days love luxury,
They have no respect for authority
Children these days are tyrants..."

Socrates 460 -340 BC

Here in Worcestershire we have vastly improved since Socrates days. Excluding early years there are currently around 77,000 children and young people in the schools system. The majority engage with education every school day on a termly basis. The majority are positively engaged both in and outside school.

We should celebrate this fact.

For a variety of reasons, a very small percentage of pupils, under 0.12% in 05/06 were persistently disruptive resulting in them being excluded permanently. In addition, worrying to me as a Cabinet Member, 2.55 % of pupils had fixed term exclusions in 05/06. I am pleased to say, however, that rates of both permanent and fixed term exclusions at this stage of the academic year seem to be lower.

The impact of a breakdown in the relationship between any school and one of its pupils is significant. For individual children and young people there is a strong pre-disposition for their life chances to be diminished.

Excluded children:

- Have their learning patterns and educational prospects disrupted and damaged,
- harbour feelings of anger and bitterness towards the education system in general,
- suffer from a loss of self-esteem and confidence,
- have their psychological well-being damaged,
- miss out on appropriate social interaction,
- often feel alone, isolated and very confused about the exclusion process,

Research Save the Children's

And permanently excluded children and young people and those with frequent fixed term exclusions are more difficult to reintegrate.

For the headteacher and staff of a school with a difficult, disruptive child or young person the breakdown must be extremely disappointing. However, it is important to remember disruptive behaviour not only impacts front line teachers but also the ability for the other children and young people in a class to learn.

A report published by the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), showed that the majority of teachers questioned would prefer schools to deal with unruly pupils internally rather than permanently excluding them.

However, documented case studies show that nationally there are some extremely serious reasons for exclusion. Worcestershire has its own very small minority in this category.

Exclusion is currently a necessary and important tool in the behavioural management of children and young people but there are no winners when exclusion takes place, whether fixed term or permanent.

I, like the Director, would wish strategies to be developed by schools working in partnership with the local authority to aspire to zero permanent exclusions in the future.

My own view is that a zero exclusion ambition is not about telling schools not to exclude but about partnership working with schools, the local authority and families to tackle long-term behavioural/social/emotional problems, which are often behind exclusion cases.

The work around school and community clusters, successful “managed moves” area panels, the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework, the deployment of area based integrated teams, the new partnership between Schools and Children’s Services, developed by head teacher representatives and the extended leadership team, are all part and parcel of a new direction. The full effective front line integrated practice, due to come on stream in September, has the potential to impact this difficult area.

I am pleased that the scrutiny confirms my own understanding that the majority of Worcestershire children and young people are committed to education and our exclusion numbers compare well with other authorities.

I am particularly pleased the scrutiny confirms we had no children under 7 in 2005/6 that were excluded permanently.

I am disappointed the numbers of permanent exclusions that showed such a welcome decrease to 31 in 2004/5 rose again to 92 in 2005/6, which seemed to indicate non-sustainable solutions were in place. The 2006/7 numbers, however indicate that the figure is likely to fall to around 65 by the end of this academic year.

The statistically significant increase in older white British females between 2004/5 and 2005/6 being permanently excluded is worthy of further investigation. It is this group in particular that has set us back. Whilst nationally approximately 20% of permanent exclusions are female, in Worcestershire the figure was 29% in 2004/05 and 26% in 2005/06.

It is pleasing that the number of fixed term exclusions are slightly decreasing in terms of number of pupils and number of days. In 2004/05 2,095 pupils had fixed term exclusions resulting in the loss of 13,533 days of education. In 2005/06 2003 pupils had fixed term exclusions resulting in the loss of 11,879 days of education.

Before moving on to comment on the individual recommendations I should like to congratulate the scrutiny panel for again putting the spotlight on this important

area. I should like to acknowledge the panel's approach to this important subject and the wide engagement of interested parties.

I was pleased to see this is truly a holistic countywide report.

Finally, I should like to thank the staff in schools and the local authority pupil referral units who make considerable effort to support those pupils with challenging behaviour. And the head teachers who strive daily to deal with this 21st century challenge as far as they can internally.

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.

We do this in part

A process for user (pupil) feedback does exist through the PASS system (Pupil Attitude to Self and School).

This system obtains the views of the pupil upon entry to the PRU, similarly upon re-integration to mainstream school and then again after the pupil has been back in school for about a term to ascertain the views of the pupil, what has worked and what hasn't for that individual young person, and what needs to change for it to continue to be successful.

We will look again to see if this system adequately evaluates the support given by the local authority.

We will look to develop a mechanism whereby the school sector can evaluate how well it and the local authority support individual children and young people.

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.

The F40 is continually pressing the DfES for fairer funding for Worcestershire schools. If the imbalance were to be corrected then additional delegated funding would be available.

Since the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Grant which goes direct to schools the Local Authority that is tasked to make efficiency savings and receives a lower percentage increase year on year than the schools has less central funds to add to the pot.

However, Schools do and will continue to receive a delegated service through the EPS; the number of hours per school is delegated via an agreed model.

Schools through their increased funding, both this and next financial year, will be at liberty to purchase (internally or externally) additional support services for this purpose

Recommendation 3

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

It is nationally recognised that there is a shortage of appropriately qualified Educational Psychologists. EP training was previously funded by nationally top slicing all LAs. The government has now ceased this top slicing but Worcestershire has agreed to continue to contribute to EP training through its own funding.

We will discuss with the University the increasing of capacity in this area.

Multi-Agency Support

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at the availability of the CAMHS service.

Currently the CAHMS service is geared to addressing the highest level of need.

The joint commissioning of the CHAMS services did not take place in 06/07 due to PCT funding issues. CHAMS expansion is delayed yet it is one of the top issues raised in the needs analysis. Reductions/review of referral criteria for this stretched targeted service is one of my current concerns.

In addition I think, around the area of exclusions, a modified form of CAHMS could add real value.

This point is well made by the panel I would welcome this being a topic of scrutiny and have myself brought this to the scrutiny committee's attention on prior occasions.

There is much to be done in expanding access to the existing service and providing a preventative service.

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.

A single point of contact for individual pupil services at tier 2,3, and 4 of children's services will exist through the CAF (Common Assessment Framework). The new Integrated Teams will also act as a single point of contact at school level.

For practical reasons connected in part with consultation with headteachers and HR issues the full effective front line integrated practice, is now due to come on stream in September. It has the potential to impact this area

The importance of early intervention and preventative strategies

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Local Authority should consider 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.

Whilst the number of children at Foundation, KS1 , KS2, that are excluded are extremely small the local authority would like to move further in this direction.

Through the Early Years (Pre school) SEN partnerships this is an emerging theme which is being developed to encompass Foundation, and Key stages 1 and 2. A good example of this is the development of nurture groups in a number of primary schools.

Currently resources are tied up making provision for pupils excluded by schools at mainly KS3 and KS4. This current status is preventing the LA focusing on preventative work with younger children and their families.

The director and I will consider how resources can be targeted at further preventative work in the future.

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.

Work is underway with all the Area Panels to optimise the meeting of 'local need' in whatever way best suits that cluster of schools.

Officers share good practice with schools from both within and outside of the Local Authority

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.

The Local Authority agrees with this recommendation

It has already been agreed that training will continue to be part of the workforce reform programme of Children's Services

Recommendation 9

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

This investigation has already been undertaken and completed.

In June 2006 the guidance was issued to all schools and education establishments on 'Positive Handling Strategies'.

This has been made available to schools and their associations (who took part in lengthy consultations) on this matter in many forms (hard copy and electronic).

The method of 'Best Practice' in Worcestershire County Council is the 'Team Teach' method, this is one accredited method authorised for usage by BILD

(British Institute for Learning Difficulties) who 'police' this aspect of work for the DfES and DOH.

Training for school and central staff is provided at a reduced cost (Less than that of the named Licensed Copyright Provider).

This is done through having a Lead coordinator/trainer, supported by other staff (school and central) in a non-profit making partnership arrangement.

As is the usual practice the LA can only advise schools in this area of work and cannot insist that they engage in training provided by us, but at their expense.

Working with parents

Recommendation 10

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

The Local Authority has investigated some ways in which further support can be offered to parents.

Through the Children's Services multi-agency Parenting Strategy Group, there is now a Strategic and Operational approach to engaging parents at the earliest opportunity to avert a later 'crisis' statutory intervention.

This is now being effected by way of parenting contracts with schools and/or voluntary parenting programmes.

This work will continue to develop more through the Strategy Programme
The Local Authority is never complacent and will with schools and parents, through reviewing best practice elsewhere continue to look at additional methods to assist in this area.

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 Local Authority fully agrees with the panel.

This work is at it's early stages, and is at the moment limited to requests only for such training.

However, as with all training provided there will be cost implications for schools.

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.

The Local Authority fully agrees with the panel

Recent events doing exactly this have been held and will continue to be held such as those being developed and supported by the Primary and Secondary behaviour consultants including regular network meetings for secondary schools.

Schools are able to organise joint TED days if they wish to work on common policies and practice.

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.

The Local Authority fully agrees with the panel.

It is helpful that the panels own investigations highlight that some managed moves panels are more successful than others.

It is important to continue to share best practice between panels.

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.

The Local Authority fully agrees with the panel.

It is the intention of the Local Authority to monitor and evaluate local collaborative arrangements and promote similar units if the results are positive.

Recommendation 15

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

Schools working together for the good of all pupils within the whole pyramid, especially around community and transition, fits with their understanding of the tenants of Every Child Matters agenda.

Increased collaboration and cooperation are expected of schools by the Local Authority and the DfeS. Collaboration and co-operation are beneficial to both pupils and schools.

It is open to debate whether incentives are of value in this arena.

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.

The Local Authority agrees that outreach services of the PRUs should continue to cover both primary and secondary schools.

At Foundation and Key Stage 1 and 2, Behaviour Management Programmes and Courses do currently exist and are delivered in primary schools.

This ensures that the good practice lessons are shared from behaviour support service staff and amongst school staff; thereby leaving staff in situ who will continue to deliver behaviour support in a very similar way, this ensures continuity of practice for the professionals involved and most importantly for the child.

At Key stage 3 and 4, through the new partnership approach with schools each Headteachers Panel will be allocated a number of 'behaviour support outreach hours'; The Panel will then decide how best to use this resource within that collaboration of schools to ensure that it has the greatest impact on outcomes for the most needy schools and pupils.

The LA does not have the resources to offer unlimited training and prevention work and maintain the PRU provision, which is a statutory duty.

If schools continue to permanently exclude pupils the LA has no alternative other than to use its resources in the PRUs to continue to educate them.

Partnership working and greater collaboration within area panels together with the full effective front line integrated practice due to come on stream in September, has the potential to impact this area. The more successful these strategies are, the lower the numbers in the PRUs, the more resources will be available for outreach work at KS3 and 4.

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.

At Key stage 3 and 4, through the new partnership approach with schools each Area Panel will be allocated a number of PRU places.

The Panel will then decide how best to use this resource within that collaboration of schools.

This will enable schools to have a 'Rolling Programme' of pupils through the PRU's focussing the support on those pupils who need it most to avert permanent exclusion.

This will ensure that it has the greatest impact on outcomes for the most needy schools and pupils.

It has been suggested that voluntary exchanges between staff in the PRU's and those in schools would enable Area Panels to understand issues from both sides. There is some emerging good practice in this area .

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.

Through the Schools Forum this area is consistently under review and will continue to be so. Every school can take up to two pupils above their PAN. Thus even if a school is full it can be required to admit an excluded pupil.

There is no evidence to suggest that individual schools take a disproportionate number of permanently excluded pupils. However this is a worrying allegation, which I am concerned to hear. I am investigating one schools concerns and should like panel members with evidence on other schools forced to take a disproportionate number of excluded pupils to present this evidence to officers, so that a full investigation can be carried out based on the supplied evidence.

It is understandable that if the perception above is constantly given credence then parental confidence will be affected regardless of whether it has any foundation. For this reason it is important that any evidence to support allegations is fully investigated.

The Increased Flexibility Programme

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the Local Authority should work with the 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.

FE colleges have their 'own' admissions, exclusions and appeals procedures.

I am still a member of the local LSC though not in my capacity as Cabinet Member but rather my industry background. I would be pleased to follow up the comment from the scrutiny panel to obtain a response to the point made.

It is important to note, however, when a child or young person of compulsory school age, who is on the school roll of an mainstream, special school or PRU attends that facility as part of their Flexible Curriculum Provision then the 'home' school should in partnership with the Provider negotiate other suitable placement as an alternative to being excluded from the course or college.

The college is acting as provider commissioned by the 'home' school of the pupil/learner and should still have responsibility in respect of discipline / behaviour breaches.

Our findings

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the Local Authority should encourage all schools to continue to participate in the VIP project. 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.

The Local Authority fully agrees with the panel. It is working in partnership to evaluate the VIP projects, its impact on the level of permanent exclusions, ensure the providers are duly accredited, approve and monitor new and existing providers.

Recommendation 21

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

The Local Authority fully agrees with the panel and has done so. It has recently been informed that a bid for funding the engagement programme in 2008 has been approved.

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.

The school is responsible for the pupils on its roll.

The school has the funding for these pupils but where it can the LA may be able to offer some limited funding support.

The work around school and community clusters, successful area panels, the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework, the deployment of, area based, front line integrated teams, the new partnership between Schools and Children's Services, developed by headteacher representatives and the extended leadership team, are all part and parcel of the new direction within Worcestershire with the potential to significantly impact this area

The whole area of exclusions depends upon partnership working. The Director and I are ambitious for zero permanent exclusions.

Sustainability will always be an issue for the schools themselves. The Local Authority will support in as many ways as it can but funding constraints limit the extent of its reach.