

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 21st January 2019

SUBJECT: Permanent Exclusions from Schools

REPORT FROM: Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

CONTACT OFFICER: Paul Cooke, Strategic Lead (Schools, Academies & Colleges)

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report attached at Appendix One summarises the trends in permanent and fixed term exclusions from the 2017/18 academic year. Information is analysed by gender, special educational need, and the reasons for exclusion. As appropriate, statistical data from national and neighbouring Authorities has been used to provide context for Bury.

This is a preliminary report, with further exploration into possible causes, trends and analysis of vulnerable groups to be completed.

Reducing both permanent and fixed term exclusions is a key priority for Bury, in order to ensure that inclusive schools and settings provide improved experiences and outcomes for all children and young people through 'One Child, Once Chance, One Partnership, One Bury'

The report also contains an analysis of secondary school 'off-rolling' – that is Year 10 pupils who were on roll in 2016/17 but were no longer on roll at a Bury school in Year 11 in 2017/18.

Information is also provided on 'internal exclusions' in secondary schools, analysed at partnership level, detailing the number of lessons/sessions which pupils spend outside of the classroom, either in isolation or inclusion rooms.

High level data regarding Elective Home Education is also included. More detailed analysis of this data will take place and will be the subject of a separate report, also looking at Children Missing Education as part of a review of casework and referral processes.

1.1 Permanent Exclusions

Bury has seen a rise in permanent exclusions in recent years and is currently twice the national average. In Bury, 84 pupils were permanently excluded in 2016/17, up by 33 on the previous year. This equated to 0.27% of the pupil population. Nationally, only 0.1% of the population were permanently excluded.

Prior to 2016/17, whilst permanent exclusion rates in Bury were higher than national average, they had remained stable. Nationally, there had been a slight increase over the same period, with five of Bury's statistical neighbours also seeing an increase. Data for 2017/18 is showing a fall in permanent exclusions in Bury from 84 in 2016/17 to 62 in 2017/18, which is an encouraging sign. No national data is yet available for 2017/18.

1.2 Fixed Term Exclusions

The percentage of fixed term exclusions has risen both nationally and in Bury. However, Bury has seen a higher than national increase since 2015. The total number of fixed term exclusions was 1,782 in 2016/17, a rise from 1,307 in the previous year.

While all sectors saw an increase in fixed term exclusions, the most concerning rise was within primary. Having issued 68 in 2014/15 and 67 in 2015/16, Bury had 105 fixed term exclusions in 2016/17, rising still further to 155 pupils in 2017/18.

Secondary Schools in Bury have also seen a significant rise in fixed term exclusions, from 1,000 (2015/16) to 1,371 (2016/17), and continuing in 2017/18 to 1,883.

The Pupil Referral Units have seen an increase year on year. In 2016/17, 303 fixed term exclusions were issued, 65 more than the previous academic year which itself was an increase of 130 on 2014/15.

In comparison with GM, statistical neighbours and national picture, whilst Bury has seen an increase year on year, we had been below average and national statistics until 2016/17.

However, in 2016/17, Bury saw a disproportionate increase in fixed term exclusions from 4.65% (2015/16) to 6.28% (2016/17). This 1.63% rise placed Bury in 9th position in GM and 8th position out of 11 statistical neighbours in 2016/17, having previously been in 2nd and 3rd position in 2015/16 respectively. Data for 2017/18 is showing a rate in Bury of 7.28%, a further rise of 1%.

Whilst disruptive behaviour remains the highest recorded reason, we have seen a significant number recorded as physical assault on pupils and adults. We are also seeing verbal abuse being recorded.

1.3 Off-Rolling

Analysis of School Census returns has identified those pupils on roll in Year 10 in the 2016/17 academic year who were no longer on roll at a Bury School in Year 11 in the 2017/18 academic year. This identified 36 pupils who had been taken off roll, 28 boys and 8 girls.

Destinations have been identified for 33 of the 36 children and officers are liaising with individual schools in order to ascertain those still outstanding. Three pupils in this cohort were removed from roll to be electively home educating (EHE).

1.4 Internal Exclusions

Analysis of secondary school internal inclusions is not currently available from all schools but, where this information has been provided by the school this is shown in tables in Appendix One. Further work with schools in order to get a comprehensive picture of activity.

Internal exclusions are the lessons/sessions which pupils spend outside the classroom in either isolation or similar separate arrangements.

1.5 Elective Home Education

The number of children known to be electively home educated has increased significantly, from 77 in 2014/15 to 137 in 2017/18.

In a number of cases, parents have shared with the LA that they have removed their child from school due to risk of exclusion.

Of all the children removed across each year group in 2017/18, 16.4% were removed by parents feeling their child was at risk of exclusion. Some of this cohort have returned to school – of the 19 pupils removed to EHE during 2017/18 for reasons of exclusions, 14 returned to school within the same year.

This suggests that we need to work closer with schools and families to avoid inappropriate removal by parents to avoid exclusions, which is likely to further damage pupil's educational outcomes and raise safeguarding concerns in some cases.

2.0 Conclusion

The data paints a worrying picture in terms of the scale of exclusions and, whilst performance has improved in 2017/18, and has continued to improve in the current academic year, much more needs to be done.

There is now far greater transparency of data and this is being used to challenge schools.

With a clear focus on inclusion, the LA is working with all school leaders and governing bodies to bring about a swift and significant change to current practice, through a range of measures.

Recently appointed Inclusion Lead Officers, working with our Inclusion Partnerships, bring a much needed focus to this.

List of Background Papers:-

Appendix One – Performance data report

Contact Details:-

Paul Cooke – Strategic Lead (Schools, Academies & Colleges) – 0161 253 5674
p.cooke@bury.gov.uk