

SCRUTINY REVIEW INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)

Review: Permanent and fixed period exclusion from school

Scrutiny Committee: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Director leading the review: Mark Taylor, Director of Schools and Learning

Lead Officer: Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services

Overall aim:

- To examine the use and impact of fixed period and permanent exclusion from both primary and secondary school, and make recommendations that will enable more children and young people to remain in mainstream education.

Objectives of the review:

- To understand how the school exclusion process operates and the work undertaken at school and local authority level to prevent exclusions.
- To review the support available to excluded pupils, and to scrutinise if this is effective.
- To explore the reasons for exclusions, and the reasons why Islington schools have higher rates of exclusion than the Inner London average.
- To evaluate the impact of permanent and fixed period exclusion from school for all stakeholders – the young person, their parents and family, the school, the Pupil Referral Unit and the Local Authority.
- To assess the effectiveness of school based provision and work being done by schools to improve behaviour and reduce exclusion, including access to effective support services.
- To examine the variability in readiness to exclude across Islington schools, and the perception by some parents whose children have been excluded that some schools are giving up on their children too soon and at too young an age.
- To review alternative interventions and approaches to fixed period and permanent exclusion and evaluate their effectiveness, informed by national and local good practice in successfully reducing exclusion.
- To evaluate provision for children and young people for whom mainstream education may not be appropriate.
- To review how all Councils services and functions can be utilised to reduce exclusions.
- To understand if and how the council can work with academies and Trust Boards on their exclusion practices.

Scope of the review:

The review will focus on:

- Exclusion trends/characteristic in Islington, including the different rates of exclusion between boys and girls, and the disproportionate representation of some minority ethnic groups; the interaction between these characteristics; why do certain groups appear more likely to be excluded?
- If pupils eligible for free school meals or with special educational needs are more likely to be excluded than the remainder of the cohort
- The effectiveness of exclusion in addressing disruptive behaviour, both for the excluded young person and across the school.

- The factors which influence schools' decisions to exclude, and their interaction with other services whose interventions, in partnership with the school and the family, might otherwise have helped to avoid exclusion.
- The impact of support, monitoring, challenge and intervention mechanisms from the Local Authority / Academy sponsors on schools' exclusions practices.
- The role of governors and Trust boards/Chief Executives in endorsing school policies, providing scrutiny and challenge of exclusion decisions by schools.
- The extent to which permanently excluded children and young people are able to return to mainstream education, and the challenges this presents for all stakeholders.
- Examples of good practice in managing children identified as being at risk of exclusion (e.g. Islington Schools with zero exclusion), and in reducing exclusion rates (including between different groups of pupils).
- If there are any common factors among pupils who are excluded and those who are persistently absent.

Type of evidence:

The Committee will:

- Hear the views of individuals affected by the exclusion of a child from school and their real-life experiences and observations of the exclusion process
- Be fully briefed on the current exclusion process including arrangements for appeal
- Visit New River College (Pupil Referral Unit) - the main destination for permanently excluded children and young people - to meet staff and young people
- Observe a Head Teachers briefing (all Islington Head Teachers) and discuss their views
- Receive witness evidence from national advisers

It is proposed that witness evidence is taken from:

- Children and young people excluded from school and their families
- Representative Headteachers
- Peter Gray, Independent Expert (Government Adviser)
- Gabriella Di-Sciullo, Head of Admissions and Children Missing Education
- Nigel Smith, Executive Head of New River College
- Gill Sassienie, Principal Educational Psychologist
- Head of Early Help Service
- Representative from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Written evidence will include:

- Annual report on Schools and Learning (June 2017)
- Department for Education (DfE) statistical release: permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England 2016/17 (July 2018)
- Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England; Statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion (DfE) (Sept 2017)
- Behaviour and discipline in schools; Advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE) (January 2016)
- 'They never give up on you' – Office of the Children's Commissioner School Exclusions Inquiry (2012)
- A Review of School Exclusion: terms of reference (May 2018) Edward Timpson for DfE (due to report to the Prime Minister by the end of 2018)

Additional information:

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Witness Evidence Plan

Committee Meeting – Monday 16 July 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – Introductory Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny Initiation Document 	For the Committee to agree the aim, objectives and scope of the review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candy Holder, Head of Pupil Services 	Introductory presentation to include exclusions data; processes; the legislative framework; the roles and responsibilities of schools, the local authority, young people and their parents; and an overview of the impact that exclusions can have on young people, their families, schools, the Pupil Referral Unit, and the Local Authority.

August Recess	
Who / What	Area of focus – Background Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written Evidence 	Written evidence will be circulated to members over the August recess. This will include background information that may be of interest to members; i.e. previous reviews carried out at national level, statutory guidance produced by the Department for Education, national statistics, and so on.

Committee Meeting – Thursday 13 September 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – The Council's Role in Prevention and Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gill Sassienie, Principal Educational Psychologist 	The role of the educational psychology service in preventing exclusions and supporting pupils.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruth Beecher, Head of Early Help Services 	The role of early help services in supporting pupils staying in school and preventing exclusion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services 	The mental health support available to young people at risk of exclusion, and to those who have been excluded.

Scrutiny Visit – Tuesday 2 October 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – The views of parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus Group with parents of excluded pupils 	To discuss exclusion issues with parents, their experiences and views on how schools and support services operate, the impact of exclusion on the family, how they think services and processes could be improved to better support young people and prevent exclusions.

Committee Meeting – Thursday 18 October 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – The National Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter Gray, Independent Expert and Government Adviser 	The national context and work underway across the country to prevent exclusion and support excluded pupils. To include best practice from other areas, and details of the government's Review of School Exclusion, due to conclude in late 2018.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabriella Di-Sciullio, Head of Admissions and Children Missing from Education 	The exclusion appeals process.

Scrutiny Visit – Wednesday 21 November 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – The experiences of young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit to the New River College Pupil Referral Unit to meet excluded pupils and Nigel Smith, the Executive Head of New River College 	To talk to excluded young people about their experiences, to assess provision for excluded pupils, and to discuss the review with the Executive Head.

Committee Meeting – Thursday 22 November 2018	
Who / What	Area of focus – The views of Head Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Head Teachers to attend (ideally two secondary and one primary) 	To discuss their approach to exclusions and their views on processes and support.

Committee Meeting – Thursday 10 January 2019	
Who / What	Area of focus – Any outstanding matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Findings of the National Review of School Exclusion 	The national review should have concluded by January and the Committee will be able to assess its findings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other information as requested by the Committee 	To consider any outstanding information requested by the Committee during the course of the review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concluding Discussion 	For the committee to discuss their thoughts and conclusions on the evidence received, prior to developing recommendations.

Committee Meeting – Monday 4 March 2019	
Who / What	Area of focus – Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Recommendations 	To agree a set of draft recommendations that will form the basis of the committee's report.

Committee Meeting – Thursday 30 April 2019	
Who / What	Area of focus – Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Report 	To agree the final report, summarising all of the evidence received, and explaining the reasons for the recommendations. The report will then be submitted to the Executive.