



Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee	20 July 2020	All

Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt

SUBJECT: Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusion from School – 12 Month Update

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 In June 2019, Executive received a report from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee which examined the use and impact of fixed period and permanent exclusion from both primary and secondary schools in Islington. The report proposed fourteen recommendations to enable more children and young people to remain in mainstream education.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on action taken in response to the recommendations, and also provides comparative data to show impact¹. It confirms that fixed period exclusion from Islington secondary schools has reduced by 40% and from primary school by 25% over a 12 month period. Permanent exclusion from secondary school has also reduced by 10%, and has remained at the same level (i.e. 4 permanent exclusions) for primary schools. The report also outlines further action planned.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress made against the recommendations from the Review
- 2.2 To note the further work proposed to consolidate and build on the improvements to date.

¹ Data compares exclusion activity between April 2019-March 2020 to April 2018-March 2019 to take account of the COVID disruption (i.e. a school year comparison would be invalid as schools were only partially open for the Summer term 2020. However, we can confirm there have been no reported exclusions from Islington Schools during the COVID-19 period).

3. Background

- 3.1 Between July 2018 and April 2019, Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of fixed period and permanent exclusion from Islington primary and secondary schools. In carrying out the review the Committee met with young people, parents, head teachers, council officers and other experts in the field to gain a balanced view. The Committee also considered relevant data, guidance and other documentation. Overall the Committee was satisfied with the range of support services available. However, they concluded that Islington’s exclusion rate was too high, that the significant variation of exclusion rates across Islington’s schools was not justified and that further focused work was needed. The Committee emphasised that exclusion is a fairness issue that has a real impact on young people and their families.
- 3.2 Although the partial closure of schools from March 2020 means that some work has been interrupted, a lot has still been achieved. Activity will pick up again at pace from September 2020.

4. Data update

- 4.1 The following data compares exclusion activity between April 2019-March 2020 to April 2018-March 2019 to take account of the COVID disruption (i.e. a school year comparison would be invalid as schools were only partially open for the Summer term 2020). We can confirm there have been no exclusions from Islington Schools reported during the COVID-19 period however.

Chart 1: Fixed Period Exclusion

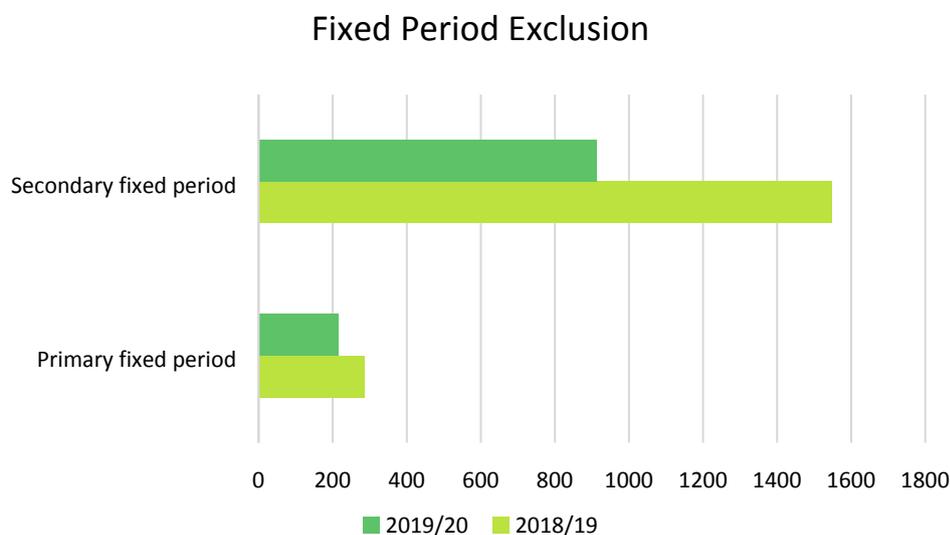


Chart 1 shows that fixed period exclusion from Islington Schools reduced by 40% at secondary and 24% at primary in a 12 month period.

In 2019-20, 48% of all fixed period exclusions at secondary were for persistent disruptive behaviour. This is a reduction of 4% on the previous period, although the actual number of exclusions for this reason reduced by 370+. The main reason for fixed period exclusion from primary school was for physical assault against an adult, although the actual number for this reason reduced by 20. Exclusion for physical assault against a pupil at primary also reduced by 30 over the reporting period.

Chart 2: Permanent Exclusion

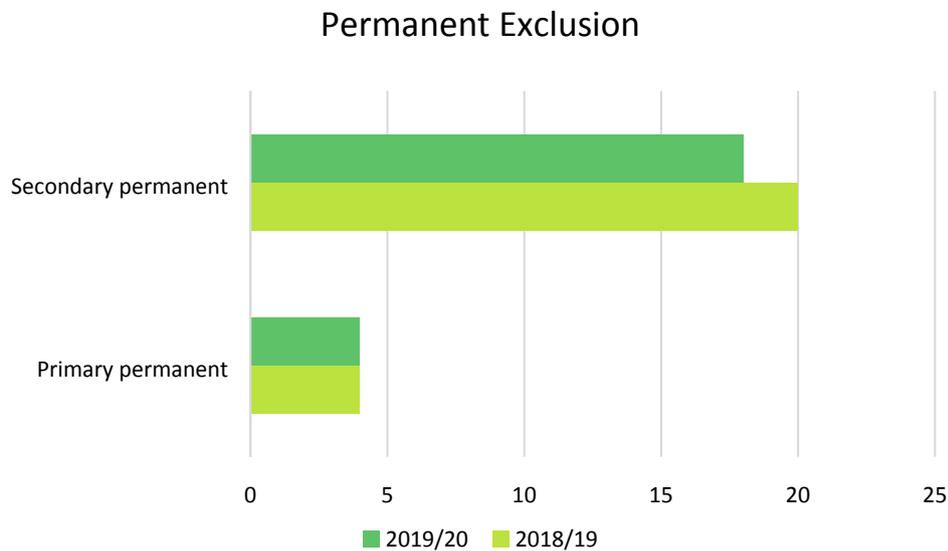
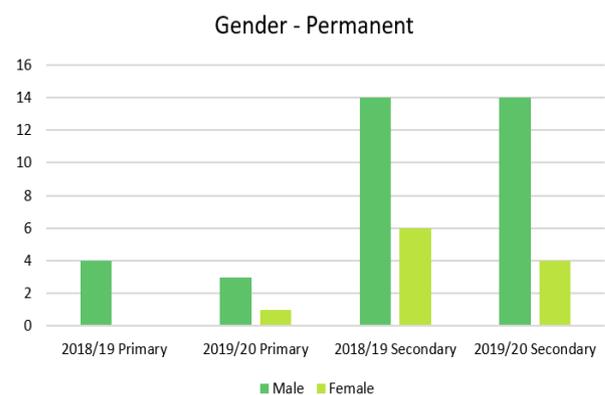
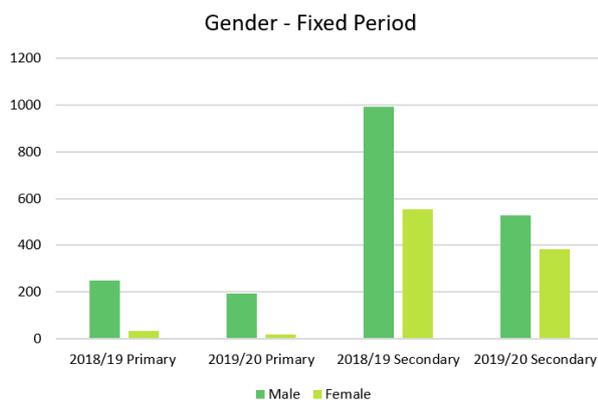


Chart 2 shows that during 2019-20, permanent exclusion from Islington Schools reduced by 10% at secondary and stayed the same (i.e. 4 permanent exclusions) at primary.

One secondary school accounted for 30% of all permanent exclusion from secondary school, although the same school accounted for only 5% of permanent exclusions during the previous 12 months; focused work is being undertaken with that school. For all other secondary schools, the number of permanent exclusion reduced compared to the same period in the previous year. There were 4 permanent exclusions from primary school in each year; this involved eight different primary schools.

In 2019-20, 40% of permanent exclusion from secondary school were weapon related. The main reason for exclusion from primary school was physical assault against either an adult or pupil.

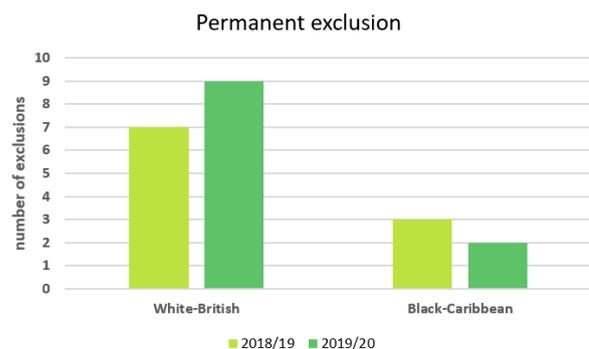
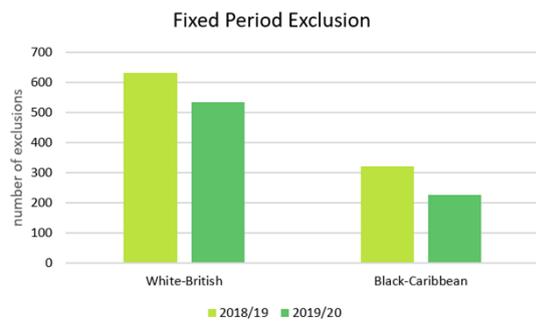
Charts 3: Gender



Charts 3 show that although the number of girls receiving fixed period exclusion reduced by 170 in 2019-20, as a percentage of all fixed period exclusions they rose from 36% to 42%. The number of girls receiving a permanent exclusion fell from 6 to 4.

Charts 4: Ethnicity

Charts replaced as follows:



Black Caribbean and White British children are over-represented among those excluded from Islington schools. **Charts 4** show that fixed period exclusion of Black Caribbean children reduced by 95 in 2019-20, representing a 29% fall. White British children receiving a fixed period exclusion reduced by 97, representing a 15% fall. The number of Black Caribbean children permanently excluded fell from 4 to 2, but the number of White British children permanently excluded rose from 9 to 11. Disproportionality remains a focus for further work this year.

Response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations

5.

Helping our schools to prevent exclusions and support young people at risk of exclusion

5.1 Recommendation 1: Schools should be encouraged to make referrals at the earliest opportunity to support services such as Educational Psychology, CAMHS, the New River College outreach service and Early Help services.

Improving the range of services to support children and young people, and in particular to support their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs was one of three priorities under Children's Services Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2018-20.

As a consequence, the range of services available has developed considerably over the last 12 months as follows:

- An expanded SEMH emotional wellbeing pathway, including Barnardo's (new contractual relationship); Emotional Wellbeing Workers (new roles); Social Prescription (Third Sector / Universal Services pilot); online counselling (Kooth – new service)
- Full integration of CAMHS and the emotional wellbeing pathway within the Children's Services Contact Team (CSCT) (live from September 2019).
- Mental Health in Schools Teams (see 5.2 below)
- Review of Early Help Services and relaunch for September 2020 with a much sharper focus on pushing support 'in' to schools (rather than schools needing to refer 'out')

The new / reorganised Services and pathways have been promoted to schools through briefings, communications and direct contact; schools are generally the highest referring agency.

Referral routes to school support services, including New River College Outreach, have been streamlined and simplified to make access less bureaucratic for schools and therefore provide quicker access. From September 2020, Schools will use a single referral route, and a multi-disciplinary team will then determine the most appropriate response, meaning there can be no 'wrong' referral.

New River College Outreach Service remains very well-used by our schools to advise at the first signs of concern. They have also collaborated closely with other Council and health services to help develop a [Recovery Curriculum](#) to support all schools in welcoming back all children to school in September 2020 following the COVID-19 disruption. They remain a strong and much valued partner.

Our schools continue to consult our Educational Psychology Service at a later stage of concern however, primarily for statutory assessment work as part of the Education, Health and Care needs assessment process. We will continue to encourage schools to make greater use of the early help advice that Educational Psychologists are able to offer on suitable interventions across a range of needs. The 'traded' model under which the service currently operates limits the extent to which this can be influenced (i.e. it is for the school that purchases the service to decide how to use it) although the service continues to promote a full offer.

5.2 Recommendation 2: Schools should be further encouraged to make best use of the whole-school transformation programmes offered by CAMHS, Educational Psychology, and the New River College outreach services.

Islington Trauma Informed Practices in Schools (iTIPS)

The [Islington Trauma Informed Practices in Schools \(iTIPS\)](#) project aims to help schools embed a whole-school trauma strategy. This academic year, 15 primary schools, three secondary schools and New River College have used the framework to support their work. A paper – [Developing trauma-informed practices in inner London schools – the iTIPS Pilot](#) - was published by *Research in Practice* earlier this year positively evaluating the model. The model was also cited as good practice by Ofsted in their report '[The multi-agency response to child sexual abuse in the family environment](#)' (para 82) published in February 2020 as follows:

'Islington, through strong strategic commitment, has improved practice by creating a working environment in which children can build trusting relationships, across both universal and specialist provision... It has made a significant difference to the culture in schools...'

We are currently looking to consolidate funding to roll the programme out to more schools.

Mental Health Support Teams

In June 2019 Islington was successfully awarded 'Trailblazer' status as part of a national NHS initiative to provide trained mental health support in schools. Trailblazer sites will test how the development of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) can work with schools, local authority and other services to improve earlier identification and intervention.

For the Islington pilot, we have established two teams, North and South of the borough, so that every schools, and therefore every child in an Islington school will have access to a MHST.

The MHSTs are building on support already in place e.g. school counsellors, nurses, Educational Psychologists, voluntary sector and programmes such as iTIPs to support children and young people with mild to moderate mental health issues e.g. exam stress, behavioural difficulties or friendship issues. They also help children and young people with more severe needs to access the right support, and provide a link to specialist NHS services

Staff have been appointed and trained. The project will recommence in September 2020 following COVID-19 disruption, and will be fully and independently evaluated.

5.3 Recommendation 3: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should encourage schools to closely link their Behaviour Management and Special Educational Needs functions.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) is identified as one of four areas of need in the governments statutory SEN Code of Practice. It is also one of three priorities in the Council's [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Strategy 2018-20](#). Consequently, behaviour management in the context of SEND is an area of focus for regular support and development forums, including the SEN Co-ordinators, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Deputy Head teachers and Head teachers.

Officers from Pupil Services and School Improvement are collaborating more closely to develop materials and approaches for schools, for example recent guidance on [Well-being and Recovery](#), and [Attendance and Behaviour](#).

In response to recommendations from the Scrutiny Review, Officers have also developed an on-line interactive [SEND Support Behaviour Handbook](#) for Islington schools, to sit alongside [SEND Support handbooks](#) and other materials available through our mental health and well-being programmes.

The purpose of the Behaviour Handbook is to give information to assist with the early identification and planning of consistent support for children and young people with SEMH needs. It is informed by existing good practice in Islington as well as the latest DfE guidance on SEMH and SEND. It has a section on exclusion from school, including a protocol developed by a working group of Headteachers and Officers (see 5.4 below).

The Handbook was launched to schools in October 2019, and demonstrated at a SEND Exhibition of Good Practice for Islington Head teachers and SENCOs held at the Town Hall in November 2019. It is being well-used by schools in Islington and beyond.

The SEND Local Offer website has also been updated to include information about exclusion from school.

5.4 Recommendation 4: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should encourage and support all schools to form Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships.

Officers from Pupil Services and School Improvement, have further researched different Behaviour and Attendance Partnership models in operation across the country and their impact, and presented evidence to Head teachers for further consideration. Islington Schools have already formed a number of collaborative education improvement partnerships (e.g. Future Zone, involving 22 schools who collaborated to provide a [protocol](#) for supporting children back into school following any fixed period exclusion – see 5.3 above). Attendance and behaviour are also standing agenda items for twice termly

Headteacher briefings. We have a focus group with ten schools whose attendance gives most concern that meets monthly. In addition, the role of Securing Education Boards has been further developed (see 5.7 below).

Our schools do not therefore consider that Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships would bring any additional value at this time.

5.5 Recommendation 5: School governors should receive training on how they can help to shape their school's culture and ethos, their role in the exclusion process, and how they can scrutinise school behaviour policies and practices.

Three presentations have taken place for all Chairs of Governors (May and September 2019. January 2020) on fixed term and permanent exclusion, the recommendations of the Scrutiny review and Governors role in developing an inclusive school ethos. Materials have been provided (e.g. questions to ask, a 'pupil movement' checklist). Further training sessions for all Governors have been offered, but not well attended.

A number of further actions are planned to improve access and engagement for Governors (e.g. more 'virtual' training, recruiting more Governors from BAME communities) and are set out as part of COVID-19 recovery programme. We will continue to work on this.

5.6 Recommendation 6. To ensure that all school staff are well equipped to support young people at risk of exclusion, officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should explore how information on pupil needs can be shared widely between support services and school staff whilst meeting confidentiality requirements.

An [Information Sharing Agreement](#) for children and young people with special needs has been developed, agreed and signed off by relevant services following approval by the Council and Health Authority's respective Information Governance processes in the context of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). It covers the purpose for sharing information, information that can be shared, the legal basis for sharing and a description of the arrangements for sharing information.

'Team Around the School' (TAS) is a partnership that enables schools and other family support services to meet on a regular basis and have a shared conversation about children they may be worried about. This means that early help and intervention can be put in place to stop concerns escalating.

We are further developing a local TAS model as an effective framework for enabling information-sharing, by setting out a local protocol and making better use of virtual platforms to improve sustainability. This will be underpinned by each schools data protection arrangements.

Developing best practice in our schools

5.7 Recommendation 7: The Securing Education Boards should consider if any of their processes can be amended to offer additional support to pupils at risk of exclusion.

All local authorities must have a Fair Access Protocol to ensure that any unplaced children are allocated a suitable school place as quickly as possible. This includes children permanently excluded from school. Islington's fair access arrangements are overseen by a primary and a secondary Securing Education Board. Each has multi-agency membership, including Head teachers.

The Boards have reviewed their role following recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee and now include as part of routine consideration:

- Data on exclusion and children who leave school to ensure an understanding of how such activity feeds into local trends
- Notification to the allocated social worker of any child referred to the Boards
- Follow up by an identified lead professional, as agreed by the Board, for any requests for alternative placement not agreed by the Boards
- Chair's action to expedite any urgent matters
- An annual report from each Board is now circulated to all schools

Examples of good practice are shared by Board members e.g. through briefings, professional networks and education partnership networks with all schools, so that all of Islington's pupils can benefit from good models in preventative and restorative work.

5.8 Recommendation 8: Officers in Pupil Services and School Improvement should use the Committee's findings to produce a Good Practice Guide for schools.

See 'Behaviour Handbook', as detailed in 5.3 above.

5.9 Recommendation 9: A 'Charter for Inclusion' should be developed with Islington Schools and New River College to affirm their commitment to supporting Islington's young people to stay mainstream education.

In researching successful approaches to inclusion to respond to this recommendation, we identified a body of research on '[Belonging and Place](#)', led by Kathryn Riley, Professor of Urban Education at UCL

The research suggests that one in four children report a feeling that they don't belong². It is also suggested that children from disadvantaged communities are twice as likely as their more advantaged peers to feel that they don't belong³, and four times more likely to be excluded⁴.

For some children, if they don't belong in school, they don't belong anywhere.

Schools come into their own when they recognise that each child, each young person, each adult who passes through the school gates brings their own story into the life of the school

² OECD (2017). PISA Results 2015 (Volume III).

³ OECD (2013). PISA 2012 Results in focus. What 15-year-olds know and what they can do with what they know. Paris, France: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

⁴ The Fair Education Alliance (2017). Report Card 2016–2017.

Unfortunately this work has been interrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak. However, workshops with Headteachers have continued with support from Prof Riley to consider leadership in the new era, taking into account some of the issues emerging from COVID-19 about equality - in particular the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign. The project will continue at pace from September 2020.

Supporting children and young people excluded from school

5.10 Recommendation 10: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should review the feasibility of attaching a named social worker to New River College.

As part of Early Help Review outlined in paragraph 5.1, officers have consulted with New River College on the best model of delivering support to children and young people who attend the College and their families. Two dedicated workers from the new service will continue to work exclusively with children at the College and their families.

Because of the statutory framework, case supervision and professional development requirements for Social Workers it was not considered operationally viable to attach a named Social Worker directly to the College. However the Head of Service, Children in Need now links regularly with the College and provides a direct point of contact where any concerns need to be escalated.

5.11 Recommendation 11: To remove the stigma associated with attending a pupil referral unit, officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should work with New River College to widely promote the successes of its pupils.

New River College (NRC) remains is a successful and well-run school, which Ofsted judged to be 'Good' overall (2018), securing good and sometimes outstanding progress for all learners, with the school's work to promote personal development and welfare also judged as outstanding. Staff continue to work tirelessly to provide educational and emotional support so that their young people can prosper. Up to 75% of students in some year groups have continued to attend the College during the COVID-19 period, with daily contact and home learning support for those who feel safer at home. The college remained open to students during the Easter and half-term breaks.

During the 2018/19 academic year, 23 pupils returned to mainstream education. The College also have a very high rate of children leaving with a firm education, employment or training offer, with no young people not in education, employment or training for the last two years. A number of young people are also supported to successfully move on to, as well as step down from, specialist settings. Students at the college and their families overwhelmingly report on the life-changing impact of the care and support they receive from the college community.

Plans are in place to further strengthen the education, employment and training offer to the College via iWork and the Council's HR team. As mentioned in 5.1 above, the Outreach Team from NRC have also collaborated with Officers to provide emotion health and well-being support guidance for all Islington schools during the COVID-19 disruption

Officers have continued to promote the successes of pupils at NRC, overseen by the Director of Learning and Schools Management Team. The most recent example of this is a video produced by the students – Stress on the Brain – which can be viewed [here](#).

5.12 Recommendation 12: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should engage with neighbouring authorities and schools in neighbouring boroughs close to the borough boundary, making them aware of this review and the support that is expected for pupils who are Islington residents.

A copy of the Review has been shared with neighbouring Local Authorities at an operational level, alongside an extract from Islington's local 'advice, support and expectations' document and contact details of our Pupil Services and School Improvement Services, should they have any concerns about an Islington resident that cannot be addressed through services normally available to all children and young people at that school.

At a strategic level, the need for a cross-borough protocol for vulnerable children has been discussed by Service Directors across the North Central London area (Hackney, Camden, Barnet, Enfield, Barnet and Islington) at Islington's request and added to the work programme. This work will be picked up again in September 2020.

Urging Central Government to act in the best interests of young people

5.13 Recommendation 13: Islington Council should lobby for national policy changes that would support children to remain in mainstream education

A number of recommendations for Ofsted and the Department for Education are included in the Timpson Review. Officers will ensure that Islington continues to respond fully and robustly to any consultations that flow from these recommendations.

5.14 Recommendation 14: Officers in the Children, Employment and Skills directorate should report back to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the national School Exclusions Review led by Edward Timpson CBE, and detail if it is possible to implement its recommendations locally.

A report on the findings of the Timpson Review was presented to Children's Services Scrutiny Committee in June 2019.

6. Further Action

6.1 Narrowing attainment gaps and securing equality in outcomes for all pupils remain central to the Council's 'Fairer Together' strategy. There is further concern that the COVID-19 disruption may exacerbate existing inequalities or create new ones, as the virus and lockdown impact more heavily on disadvantaged communities. Promoting inclusion and reducing exclusion therefore remain a high priority. The following actions are therefore included in our forward planning:

- A Black and minority ethnic action plan involving a wide programme of work
- Supporting the delivery of a Recovery Curriculum (which includes mental health and wellbeing) and encourage schools to offer a broad, inclusive curriculum for all pupils up to Year 11, including the arts and digital and other technologies as more children return to school

- Developing a local mechanism for supporting those who disagree with their assessed grade under the new COVID-19 exam arrangements
- Ensuring support for disadvantaged pupils transitioning to new provision in September, including progression post-16 and EET opportunities
- Developing local 'Black Lives Matter' materials for use by all schools e.g. celebrating black pioneers in the community (old and new)
- Promoting equality training in Continuous Professional Development (e.g. having challenging conversations) – including for Governors
- Reviewing processes within the Education system that may lead to unequal outcomes (e.g. UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health-check tool)
- Supporting schools to undertake self-audit using Culturally Competent Curriculum tool and ensure social justice is threaded through
- Recruiting more Black and minority ethnic governors (detailed action plan)
- Encouraging our schools to further explore flexibility in grouping and consider minimising / removing setting where appropriate.
- Encouraging schools to develop their relationships with parents to ensure school staff understand the communities they serve, explore the make-up of their communities in staff induction and staff and governor training, revisit the aspirational values embedded in their work and reflect on whether they are meaningful for all of their communities
- Encouraging schools to adopt behaviour policies that are underpinned by fairness, kindness, consistency and positivity
- Schools will be asked to consider the identification of suitable role models and mentors who relate to borough's different communities to work with children and young people
- Reviewing school websites to ensure communication is positive
- Encouraging schools to strengthen engagement with local community groups as a way of building consensus on how to 'close the gap'
- Promoting mentoring opportunities for families from within their communities
- Ensuring pupil voice includes a range, including those who do not engage or are disillusioned (i.e. opportunities to discuss lived experiences).

7. Implications

7.1 Financial implications:

All of the recommendations have so far been implemented within existing budgets with the exception of part of recommendation 2 (Mental Health Support Teams), where in June 2019 Islington was successfully awarded 'Trailblazer' status as part of a national NHS and schools in England initiative to provide trained mental health support with attached funding in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Moving forward, the preferred operating model for the Education Psychology Service (recommendation 1) remains a challenge under the current funding arrangements; particularly with regard to the traded element of the service, where schools buy-back Education Psychology time for specific services. The funding model is being reviewed to establish what changes are possible to better align funding with the preferred operating model, however this may require additional investment by the Council.

Similarly the level of funding required (and potential sources) to roll out the iTIPS offer more widely (recommendation 2) is being reviewed.

7.2 Legal Implications:

Governing bodies must have regard to Statutory guidance on the exclusion of pupils from local-authority-maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units and the principal legislation to which this Guidance relates to is:

- The Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011;
- The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012;
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- The Education Act 1996; and
- The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by the Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

The guidance makes clear that only the head teacher of a school can exclude a pupil and this must be on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently. A fixed-period exclusion does not have to be for a continuous period.

Any decision of a school, including exclusion, must be made in line with the principles of administrative law, i.e. that it is: lawful (with respect to the legislation relating directly to exclusions and a school's wider legal duties, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the Equality Act 2010); rational; reasonable; fair; and proportionate.

Governing Bodies must also have regard to 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' as stipulated in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and acknowledge the school's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of safeguarding and pupils with SEN.

7.3 Environmental Implications

The actions proposed in this report do not have any environmental implications beyond those associated with standard office usage and are unlikely to significantly change the existing impacts of the services.

7.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Resident Impact Assessments have been undertaken as part of the process of developing and implementing policies and actions arising from this report.

8. Reason for recommendations

- 8.1 This report details the response to recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families Date

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