

Website Content Good Practice Template

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

AREA TITLE

Preventing Exclusions

About...

Overview

The National Autistic Society's (NAS) Report: *Make School Make Sense (2006)* found that one in five children with autism had been excluded from school and that figure rises to one in four for children with Asperger syndrome.

Of these children, 67% have had more than one fixed term exclusion and 16% had either been excluded more than ten times or so many times that their parents had lost count. Twenty four per cent of excluded children were excluded permanently.

Of the children in the NAS survey who have been excluded from school, 34% had missed a term or more of school and 10% had missed more than a whole school year, over the last two years alone.

Seventy one per cent of parents surveyed by the NAS said that their local authority did not put any support in place for their child whilst they were excluded from school, although they are required to do so.

In addition to formal exclusion, many parents report that their child has been excluded from school on an ad hoc or informal basis. Over half of the parents who highlighted that this had happened to their child, said it had happened more than ten times or that they had lost count of the number of times their child had been excluded in this way.

Government Guidance

Addressing the issue of exclusion from school and providing alternatives to mainstream schooling are key elements of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) Behaviour and Attendance strategy.

The Government has drawn up detailed guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units containing information on when and how exclusion should be implemented, and procedures for appeals against exclusion: **Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units (2007)**. This guidance makes it clear that removing pupils from school for disciplinary reasons, without following formal procedures, is illegal. It came into effect in September 2008.

The Government has also issued specific guidance around managing and reducing unofficial exclusions: **Effective Practice for Local Authorities and Schools in managing and Eliminating Incidents of Unofficial Exclusion**. If a pupil is excluded unofficially they are unlikely to have educational provision made for them. Unofficial exclusions need to be addressed because this issue has a direct impact on the Government's aim to ensure that no child is missing from education. This document sets out what constitutes an unofficial exclusion, four key effective practice principles which underpin successful management of exclusions, and how some schools and local authorities (LAs) are making clear

that unofficial exclusion is illegal. Effective policies, procedures and training minimise the number of pupils at risk of either permanent or fixed period exclusion.

The White Paper *Back on Track* published on 20 May 2008 sets out a new strategy for transforming the quality of alternative educational provision for those who are unable to attend mainstream or special schools for whatever reason, including those at risk of exclusion. Schools should intervene as early as possible to address emerging behaviour problems, including those masking underlying learning difficulties or disabilities, thereby minimising the need for permanent exclusion.

Many schools find Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs) useful to help pupils better manage their behaviour. It is particularly appropriate for those pupils whose behaviour is deteriorating rapidly. Whether or not there is a PSP in place, local authorities should where possible provide active support for head teachers who are considering a permanent exclusion. This may involve looking at alternatives to exclusion. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a voluntary process, common to all children's services, to help identify a child's needs as early as possible and agree what support is appropriate. Resulting early intervention should help reduce the risk of problems reaching the point where exclusion is considered necessary. A CAF may be undertaken as part of a PSP or at any stage. It may be particularly appropriate to carry out a CAF in cases of multiple fixed period exclusions.

The local authority should be fully involved in any measures involving out-of-school services. Some local authorities have successfully reduced the need for exclusion by establishing Pupils at Risk Panels. These panels, which are usually managed by head teachers, consider referrals of pupils at risk of exclusion and make recommendations for school-level action and support from the local authority and other services.

The behaviour of pupils at risk of exclusion is sometimes driven by complex combinations of social, emotional and health problems, so the involvement of the local authority and other services should be co-ordinated. Multi-agency teams such as Behaviour and Education Support Teams are an effective way of doing that and, increasingly, Children's Trusts are providing targeted multi-agency arrangements to support pupils in school with additional needs. In all cases where a child is receiving support from more than one agency, one practitioner should act as the 'lead professional' to coordinate support and provide a single point of contact for the child and family.

Practical Strategies to minimise exclusion (NAS Make School Make Sense Report 2006)

Inclusion is about the quality of a child's experience; how a child develops his or her skills; participates in the life of the school and learns and plays with children from a range of backgrounds. In practice, free time, lunch, school trips, assembly, extra curricular activities and the like can be the most testing times in the school day for children on the autism spectrum, who all find changes to routine and social interaction difficult. The stress and anxiety that can build up often leads to official or unofficial exclusion from certain activities and may have consequences for a child's behaviour and ability to learn back in the classroom and their behaviour at home.

Sensory difficulties: Some children on the autism spectrum are particularly sensitive to sensory stimuli; they can find it difficult to block out background noise or visual information and can be overwhelmed by all the sensory information in their environment. Many parents highlight the importance of a quiet space or a calm working environment and specific support to move around the school.

Break times: Children on the autism spectrum find unstructured time difficult to manage and break times or free periods can be particularly challenging. Children on the autism spectrum need specific support at break times such as structured activities.

Peer support: children on the autism spectrum have difficulty with social communication and interaction and can therefore find it difficult to build relationships. Action to increase understanding of autism across the whole school and to provide support with social activities can make a huge difference to whether a child on the autism spectrum feels included at school.

Home-school communication: Parents really value good home-school communication, and the standard of communication correlates closely with how satisfied parents are overall with their child's education. Parents say that home-school diaries are very useful when completed properly. Children on the autism spectrum may not communicate their experiences well, and stresses built up during the school day can explode once they get home. Caring for a child on the autism spectrum involves additional pressures and responsibilities, so it is vital that already over-stretched families are not relied upon to provide the support their children are entitled to at school.

Links

[DCSF Exclusion and Alternative Provision](#) dedicated website providing guidance, case studies and frequently asked questions.

[Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units](#) (2007) This is the key government guidance setting out the Exclusions process which must be followed by schools

[Effective Practice for Local Authorities and schools in managing and Eliminating Incidents of Unofficial Exclusion.](#)

Case Studies

Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire is characterised by a positive approach to multi-agency working. The preventive and multi-disciplinary approach to exclusions in Cambridgeshire has a number of strands which include:

- In-school support to schools through the Cambridgeshire Secondary Support and Inclusion Service.
- In-school Learning Support Units in identified secondary schools to add to school support systems
- Use of the Pupil Referral Centres as augmented Key Stage 4 provision for pupils at risk of exclusion
- Multi-disciplinary approaches to providing support for pupils with complex needs

Primary Support Service provides specialist support for speech and language,

autism and behaviour and is made up of teachers, Teaching Assistants together with a Senior Lead Practitioners. The Secondary Support and Inclusion Service offer all secondary schools: in-school support and support for re-integration, and access to out of school provision.

Example from DCSF website

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