

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Date:	04 March 2016
Subject:	Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy

Summary:

This report presents the Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee and updates on progress in relation to reducing school exclusions.

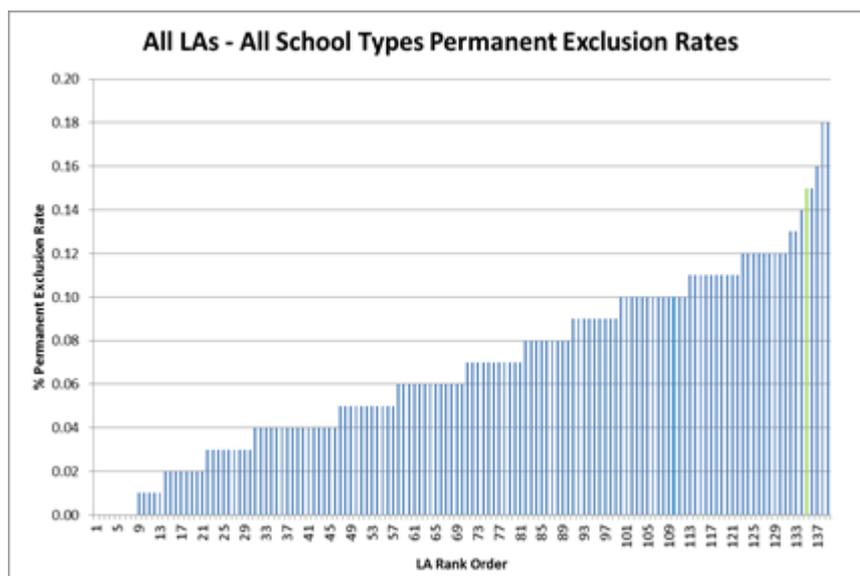
Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the content of the report and provide feedback and challenge as required.

1. Background

Children in Lincolnshire are more likely to be excluded than in many other Local Authority (LA) areas. The chart below shows that for those LAs that have publishable data¹, Lincolnshire was ranked 135th out of 139 for permanent exclusions from all school types.

¹ Where there are low numbers of exclusions, typically 10 or less, the data is suppressed from publication to prevent the potential identify of individuals.



Primary:

- Lincolnshire was ranked joint last position out of 95 publishing LAs
- 40 LA areas had no primary exclusions
- The national rate of permanent exclusion is 2 per 10,000 pupils; in Lincolnshire it is 7 per 10,000 pupils

Secondary:

- Lincolnshire was ranked 110th out of 132 publishing LAs
- 6 LA area had no secondary exclusions
- The national rate of permanent exclusion is 13 per 10,000 pupils; in Lincolnshire it is 23 per 10,000 pupils

For fixed-period exclusions:

- Lincolnshire primary schools are more likely to use fixed-period exclusions; they are less likely to use a fixed-period exclusion with a pupil that has previously had one and the number of days excluded is lower, meaning less learning days lost.
- Lincolnshire secondary schools are less likely to use fixed-period exclusions; they are less likely to use a fixed-period exclusion with a pupil that has had one previously but they are more likely to exclude for more days, meaning more learning days lost.

Whilst recognising that there is no single solution to reducing the number of exclusions, this strategy outlines synergistic change across schools, the Local Authority and providers in order to achieve better outcomes for Lincolnshire schools and pupils. We need to change the way that we support pupils with challenging behaviour and shift away from specialist and statutory intervention to **earlier help and support**. We want to ensure that capacity and skills are aligned at all levels, and the thresholds between each level are clearly understood and implemented.

Progress Update

The Lincolnshire Ladder of Intervention (LLBI) has been published and with this the mechanism for a zero exclusions county. The expectation is that all schools will follow the LLBI from September 2016. It comprises three main steps. The first is school-led. Practitioners must identify the underlying causes of challenging behaviour by undertaking both cognitive and holistic assessments, including an Early Help Assessment and then intervening as appropriate. If such intervention does not result in an improvement in behaviour, then the school must implement a Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) which is solutions-focussed and lasts for at least two terms, to allow the pupil time to demonstrate progress. If this fails, then the PSP forms the basis of a referral to the Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) and the school is able to access specialist support within the setting for the pupil. If this affects no positive change, a pre-exclusion referral is made to the Lincolnshire Teaching and Learning Centre (LTLC) enabling the pupil to benefit from intensive support away from the base-school, but dual-registered. On successful completion of this work, the pupil is deemed 'school-ready' and a reintegration passport is devised to support a return to the mainstream school.

The BOSS, responsible for bridging all LLBI stages beyond PSP, is currently out to tender with 24 providers attending a very positive briefing event. The deadline for bids is 26th February 2016. Work to improve the LTLC is underway with Wellspring now identified as the preferred sponsor and providing interim leadership across all sites. A recently appointed executive head teacher and executive deputy head teacher are leading change and an Interim Executive Board (IEB) has been put in place to hold them to account. The provision will be fit for purpose by September 2016, albeit with interim arrangements in place with regard to premises.

Mary Meredith, Services Manager Inclusion, was appointed in January 2016 and has developed the role of the Reintegration Team so that work is preventive as well as reactive. For example, caseworkers now contact schools who have excluded pupils, for a fixed term period, three times or more within a term and provide challenge and support in order to arrest what is often a trajectory towards permanent exclusion. They are also working with disengaged families on behalf of schools as this was identified through discussion with head teachers as a major barrier to inclusion.

The problem of permanent exclusion for one-off breaches of behaviour policy is also being addressed. The Services Manager Inclusion is working alongside professionals from Safeguarding, Young Addaction and schools to develop a **Lincolnshire Drugs and Substance Misuse protocol**. This will be shared at the summer term Head Teacher briefings. A model **LCC risk assessment** is also being developed to support schools in dealing with pupils who use 'weapons' (N.B. this can be a pencil or a water bottle). This will promote a more reasonable, proportionate and fair approach to the management of such incidents, protecting pupils, where appropriate, from the harmful effects of permanent exclusions.

Restorative practice will underpin the work of the BOSS and has been embedded within the LLBI. All Inclusion Team members will be attending a 3 day Restorative Practice Training Programme in April and May 2016 and four specially appointed

FGC workers will also be trained in this. LCC will then be able to offer a restorative conferencing service for schools to draw upon when they are seeking to avoid permanent exclusion and allow young people the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. In time, schools will develop their own capacity to run formal restorative conferences.

Mary Meredith has met with head teachers at eight of Lincolnshire's highest excluding secondary schools, with a view to visiting all such settings before Easter. The overwhelming majority of head teachers have engaged in problem-solving dialogue and, in particular, welcome the development of a county-wide protocol for supporting schools to deal with 'one-off' incidents. In all of the settings visited, inclusive practices are evolving with head teachers also beginning to share strategies in the spirit of sector-led improvement.

Low and zero excluding secondary schools have all received letters from LCC congratulating them on their contribution to Inclusive Lincolnshire and inviting them to share effective practice. All have been happy to open their doors in this way.

2. Conclusion

Schools have responded very positively to these strategies. There is good evidence that they are moving in a more inclusive direction, even before the BOSS is available to them. Early data shows a drop in permanent exclusions during term 3, which hopefully indicates an appetite for change. Clearly, there will be an ongoing need to monitor the data to ensure that lower rates are sustained. It is also anticipated that the BOSS will consolidate and accelerate progress.

The Lincolnshire Learning Partnership Board (LLPB) and Schools Forum (SF) have been considering a range of strategies to support and challenge Lincolnshire schools and academies to reduce the number of permanent exclusions. The Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy has explored the potential impact and appetite for schools to pay a reintegration charge where head teachers cannot demonstrate they have met an agreed ladder of intervention expected of all schools. Such a levy would be in the region of £25k (which is roughly the cost of educating pupils who have been permanently excluded) and is used in other Local Authorities.

Having consulted with the LLPB, SF and head teachers through wider head teacher briefings, it is recognised that there is some appetite for the charge to be applied. However, in the spirit of shared vision and collaboration, we want to assess the impact of the Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS) as we hope that this will drive a more inclusive approach and that head teachers will recognise the need for consistency and engagement with the ladder of intervention without the need for a levy. It is the vision of all head teachers who responded to the consultation that exclusions should be reduced. The BOSS will be operational from September 2016 and will support schools and the LA in managing pupils with challenging behaviour more effectively. The levy will be shadowed in this system but not administered and its long-term future will be reconsidered once the impact of the BOSS can be fully evaluated at the end of academic year 2016-17.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy - December 2015

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Mary Meredith, who can be contacted on 01522 554549 or mary.meredith@lincolnshire.gov.uk .

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