



Open Report on behalf of Heather Sandy, Executive Director – Children’s Services

Report to:	Lincolnshire's Schools’ Forum
Date:	18 January 2024
Subject:	Alternative Provision Arrangements

Summary:
A summary of the Alternative Provision (AP) arrangements in Lincolnshire 2022/23.

Recommendation(s):
The School's Forum is invited to note and comment on the contents of the report and address any questions to the officers in attendance.

Background

Since the launch of the ‘Inclusive Lincolnshire Strategy in 2017, the Local Authority has delivered its alternative provision (AP) through its commissioned arrangements at Springwell Academy and Build a Future (BaF). The commissioned alternative provision enables the Local Authority to deliver its duty to provide education six days after a permanent exclusion. It also forms part of short term intervention provision for educational settings as part of proactive preventative support via Lincolnshire’s Ladder of Behavioural Intervention.

The Local Authority also has commissioning arrangements at Pilgrim Hospital School. This alternative provision provides short term placements for a pupil’s medical condition, which requires a higher level of support than their school can provide through reasonable adjustments. This also forms part of Lincolnshire’s Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Pathway.

Alternative Provision

The Local Authority commissions 252 primary and secondary alternative provision places within Springwell Academy. This is across four purpose-built centres that are situated within the four localities at Grantham, Lincoln, Mablethorpe and Spalding.

Due to the reduced rate of permanent exclusion, in 2021 the Local Authority utilised 18 of the 252 commissioned places at Springwell as Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) special school places for primary aged children. These places have been utilised to meet

the needs of pupils with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans that were waiting for an SEMH special school place. This has avoided the need to access costly out of county or independent settings for these pupils.

Up until the end of the academic year 2022/23, the Local Authority also commissioned secondary alternative provision places at BaF. This Key Stage 4 (KS4) (13-16 years olds) provision has been in place since autumn 2018 for pupils permanently excluded or at risk of permanent exclusion. The setting provided 75 pupil places per annum under a block contract payment, with scope for 50 additional pupil places spot purchased at the point of need. With the end of this commissioning arrangement, the Local Authority is progressing with plans to block commission a similar level of places through new arrangements.

The Local Authority commissions 80 places at the Pilgrim Hospital School. Access to Pilgrim Hospital School is via the multi-agency Medical Support Panel (MSP).

Exclusions and Suspensions

When considering the data below, it is reminded that 2019/20 and 2020/21 were the academic years impacted by covid and national lockdowns.

The **national picture** is via data that is available on suspensions and permanent exclusions within the 2021/22 academic year across state-funded schools in England. The rate of exclusions is the number of permanent exclusions as a proportion of the overall school population in the 2021/22 academic year. The rate of suspensions is the number of suspensions as a proportion of the overall school population in the 2021/22 academic year.

Rate of Permanent Exclusions and Suspension										
	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
	PEX	Susp	PEX	Susp	PEX	Susp	PEX	Susp	PEX	Susp
Lincolnshire	0.10	4.40	0.11	4.66	0.05	3.47	0.07	3.94	0.08	7.68
England	0.10	5.08	0.10	5.36	0.06	3.76	0.05	4.25	0.08	6.91
East Midlands	0.09	4.55	0.09	4.82	0.06	3.65	0.05	4.40	0.07	7.59

In 2021/22, Lincolnshire was in line with national data (0.08), which is slightly higher than the East Midlands (0.07) in relation to permanent exclusions. In relation to suspensions, Lincolnshire (7.68) was higher than the national (6.91) and East Midlands (7.59) data. This is a similar situation to previous years.

For the last academic year (2022/23), we are able to consider our **local data**. In 2021/22, we were in a similar position to our pre-covid numbers in relation to permanent exclusions. However, the feedback to the Local Authority from school leaders was that the last academic year has proved to be a challenging landscape. They were supporting a higher number of children and young people with more challenging behaviour than previously seen. This has led to a year in which we have seen a significant increase in the number of permanent exclusions being issued by Lincolnshire schools. The resulting impact is considerable.

The commissioned alternative provision has needed to focus on enabling the Local Authority to deliver its duty to provide education six days after a permanent exclusion. There is the added challenge of a scarcity of available alternative provision providers within the market place. As a result, in Key Stage 3 and 4 this has meant from the end of the Autumn Term 2022 there has been very little ability to offer short term intervention provision for secondary schools via Lincolnshire’s Ladder of Behavioural Intervention.

In order to meet the Local Authority's duty, further alternative provision has needed to be commissioned, which is forecast to place in excess of £2million additional funding pressure on the high needs block by 2024/25 compared to 2022/23 levels. This is unsustainable.

Permanent Exclusion Comparison - School Type						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Primary	26	16	7	10	12	38
Secondary	93	105	55	71	106	184
Special	0	2	1	0	1	4
Total	119	123	63	81	119	226

In 2021/22, the local data around suspensions being issued by Lincolnshire schools showed an increase; the national data has established that Lincolnshire’s rate of suspensions was higher than the national and East Midlands rates. In the last academic year there has been a further and significant increase.

No. Suspensions per Academic Year	
2017/18	5089
2018/19	5308
2019/20	4002
2020/21	3198
2021/22	7543
2022/23	12548

Highest reasons 3 Reasons for Suspension			
2017/18	1.	Other	26%
	2.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	19%
	3.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	18%
2018/19	1.	Other	25%
	2.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	22%
	3.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	18%
2019/20	1.	Other	28%
	2.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	19%
	3.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	19%
2020/21*	1.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	40%
	2.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	27%
	3.	Physical assault against a Pupil	20%
2021/22	1.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	49%
	2.	Verbal Abuse / Threatening Behaviour against adult	25%
	3.	Physical assault against a Pupil	17%

2022/23	1.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	58%
	2.	Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	22%
	3.	Physical assault against a pupil	15%

* New Category reasons added in 20/21 and up to three reasons could be selected per Suspension

The three highest reasons for schools to issue a suspension mirrors 2021/22. However, persistent disruptive behaviour, as the highest reason, has seen a rise from just under half of suspensions issued to just below 60% in 2022/23.

A suspension may be used to provide a clear signal of what is unacceptable behaviour as part of the school's behaviour policy and show a pupil that their current behaviour is putting them at risk of permanent exclusion. However, where suspensions are becoming a regular occurrence for a pupil there should be consideration as to whether suspension alone is an effective sanction for the pupil and rather, what additional strategies need to be put in place to address behaviour and the underlying factors that are causing the behaviour.

When considering the permanent exclusion data for 2022/23 a similar picture emerges around the increase around persistent disruptive behaviour. This was the highest reason for issuing a permanent exclusion and saw a significant increase from the previous year; more than doubling from 18% to 37%. When also considering it as one of the three reasons for issuing a permanent exclusion this accounted for just below 70% of those issued in 2022/23.

Highest Reasons for Permanent Exclusions 2021/22		
1.	Physical assault against a pupil	29%
2.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	18%
3.	Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	16%
4.	Physical assault against an adult	12%
When add Persistent disruptive behaviour as 2 nd reason: 35%		
When add Persistent disruptive behaviour as 3 rd reason: 48%		
Highest Reasons for Permanent Exclusions 2022/23		
1.	Persistent disruptive behaviour	37%
2.	Physical assault against a pupil	23%
3.	Physical assault against an adult	14%
4.	Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	12%
When add Persistent disruptive behaviour as 2 nd reason: 50%		
When add Persistent disruptive behaviour as 3 rd reason: 67%		

This changed landscape requires everyone to adjust their approach as part of strategic short, medium and long-term planning and developments.

The Ladder

Lincolnshire's Ladder of Behavioural Intervention continues to be in place to support schools in investigating and understanding the underlying causes of behaviour and whether additional support is needed. The Ladder provides steps and support aimed at

schools proactively implementing early intervention to avoid escalating needs that then subsequently require suspension or permanent exclusion. The fee for intervention placement continues to be adjusted every year in line with AWPU increases. The Ladder is underpinned via support from Behaviour Outreach Support Team (BOSS) and the Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT).

The **Pupil Reintegration Team (PRT)** continues to be the Local Authority’s key involvement overseeing the Ladder and maintaining high quality application of the process, alongside headteachers. They are also responsible for providing training, advice, information and casework support to educational settings and families in relation to suspension and fixed term exclusions. Leading on and supporting a prompt and timely transition back into mainstream school for pupils following a permanent exclusion is another key aspect of their role. This can be immediately following a permanent exclusion, in situations such as one off incidents or where pupils do not need to access a period of time in alternative provision, or following a period of time accessing alternative provision intervention.

The **Behaviour Outreach Support Service (BOSS)** contract was re-tendered from September 2022. Their role sits within the Ladder and supporting schools in relation to pupils at risk of exclusion. This includes supporting schools with early identification, intervention, and support through a robust universal training offer. Schools can access this directly from BOSS. It is expected that this offer is accessed, implemented, and embedded within the school prior to any referrals for direct targeted intervention. BOSS work closely with partners within robust multi-agency working to maximise positive impact. The involvement of BOSS also supports reintegration for pupils back into their mainstream setting. Working with the PRT and the alternative provision provider to maximise the setting’s ability to meet the pupil’s needs and therefore provide improved opportunities, achievements and outcomes for the pupil going forward.

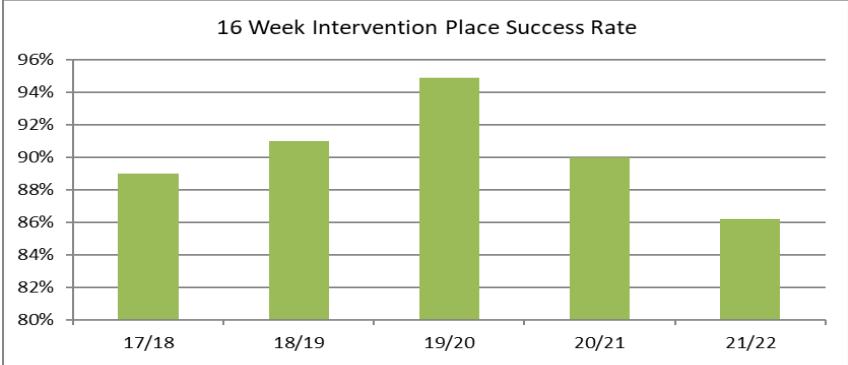
While the Ladder continues to be key across the County, as previously mentioned, the availability of short term intervention provision has been very limited for Key Stage 3 and 4 since the Autumn Term of 2022/23 as a direct result of the significant number of permanent exclusions that have been issued by schools. Therefore, while the number of intervention placements is similar to last academic year, the majority of places have been within Primary.

16 Week Intervention Placements				
	Foundation & KS1	KS2	KS3	Total
2017/18	14	24	27	65
2018/19	20	32	24	76
2019/20	25	23	11	59
2020/21	17	17	6	40
2021/22	13	29	16	58
2022/23	26	20	7	53

Where pupils are accessing intervention places, there is evidence that the Ladder and access to short term alternative provision, with the delivery of interventions that make a difference, is continuing to provide successful outcomes. When considering the 2021/22

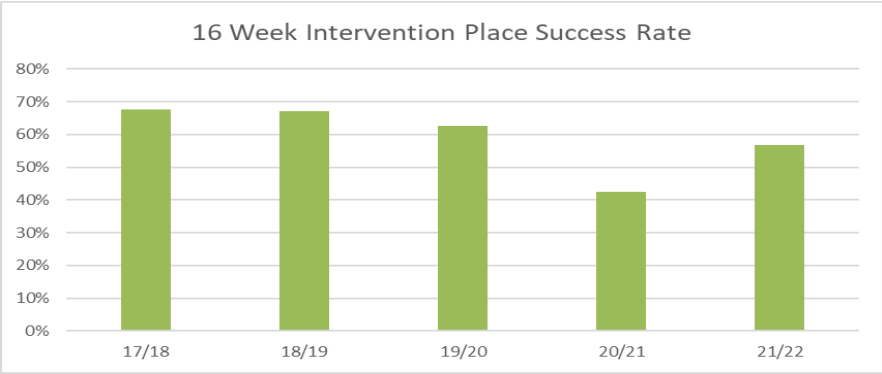
cohort, 86% of pupils that accessed an intervention placement had not been permanently excluded a year after intervention.

Proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion a year after intervention placement:



As seen in previous years, this drops when considered alongside the proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion and no transition to a specialist setting a year after intervention placement. At 57%, this is an increase on the previous academic year, however, with the continued pressure on special school places to support social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, this is placing a further unsustainable pressure on the high needs block. Lincolnshire’s SEMH Strategy is in place after being developed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. It sets out Lincolnshire’s aims and strategic direction to support the concerns around SEMH and sits alongside Lincolnshire’s Transformation work and the High Needs Strategy.

Proportion of pupils with no permanent exclusion and no transition to specialist setting a year after intervention placement:



While the Ladder continues to demonstrate positive impact it is important that strategically the key steps within the Ladder are retained. However, as with any intervention or process, it is equally important to ensure it continues to evolve so that it remains up to date and relevant. This is particularly important in light of the challenging landscape reported by school leaders this last academic year.

Following ongoing conversations with school leaders, the Local Authority has adjusted the **available support** for schools in the initial stages of the Ladder and within the crucial early intervention element, including BOSS involvement at an earlier point and the introduction

of bookable consultations. The support of PRT is reported by settings to be key and effective. The PRT continues to work closely with schools to support avoiding an exclusion where possible through proactive early intervention. They are also providing support to ensure children and young people are transitioning effectively back to mainstream settings in a timely way. The team continue to facilitate the Collaborative Headteacher Inclusion Panels (CHIPs) to support strengthening collaboration between settings, including off-site direction and managed moves and a sector lead approach to the current situation. An Inclusion Conference was provided in May 2023 with a range of workshops, speakers, advice and resources to support schools in re-embed inclusion within their settings. This continues to be built on via the Graduated Approach Briefings.

There continues to be a wide range of available support for Lincolnshire schools to access, from Early Help Teams across Mental Health services to individual specialist teams such as the Specialist Teaching Team, the Sensory Education Support Team, Dyslexia Outreach and the Working Together Team. SEND Advice Line Lincolnshire (SALL) continues to provide schools with an early conversation to help guide through the graduated approach and signpost to next steps and resources to support meeting needs. Full details regarding available support and resources can be found at Lincolnshire's Local Offer while access to the SEND Workforce Development Platform can be accessed via the LSCB training platform.

The Local Authority is increasing the availability of Alternative Provision. However, the market is extremely limited and there is a scarcity of available provision. This also comes at considerable cost to the high needs budget, which is already under huge and unsustainable pressure in relation to special educational needs and disability (SEND). The availability of Alternative Provision is having to be diverted to fulfil the legal duty and as a result is currently only able to offer limited early intervention and avoidance that has previously been in place.

To enable the necessary **crucial shift** to occur requires schools to also be taking steps and making the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of pupils within the current landscape. This includes reflecting on the last academic year to inform whole school developments for the short, medium and long term, considering the training needs and development of staff, the quality of teaching, and consistently applied approaches to effectively meet pupil's needs. Alongside good practice regarding de-escalation techniques, consideration of steps to be in place to prevent escalation occurring is key to ensuring approaches to behaviour aren't reactive. A number of schools are adjusting their in-house provision to include a range of bases, including transition bases, support hubs and the development of alternative provision.

All the steps needing to be put in place must be underpinned by a clear ethos of implementing a less punitive use of inclusion. While acknowledging the part exclusions play in school's management of behaviour it is key that in Lincolnshire exclusion is viewed by all as an undesirable outcome rather than a justifiable sanction.

Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Pathway

In September 2021, the EBSA Pathway was launched to provide schools and other stakeholders with clarity about how to respond to the challenge of pupils presenting with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). When attendance is compromised because of EBSA, or any medical issue, there is a statutory duty for both school and Local Authority to deliver education. The Pathway provides clarity around steps to be taken and in relation to roles and responsibilities; including what schools can expect of the Local Authority and vice versa.

Without accurate early identification of needs, mitigation of school stressors and effective interventions, the cycle of EBSA can quickly become self-perpetuating. The Pathway focuses on facilitating a 'step-change' in how pupils are supported with their mental health and wellbeing when that drives school avoidance. It incorporates the use of an assessment framework as a tool to identify the underlying reasons for absence, drawing up a Pastoral Support Plan that is then kept under regular review.

As set out in Lincolnshire's SEMH Strategy, a review of the Pathway has taken place during 2022/23. This has involved a working group; consisting of Lincolnshire Parent Carer Forum (LPCF), mental health colleagues, primary and secondary school staff, Pilgrim Hospital School, educational psychology, Early Help, Working Together Team, Inclusion Team Managers and the Pupil Reintegration Team. The EBSA Working Group has worked in partnership and reviewed, updated and strengthened the EBSA Pathway.

As per the aim of the SEMH Strategy, the updated Pathway has added a key element around early intervention, focussing on supporting schools to review and adapt policies and practice throughout their settings. This enables schools to address EBSA as a long-term whole school focus rather than in relation to individual children and situations as they occur. The 'steps' within the original Pathway remain in principle, but have been broken down into phases that guide schools through implementing a more robust assessment of the underlying issues causing the EBSA. This then leads the school through critically analysing the assessment to produce a meaningful support plan and keeping this under close review and adaptation. The child/young person remains central at all times.

A Toolkit has been added. This provides schools with the resources to implement the Pathway effectively at each phase, alongside links to further existing support and evidence based interventions that can supplement the Pathway. This is further supplemented through the support of the EBSA Caseworkers within the PRT offering training, advice and strategies where schools are struggling to address EBSA effectively in their settings.

The updated Pathway is fully electronic and accessed via Lincolnshire's Local Offer. It was rolled out to schools for the start of Term 2 of 2023/24.

Lincolnshire's Alternative Provision Review

To ensure the maximum positive impact of accessing alternative provision in Lincolnshire, the Local Authority's Alternative Provision Review is continuing to take place. This is aimed at identifying existing successful inclusive support and practices and will inform how our alternative provision can best be developed to enable schools to remove barriers

and improve targeted support and inclusion for Lincolnshire's children and young people. The review and the work and developments that the Local Authority completes will sit alongside the Government's plans regarding a 3 tier system of Alternative Provision within their policy paper *SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan: right support, right place, right time* published in March 2023.

Conclusion

Lincolnshire continues to be committed to improving outcomes for children and young people through the offer, access and availability of high-quality support and provision. While Lincolnshire's alternative provision arrangements appear to be appropriate and robust, this past academic year has seen a significant rise in the number of permanent exclusions and suspension being issued by schools in response to a challenging landscape. This has placed significant pressure on Lincolnshire's alternative provision arrangements and as a result, further unsustainable pressure on the high needs block. Lincolnshire's Alternative Provision Review, that is currently taking place, will consider how the provision continues to develop to meet the changing landscape and effectively and efficiently provide high quality provision and practice. Alongside this is the requirement for schools to also continue making the necessary changes and developments to adjust to the needs of the current landscape and effectively meet the needs of children and young people.

All of this is underpinned with Lincolnshire's clear ethos of ensuring that a punitive use of inclusion is avoided and exclusion is viewed by all as an undesirable outcome rather than a justifiable sanction.

Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

The report provides information and an update relating to the alternative provision in Lincolnshire in 2022/23. The report does not relate to any decision or proposal.

Alternative provision arrangements are demand led as a result of the Local Authority's statutory duty to provide education on the 6th day following school issuing a permanent exclusion. As detailed in the paper, a number of steps are being taken, as a Local Authority and within schools, to try and minimise the risk of further growth. Alongside this, medium term forecasting is taking place with prudent assumptions in place in light of this risk.

Background Papers

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

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