

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 23 APRIL 2010

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOLS IN EAST AYRSHIRE 2008/09

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Governance and Scrutiny Committee Members of the exclusion of pupils from school in East Ayrshire during session 2008-2009 and to describe the supports in place designed to reduce these figures on an annual basis.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On an annual basis the Scottish Government publishes a statistical report, 'Exclusion from Schools 2008-2009'. Information relates to local authority and mainstream grant aided schools only. Unless otherwise stated this report refers to cases of exclusion rather than the number of pupils excluded. Some pupils are excluded more than once.
- 2.2 This Governance and Scrutiny paper summarises the findings of the Scottish Government report in relation to East Ayrshire

3. OVERALL EXCLUSIONS IN EAST AYRSHIRE SCHOOLS

- 3.1 During 2008/09 there were 862 exclusions from schools in East Ayrshire, consolidating the decrease of 29 per cent in session 2007/08 from 2006/07 figures. The decrease is reported at the same time as a 15 per cent decrease nationally.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Clackmannanshire	444	536	542	529
Falkirk	889	907	679	651
North Ayrshire	2,146	2,072	1782	1303
North Lanarkshire	3,425	3,892	3031	3029
West Lothian	1,763	1,924	1735	1604
East Ayrshire	1,339	1,211	860	862
Scotland	42,990	44,197	39717	33917

- 3.2 When compared against local authorities with similar socio-economic profiles, East Ayrshire has the third lowest number of exclusions.
- 3.3 The exclusion rate per 1,000 pupils in East Ayrshire is lower than four of the five comparator authorities and is in line with the national average.

	Number	Rate
Clackmannanshire	529	78
Falkirk	651	32
North Ayrshire	1303	68
North Lanarkshire	3029	62
West Lothian	1604	62

East Ayrshire	862	52
Scotland	33917	50

- 3.4 In East Ayrshire, 496 individual pupils (2.9 per cent of pupils) were excluded during the year. This is in line with the 3.0 per cent reported nationally.
- 3.5 Two local authorities within the East Ayrshire comparator family have removed pupils from the school register; North Lanarkshire and West Lothian
- 3.6 Overall, male pupils accounted for 84.3 per cent of all exclusions in East Ayrshire. The proportion has decreased from 85.9 per cent in 1998/1999.

4. EXCLUSIONS IN EAST AYRSHIRE PRIMARYSCHOOLS

- 4.1 There were 143 exclusions from East Ayrshire Primary schools, 16.5 per cent of the total, and equivalent to 16 exclusions per 1,000 pupils.

	Primary 2007/08	
	Numbe	Rate
Clackmannanshir e	54	14
Falkirk	97	8
North Ayrshire	166	16
North Lanarkshire	376	14
West Lothian	240	17

East Ayrshire	173	19
Scotland	5616	15

	Primary 2008/09	
	Numbe	Rate
Clackmannanshir e	66	17
Falkirk	90	8
North Ayrshire	148	14
North Lanarkshire	352	13
West Lothian	164	11

East Ayrshire	143	16
Scotland	4953	13

- 4.2 This is the second highest exclusion rate per 1,000 pupils in the comparator and is above the national average. However the figure also demonstrates an improvement of 3% over the period of 2008-2009 from the previous session. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the continued efforts made at

individual school and authority level to use exclusion only as a last resort. A summary of some of the key approaches taken to support children and young people, staff and parents/carers to keep pupils working positively in school are summarised in Section 8 of this report.

5. EXCLUSIONS IN EAST AYRSHIRE SECONDARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- 5.1 There were 709 exclusions from East Ayrshire Secondary schools, 82.2 per cent of the total, and equivalent to 94.7 exclusions per 1,000 pupils. The number of exclusions in secondary schools has decreased by 32.7 per cent over the past three years. This is testimony to the significant effort made at individual school and authority level to build in support structures which are designed to offer alternatives to exclusion wherever possible. There are still clearly occasions where exclusion is a legitimate outcome to a situation, but the emphasis on staff training in relationship management, improved curricular opportunities, and partnership working with support agencies has all contributed towards the improvement in performance in this area. A summary of some of the key strategies which have helped contribute towards the improvement noted are outlined in Section 8 of this report.

	Secondary 2007/08	
	Number	Rate
Clackmannanshire	488	163
Falkirk	576	63
North Ayrshire	1613	184
North Lanarkshire	2470	114
West Lothian	1440	130

	Secondary 2008/09	
	Number	Rate
Clackmannanshire	463	161
Falkirk	547	61
North Ayrshire	1154	134
North Lanarkshire	2408	113
West Lothian	1341	121

East Ayrshire	668	86
Scotland	32905	106

East Ayrshire	709	95
Scotland	27704	91

- 5.2 There were 10 exclusions from East Ayrshire Special schools, 1.2 per cent of the total, and equivalent to 53 exclusions per 1,000 pupils.

6. COMMENTARY – SPECIFIC

- 6.1 As in previous years exclusion rates were highest during the Christmas to Easter term, with week 29 and week 31 being the highest weeks of the year.
- 6.2 97.4 per cent of all exclusions in East Ayrshire lasted one week or less. This compares to 92.8 per cent nationally.
- 6.3 Reasons for exclusion showed that 24.6 per cent involved general or persistent disobedience (32.0 per cent nationally) 20.1 per cent involved verbal abuse of members of staff (26.7 per cent nationally) and 16.6 per cent involved physical assault with no weapon (17.5 per cent nationally).

7. COMMENTARY – GENERAL

7.1 The following points were published as part of the national statistical bulletin. The profile in East Ayrshire would generally match the national one described below.

- At a national level, pupils with additional support needs in mainstream classes had a higher rate of exclusion than those in special schools. Pupils in special classes within mainstream schools had the lowest exclusion rate. Pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties had the highest rates of exclusion.
- Nationally, pupils registered for free school meals, pupils with additional support needs, and pupils looked after by the local authority all had higher exclusion rates than other pupils.
- At a national level, pupils from minority ethnic groups generally had a lower exclusion rate than white-UK pupils, but with rates varying widely across the different ethnic groups. Black Caribbean pupils had the highest rates of exclusion, with Asian-Chinese the lowest.
- At a national level, pupils with English as an additional language had considerably lower rates of exclusion than other pupils, with an exclusion rate of about half that of other pupils.

8. AUTHORITY SUPPORT STRATEGIES TO REDUCE EXCLUSION

8.1 The Authority Pathways to Inclusion Group which is composed of Officers, Head Teachers, representatives from the Educational Psychology Service, Youth Strategy and the Scottish Government Positive Behaviour Team, oversees the strategy for promoting positive behaviour across all East Ayrshire establishments. The Group is responsible for issuing school advice and circulars on promoting positive behaviour; preparing and coordinating staff training and INSET and sharing local and national best practice across all establishments. The group is chaired by the Head of Schools. Examples of some of the initiatives promoted and led by the Pathways to Inclusion Group are summarised in Section 8.2 below.

8.2 The Governance and Scrutiny Report of 25 September 2009 provided an outline of a range of support strategies which had been introduced into schools to develop and strengthen behaviour and relationships. The Pathways to Inclusion Group has continued to coordinate and promote these across all educational establishments in East Ayrshire. These are summarised below for information.

8.3 Class teachers have been offered training in programmes such as 'Framework for Intervention' to help them better manage their classroom environment with the aim of reducing low level disruptive behaviour thus preventing any potential escalation towards serious behaviours, which may ultimately result in exclusion. This programme focuses on the style and layout of the classroom to identify how it can be best utilised to maximise positive learning and minimise disruptive behaviours. Such a simple exercise can often minimise low level indiscipline in a classroom making the environment more positive for teacher and pupils alike.

- 8.4 Many teachers and particularly those with a responsibility for pastoral care in schools have been trained in a programme called: 'Restorative Practices'. This approach establishes a culture within a school which ensures the consequences of disruptive and unacceptable behaviour is dealt with in a way that directs perpetrators to take responsibility for their actions and to be responsible for improving their own behaviour in a supportive but challenging environment. This can be most helpful in helping deal with incidents that may lead to exclusions as well as providing a constructive context for the re-introduction back into school after exclusion. In schools where Restorative Practice is well established there are examples of young people themselves leading on the use of Restorative Practice approaches to solve problems without adult involvement.
- 8.5 A social skills training pack titled: 'Cool in School' has proved useful in giving teachers a structured way to develop appropriate and constructive social interaction and relationship skills amongst young people as well as between adults and young people. The pack is premised on the principle that better social skills development in young people can reduce the likelihood of exclusions.
- 8.6 A number of staff in each establishment across the authority are trained in the behaviour de-escalation techniques established by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI). Day one of the CPI training offers a robust framework for staff to understand the drivers that may escalate behaviours and consequently how to defuse situations before they get out of hand. Where staff are skilled in this area there is a much reduced likelihood that behaviours will escalate to the point where an exclusion results.
- 8.7 School staff are offered training in the 'Solution Oriented Schools' programme. This helps adults understand how to most effectively create constructive and beneficial solutions to problems that arise with young people. Where such solutions are arrived at there is a consequential reduction in difficulties escalating to the point where exclusion may be the end result.
- 8.8 Some exclusions may arise as a result of socialisation challenges for young people which can develop at a young age. One of the outcomes of the 'Nurture Programme' which has been rolled out across the authority is to increase socialisation techniques with young children to help them better manage potentially challenging social situations in a school environment. The programme creates a social framework designed to help the healthy development of a young person who may otherwise be likely destined to have a dysfunctional relationship with school and society. This nurture target group is one that is potentially at the highest risk of school exclusion at an older age.
- 8.9 The authority has invested heavily in a 'Youth Strategy' service which is an integrated service provision to support children and young people who require additional support in order to access their educational programme. The ethos of the service is one that supports and enables all children and young people to feel valued and to experience positive interpersonal relationships. It aims to meet the objectives set out by The 'Early Years Framework'; 'Curriculum for Excellence' and 'Getting it Right for Every Child'. Youth Strategy base and outreach supports have a positive impact on reducing exclusions in

mainstream schools. Most of the young people using the service present with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and without support would face the prospect of future exclusions from their school.

- 8.10 One of the keys to success of Youth Strategy lies not only in the work within an educational establishment but also as a result of the support offered to parents and carers by the social work team and teaching staff who will meet regularly with families to discuss and model parenting skills.
- 8.11 Youth Strategy recognises that many young people who come to them have in general been relatively unsuccessful in achieving within a mainstream curriculum programme. The service thus extends the opportunities for young people to access school-college link and volunteering programmes to build their sense of success and self esteem and in addition better prepare them for social inclusion in post school society.
- 8.12 Youth Strategy operates a 'no exclusion' policy. In practice this means that even the most challenging or self-excluding young people are educated at home or at another appropriate venue.
- 8.13 The holistic and child-centred focus of all Youth Strategy personnel provides a flexible and innovative means to support young people, ideally within a child's school but with the added flexibility of a suitably resourced base.

9. POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Nil.

10. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This report is linked to the Community Plan priorities of 'Promoting Lifelong Learning' and 'Improving Health and Well Being'.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 If the additional supports as described in section 8 were not in place the exclusion rate in schools may increase.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 It is recommended that Members:
- (i) invite the Executive Director to continue to report annually on exclusions; and
 - (ii) otherwise, note the contents of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)
31 March 2010
KMCK/MM

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Governance and Scrutiny Committee Report - 25 September 2009:
Exclusion from schools in East Ayrshire 2008/09

Members wishing further information should contact Kenneth McKinlay, Principal
Quality Improvement: Tel 01563 555650

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools