

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 SEPTEMBER 2009

EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOLS IN EAST AYRSHIRE 2008/09

Report by Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To advise Governance and Scrutiny Committee Members of the exclusion of pupils from schools in East Ayrshire during session 2008-2009

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. On an annual basis the Scottish Government publishes a Statistical Bulletin, "Exclusion from Schools". Information in the most recent Bulletin related to 2007-2008 and was reported to Governance and Scrutiny Committee on 13 February 2009. This report provided details of exclusions of pupils in East Ayrshire benchmarked against our comparator authorities. Performance was generally favourable against the comparator authorities and national averages but, more importantly, highlighted the significant overall reduction in exclusions in East Ayrshire schools in recent years.
- 2.2. This Governance and Scrutiny paper presents immediate year-end exclusion statistics for East Ayrshire schools for session 2008-2009. National comparator data will not be available until the publication of the next Government Statistical Bulletin in January 2010.

3. OVERALL EXCLUSIONS IN EAST AYRSHIRE SCHOOLS

- 3.1 The following tables show the overall exclusion statistics for East Ayrshire schools and data for secondary, primary and special schools and the openings lost in half days arising from the exclusions:

Exclusion Incidents

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Primary	215	261	148	173	143
Secondary	1116	1073	1053	668	709
Special	12	5	10	19	10
Total	1343	1339	1211	860	862

Openings Lost

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Primary	1224	1540	853	842	706
Secondary	6212	6187	5596	3292	3342
Special	138	38	108	182	64
Total	7574	7765	6557	4316	4112

Overall the reduction in exclusions has been maintained across all sectors, with a further reduction in openings lost i.e. where it is necessary to exclude, pupils are being excluded for shorter periods of time.

There has been a slight increase in exclusions in the secondary sector, however the fall in openings lost reported for overall exclusions has been mirrored in secondary school from 5.3 openings per exclusion in 2006-2007, 4.9 openings per exclusion in 2007-2008 to 4.7 openings per exclusion in 2008-2009.

Again, primary exclusion statistics highlight the positive downward trend shown elsewhere with the lowest number of exclusions and opening lost in the last 5 years.

As reported to Committee in February 2009 reasons for exclusion in special schools relate to issues of personal safety to staff and pupils and this sanction is never taken without full consultation with parents and carers and other professionals.

4 COMMENTARY

- 4.1 As in previous years exclusion rates were highest during November and March
- 4.2 Over the past three years the top five categories of exclusion were:
 - Verbal abuse of a member of staff
 - General or persistent disobedience
 - Physical assault with no weapon against a pupil
 - Fighting
 - Insolent or offensive behaviour
- 4.3 In the primary sector in 2008-2009, 21 schools had no exclusions, 15 had less than 5 exclusions and in only two schools were there 10 or more exclusions. In the secondary sector exclusions per pupils ranged from one exclusion for every 19.5 pupils to one exclusion for every 7.1 pupils.

4.4 Schools are supported by Educational Psychologists through the use of a range of strategies aimed at reducing exclusions, and challenged by Quality Improvement Officers who have access to exclusion statistics and performance management information which becomes the focus of professional dialogue about school exclusions and how best to reduce them. Youth Strategy staff work with young people with more challenging behaviour, again with the aim of keeping them in the system and supporting their learning.

4.5 Strategies at the disposal of schools include:

Framework For Intervention: approaches that help individual class teachers better manage their classroom environment in a manner that reduces low level disruptive behaviour and stops it escalating towards serious behaviours that may result in exclusions.

Restorative Practices: this approach engenders a culture and a philosophy within a school (or any other context) that allows the consequences of disruptive, unacceptable and difficult behaviours to be dealt with in a manner that supports perpetrators in taking responsibility for their behaviours and in developing a more constructive pattern of social behaviours. This can be most helpful in helping deal with incidents that may lead to exclusions as well as providing a most constructive context for the re-introduction back into school after an exclusion. In schools where RP is well established there are examples of the young people themselves using RP approaches to solve problems without adult involvement.

Cool in School: this social skills training pack can be very useful in giving teachers a structured way of developing appropriate and constructive social interaction and relationship skills amongst young people as well as between adults and young people. Better social skills reduce the likelihood of exclusions.

CPI Training: day one of the CPI training offers an excellent framework for staff in understanding 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.

Solution Oriented Schools: SO training 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 an exclusion may be the end result.

Nurture Classes: although Nurture classes are targeted at the early end of the school age group, where they work well they can create a framework that will help the healthy development of a young person who may otherwise be likely destined to have a dysfunctional relationship with school and society. This population are the one that is at the highest risk of school exclusion at an older age.

- 4.6 **Youth Strategy** 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 our young people present with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and without support would face the prospect of future exclusions from their school.

The key to success lies not only in the work within a school but the support offered to parents and carers by our social work team and teaching staff who will meet regularly with families to discuss and model parenting skills.

School-college link and volunteering are just two examples of partnership working that enable our young people to extend their own abilities and interests and gain recognition for their 'attainments and achievements' in preparation for participation in wider society.

Youth Strategy itself operates a "No Exclusion" policy. In practice this means that even our most challenging or self-excluding young people are educated at home or at another appropriate venue.

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.

5 POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is linked to the Community Planning focus on Promoting Lifelong Learning.

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 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 of Educational and Social Services
July 2009

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Kenneth McKinlay, Principal
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IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

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