

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 22 MARCH 2005

EXCLUSIONS 2003/2004

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Members of the levels of school exclusion during session 2003/2004 and the action being undertaken to manage exclusions.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Every year the Scottish Executive collects information related to exclusion from schools and publishes this data. Along with a small number of other statistics, the level of exclusions is seen as an important measure of service provision within schools. Changes in the law mean that all children, including those who are formally excluded from school, are entitled to an education. It is therefore important to limit the number of exclusions, and this has always been an important area of policy for East Ayrshire Council.
- 2.2 There continues to be media interest in school exclusions and related high profile cases, both in Scotland and within the UK. In public announcements, both UK Ministers and Scottish Ministers state that they will support headteachers in the proper use of the exclusion sanction. Such statements do not mark a significant policy change at either national or local authority levels.

3. EXCLUSION STATISTICS

- 3.1 The exclusion statistics for East Ayrshire Council for 2003-2004 have been forwarded, as required to the Scottish Executive. The statistics are broken down by sector for:
- Gender
 - Whether temporary or permanent
 - Duration
 - Number per pupil
 - Reason for exclusion
 - Ethnic background

3.2 The summary of the data is as follows:

2003-04	Incidents	Openings
Exclusions for Primary Schools	205	1269
Exclusions from Special Schools	11	76
Exclusions from Secondary Schools	1285	7891
Total	1501	9236

This was an increase on the number of incidents and openings compared to 2001-02 and 2002-03, but not compared to 2000-01. If the number of pupils who were excluded for 20 openings or more were removed from the data, then 1485 incidents occurred with 8723 openings lost (a significant reduction on the total).

3.3 The key features of the statistics sent to the Scottish Executive are:

- There was a total of 1501 exclusions, all of which were temporary
- There were 205 (14%) exclusions from primary school, 11 (0.7%) from special schools and 1285 (86%) from secondary schools.
- 324 (22 %) of the exclusions were attributable to girls and 1177 (78%) were attributable to boys.
- Only 92 (6%) exclusions exceeded one school week in duration.
- A total of 701 (3.8%) pupils were excluded out of a population of approximately 18,500. Of these, 327 (47%) were excluded more than once.
- 49 exclusions (3%) were accounted for by children from ethnic minorities including those of unknown or indeterminate ethnic background. In terms of known ethnicity 20 (1%) were from identifiable ethnic minority populations.
- 2 (0.1%) exclusions were the result of racist incidents.

The most common reasons given for exclusion were:

- Physical abuse of fellow pupils – 345 (23%)
- Physical abuse of staff – 55 (3%)
- Verbal abuse of staff – 276 (18%)
- Aggressive behaviour – 114 (8%)
- Persistent disobedience/disruptive behaviour – 374 (25%)
- Insolence – 149 (10%)

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 These figures indicate that exclusion is a sanction that applies to only 3.8% of pupils and that it continues to be used sparingly by head teachers. They also show that contrary to some sensational media coverage, the vast majority of pupils are well behaved and that schools are running in an atmosphere of positive discipline. This view is supported by the statistics on attainment which have been the subject of various reports to the Committee.

- 4.2** Generally, the reasons for exclusion are of concern, since all of the categories highlighted above in paragraph 3.3 reflect some form of aggression, insolence or inability of the children concerned to work in harmony with others. The creation in young people of tolerant attitudes based on self-respect and co-operation is a central aim of education as the result of a responsible dialogue between adults and young people. Moreover such ideas are linked to citizenship and working with others which are key educational priorities for this Council. Initiatives such as Circle Time, enterprise education and the promotion of the Arts, all of which have been reported to Committee are likely to assist in limiting these causes of exclusion. Equally, the Framework for Intervention initiative which directly supports staff is proving helpful in this general context.
- 4.3** The data indicates that boys are almost four times as likely as girls to be excluded. This data is consistent over a number of years and is well known nationally and internationally. Further work continues to take place on this matter at national and local level.
- 4.4** The extremely low levels of exclusion of children from ethnic minority backgrounds would indicate that while there can never be complacency on this aspect of the data, there is no obvious need for any additional action programme. Similarly, the low level of racist incidents apparent in the exclusion figures is reassuring, and shows that there are benefits in anti-racist education. These programmes should continue.

5. ACTION UNDERTAKEN

- 5.1** The majority of the increase in exclusions occurred within the secondary sector. Thus, an action plan was put in place to deal with this matter.

All secondary schools were asked to report on the reasons for the rise in exclusions. The schools have reported that there appears to be an increase in the number of pupils with severe and complex difficulties, with an increase of pupils who are apparently disturbed and distressed; of an increase in physical abuse of fellow pupils; and of an increase in persistent disruptive behaviour.

There also appear to be a small number of pupils who have been excluded a number of times and who appear to have serious difficulties, both within and outwith school. Alternative provision continues to be explored for such pupils on an active basis.

- 5.2** All secondary school submitted an action plan to deal with issues related to exclusion for 2004-05. These were submitted to the Head of Service: Schools Support and considered by the Pathways to Inclusion Group. Suggestions for action were provided to each school.
- 5.3** Monitoring of exclusions from each school is taking place on a monthly basis. The analysis for secondary schools of exclusion incidents per 100 pupils and the openings lost per 100 pupils for the period August – February for the last 6 years are as follows:

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Exclusion Incidents	7.0	8.5	6.6	6.6	9.1	7.9
Openings Lost	99.4	127.5	80.1	76.2	53.0	43.6

Comparison with all previous years shows that the number of openings lost has been reduced, which means that pupils are not being excluded for lengthy periods of times but only as a matter of necessity. It also shows a significant improvement on the number of incidents occurring.

Further action is being undertaken with a seminar on Improving Behaviour for school staff in the near future.

6. FINANCIAL/POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Continue to support initiatives that promote the promotion of positive discipline in schools
- (ii) Ask the Director of Educational and Social Services to provide further information at the end of the school session.
- (iii) Otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/EO'N
7 March 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service:
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