

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 16 SEPTEMBER 2003**

#### **EXCLUSIONS 2002/2003**

##### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To advise Members of the levels of school exclusion during session 2002/2003

### **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 A number of high profile cases south of the border have drawn attention to school exclusions. In public announcements this has led both UK Ministers and Scottish Ministers to 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 2002-2003 have been forwarded, as required to the Scottish Executive. The statistics are broken down by:

Sector

- Gender
- Whether temporary or permanent
- Duration
- Number per pupil
- Ethnic background
- Reason for exclusion

- 3.2** The key features of the statistics sent to the Scottish Executive are:
- There was a total of 1124 exclusions all of which were temporary
  - There were 185 (17%) exclusions from primary school, 15 (1%) from special schools and 924 (82%) from secondary schools.
  - 209 (19 %) of the exclusions were attributable to girls and 915 (81%) were attributable to boys.
  - Only 64 exclusions exceeded one school week in duration.
  - A total of 609 pupils were excluded out of a population of approximately 18,500. Of these, 240 (39%) were excluded more than once.
  - 33 exclusions (3%) were accounted for by children from ethnic minorities including those of unknown or indeterminate ethnic background. In terms of known ethnicity 13 (1%) were from identifiable ethnic minority populations.
  - 7 (0.6%) exclusions were the result of racist incidents.
  - The most common reasons given for exclusion were:
    - ◆ Physical abuse of fellow pupils – 189 (17%)
    - ◆ Verbal abuse of staff – 253 (22%)
    - ◆ Aggressive behaviour – 111 (10%)
    - ◆ Persistent disobedience – 199 (18%)
    - ◆ Insolence – 102 (9%)

## **4. ANALYSIS**

- 4.1** These figures indicate that exclusion is a sanction that is being 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 are the subject of a separate report to Committee.
- 4.2** The reasons for exclusion are however of concern, since all of the categories highlighted above in paragraph 3.2 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 figures do show that boys are 4 times as likely as girls to be excluded. This aspect of the data is well known nationally and internationally. Further research work and planning on this matter is required.

**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, but shows that there are benefits in anti-racist education. These programmes should continue.

**4.5** These figures will be of interest to both young people and parents. It may therefore be beneficial to discuss these statistics, and their implications with the Student Council and representative parent's group, including School Boards.

## **5. FINANCIAL/POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** Nil

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.1** 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 make arrangements for the discussion of this information at the Pupil Council and with parents including School Boards; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/GRS  
31 August 2003

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service: Quality Improvement, (01563-576089).

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

**Implementation Officer: Graham Short**