

Report to Cabinet

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| Title: | Children's Select Committee - Permanent Exclusions Inquiry |
| Date: | Monday 10 September 2018 |
| Date can be implemented: | Tuesday 18 September 2018 |
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For press enquiries concerning this report, please contact the media office on 01296 382444

Summary

In 2015/16 permanent exclusions in Buckinghamshire primary and secondary schools increased by 100% on the previous academic year, with a further increase of 6% in 2016/17. Department for Education (DfE) data for 2015/16 showed Buckinghamshire as one of the highest permanently excluding authorities in England.

The Children's Services Select Committee agreed to undertake an Inquiry into this issue as members wanted to understand the reasons underlying the significant increase in the number of pupils being permanently excluded and to investigate what support was available to pupils and their parents/carers in this situation. The Committee also hoped to identify good practice in reducing and preventing permanent exclusions.

The Inquiry Team visited schools and professionals across Buckinghamshire. They conducted interviews with head teachers and inclusion staff in secondary and primary schools, the primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units and met families affected by permanent exclusion. They also met senior officers from Children's and Education Services.

The Inquiry Team found evidence of a strong commitment from both head teachers and Council officers alike to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and it was noted that the indicative permanent exclusion rate for 2017/18 was reducing. The attached report (Appendix 1) details the Committee's key findings and recommendations. It is hoped that the following recommendations will support the work already being undertaken by the Council, Schools and other partners and drive further improvements.

Recommendation

1: That Early Help representation should be part of the Bucks Inclusion Hub to ensure families and pupils experiencing difficulties or needing access to additional services get the early help they need

2: That:

- a) a series of workshops 'Towards Better Behaviour, Sharing Best Practice' should be offered on selected INSET days during the academic year 2018/19, to be attended by all head teachers, their INCOs/SENCOs and chairs of governors with the possibility of rolling out the programme on a wider basis; and**
- b) senior leadership teams across all schools in Buckinghamshire should be strongly encouraged to attend BCC-commissioned behaviour training (for example, Behaviour Network Meetings) and to include low-level disruptive behaviour training as a standard element in their school.**

3: That:

- a) BCC guidance and toolkit templates should be reviewed immediately if there are any changes to national guidance or legal advice. Any changes should be made within 5 working days at a minimum and communicated to head teachers and governors within the same time period; and**
- b) the toolkit should be removed from the schools website when amendments are being uploaded to ensure version control integrity and prevent out of date material being used by schools.**

4: That, through the Side by Side project, the BCC SEN Team facilitates and supports schools in setting up regular SEN audits using a system-led model to ensure that their policies and procedures are compliant with legislation and regulations and in line with current best practice.

5: That Education Service officers:

- a) more effectively promote and signpost guidance to schools to help them to identify, within statutory requirements, how much information and evidence to include on Education Health and Care Plan forms ; and**
- b) review communications to head teachers concerning alternative provision opportunities through the SEND Local Offer to ensure all avenues are being explored when pupils are in imminent danger of being permanently excluded.**

6: That, as part of the review of the outcomes of SENDIAN pilot, the Education Service should also review the impact and value of a 'named' Educational Psychologist for schools and explore ways in which mixed primary and secondary school clusters could be set up to achieve this objective where budgets allow.

7: That, as part of its work on the Inclusion Hub, officers should facilitate formal locally-based networks of head teachers to support each other on permanent exclusion issues.

8: That the BCC website is further strengthened to make it more user-friendly for parents. This should include: a link to a permanent exclusion Q&A format or leaflet for parents whose child has been permanently excluded; and signposting to a range of advocacy services to help parents negotiate the permanent exclusion process, an approach which is favoured by other local authorities.

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

Please see Appendix 1 for the full Inquiry report.

B. Other options available, and their pros and cons

See report attached.

C. Resource implications

The resource implications of all recommendations are to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the Inquiry Report.

D. Value for Money (VfM) Self Assessment

See above

E. Legal implications

N/A

F. Property implications

N/A

G. Other implications/issues

N/A

H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

N/A

I. Communication issues

Cabinet's response to the recommendations will be published.

J. Progress Monitoring

Where recommendations are agreed by Cabinet, the lead officer for each recommendation will be asked to provide a written progress update to the lead Cabinet Member. The Cabinet Member and relevant officers will be invited to the Select Committee to follow-up on the progress of the recommendations at 6 & 12 months.

K. Review

See above

Background Papers

Minutes of meeting of Children's Select Committee 5th Dec 2017

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/g9304/Public%20minutes%2005th-Dec-2017%2010.30%20Childrens%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=11>

Minutes of meeting of Children's Select Committee 10th July 2018

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/g9765/Printed%20minutes%2010th-Jul-2018%2010.30%20Childrens%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on Friday 7 September. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343), or e-mail to democracy@buckscc.gov.uk