

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 15th April 2015

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WARD(S): All

PART I

FOR COMMENT AND CONSIDERATION

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide information on the exclusions procedures followed by Slough schools, the systems in place to reduce exclusions, information on the number of exclusions across Slough in comparison to national figures and how parents can access support and advice.

The report will address the following issues raised by Members for discussion:

- Publication of policy and procedure around exclusions
- How to ensure all schools follow a uniform exclusion procedure regardless of type of school
- The role and responsibility of Slough Borough Council (SBC) officers and councillors.
- Guidance for parents regarding exclusion policy and procedures

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to note the report and comment.

3. The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

The JSNA highlights the educational successes across the town and its relationship with other aspects of life. The JSNA examines outcomes at each life stage from entry into school, through transition to secondary school and work based learning. It gives particular attention to those who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) and those at risk of NEET with consideration to how this group can be supported for their own benefit and that of the community.

3a. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- Economy and Skills

If pupils cannot access education, this will affect their long term prospects and opportunities. The immediate and lasting adverse impact from being out of school relate to educational attainment and progress.

- Health and Wellbeing

It is important for pupils' health and well being that they are able to attend school and participate.

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The work on preventing exclusions and brokering managed moves will help ensure that children and young people in Slough will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

(b) Risk Management

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Risk/Threat/Opportunity</i>	<i>Mitigation(s)</i>
<i>This is an information report</i>	<i>There is a risk that the number of excluded pupils or pupils not receiving education grows and schools become more resistant in admitting challenging pupils.</i>	<i>The panels referred to in the report and the School Access Officer are flexible and work closely with schools to meet the changing needs within the Slough area, working to ensure children are in school and being educated appropriately.</i>

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no significant Human Rights Act or other legal implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no need for an equalities impact assessment.

(e) Workforce

There are no workforce implications.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 DfE published a guide on exclusions in 2012. The guide was for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusions, which includes head teachers, governing bodies and local authorities. It was circulated to schools and is referred to in discussions about exclusions. A copy can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269681/Exclusion_from_maintained_schools_academies_and_pupil_referral_units.pdf

This guidance is adhered to across the Local Authority by all the schools and Slough Borough Council. In this regard, all Slough schools follow a uniform procedure regardless of their type. The Local Authority does not publicise any additional documentation to that of the national guidance. However, most schools and academies provide information about this guidance on their websites under headings related to behaviour and exclusions.

5.2 The 2012 guidance is still in force. DfE had released an updated version which should have come into force on 5 January 2015, but this was withdrawn following complaints from lawyers that it would result in more children being excluded. In the 2012 guidance, permanent exclusion is considered as a last resort. It states: 'permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the school's behaviour policy; and where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school'. However, this is not referred to in the new proposed guidance which has been withdrawn.

5.3 All Slough schools, academies and officers work closely together to reduce permanent exclusions as far as possible within the guidance referred to above. There is not a separate exclusions policy for Slough, as the national guidance applies to all schools, but there is a borough wide commitment to reduce the number of exclusions as far as possible. There are 2 panels which meet on a monthly basis to consider the most vulnerable pupils who are at risk of exclusion or out of education. The PEAR (Pupils Educationally at Risk) panel considers secondary pupils and primary pupils are discussed at the Behaviour Panel. Both receive referrals from all schools including Academies and include representatives from schools and other agencies and are chaired by the Head of School Services and Access. The intention at each panel meeting is to decide on the next steps for all pupils who are presented, so that they continue to be engaged in appropriate education. In most cases this is achieved.

5.4 In addition to the panel meetings, a School Access Officer is employed to manage a caseload of pupils at risk of exclusion or out of school. The School Access Officer provides advice and guidance for parents and has a close working relationship with most schools. This enables solutions to be found in many cases where pupils are at risk of exclusion and occasionally involves challenging schools where exclusion may not have been an appropriate response. The School Access Officer follows the Fair Access and Managed Moves Protocol, which is attached as Appendix B. The School Access Officer's role is to prevent exclusions as far as possible by intervening before a permanent exclusion takes place. Additional support can be provided for schools or the pupil can be transferred to alternative education or another mainstream school. These are referred to as managed moves and must have the support of the parents. The School Access Officer is also responsible for providing education for those who have already been excluded, as well ensuring as far as possible that persistent non-attenders and pupils who are not on roll are provided with education as soon as possible. Pupils can only be deleted from the roll of a school in very specific circumstances, which are covered by regulations. The School Access Officer's caseload has increased in recent years. During the 2012-13 academic year there were 88 cases. In 2013-14 this had grown to 117 and so far in the 2014-15 academic year there have been 105 cases. It is likely that this is due to a growing school population and higher levels of need. It is intended that a detailed analysis will be

completed at the end of the current academic year, comparing 2013/14 to 2014/15. This will be used to review how referrals are made to the School Access Officer by schools and what it is showing about challenging behaviour across schools. This will be shared as appropriate to inform practice. There is an example of a typical case attached as Appendix A.

5.5 Clearly, the Local Authority, through Cambridge Education, has an important role in ensuring procedures are adhered to and that partnership working takes place with schools to ensure that as few as possible exclusions are implemented and where pupils are excluded then there is timely intervention to ensure a return to school or a different school as soon as possible. Parents can challenge a permanent exclusion with the governing body. If the governors agree with the head teacher's decision about exclusion, parents can appeal to the Local Authority or the Academy Trust if the school is an academy. The Local Authority is then required to set up an Independent Review Panel to consider the appeal.

5.6 The Elected Members are not involved directly in these processes. However, clearly Elected Members have a role in overseeing this work to ensure that as far as possible pupils are provided with appropriate education related to their needs and taking into account parental preference and the availability of places.

5.7 Slough's exclusion statistics compare well against national figures. The latest national figures available are for the 2012/13 academic year.

(a) **Fixed Term Exclusions:** Number of exclusions and percentage of school roll in brackets.

	2011/12 Slough	2012/13 Slough	2012/13 National	2013/14 Slough
Primary	159 (1.11)	72 (0.48)	(0.88)	81 (0.50)
Secondary	523 (5.13)	511 (4.98)	(6.75)	410 (3.93)

(b) **Permanent Exclusions:** Number of exclusions and percentage of school roll in brackets

	2011/12 Slough	2012/13 Slough	2012/13 National	2013/14 Slough
Primary	0	0	(0.02)	0
Secondary	9 (0.09)	9 (0.09)	(0.12)	0

DfE Figures 11/12 & 12/13
Slough Figures 13/14

National exclusion figures for 13/14 will be available in July 2015.

(c) **Statistical Neighbours:** Slough has 4 close statistical neighbours which are Hillingdon, Hounslow, Redbridge and Luton. For fixed term primary exclusions the proportion of the population excluded for these boroughs ranges from 0.40% to 0.54% with Slough at 0.48%. For secondary fixed term exclusions across these authorities the range is 4.71% to 7.21% with Slough at 4.98%. Primary permanent exclusion figures are zero in Slough and Luton and not recorded in the other boroughs as numbers are below recording

thresholds. For secondary permanent exclusions across these four authorities the range is 0.10 to 0.16% of the population with Slough at 0.09%.

(d) **Vulnerable Groups:** Children with SEN are one of the main vulnerable groups and one of the groups where significant numbers above the national average are excluded from schools and in some cases unacceptably. SEN statements nationally have remained the same over recent years; with a slight decrease recently in Slough. SEN pupils without statements have decreased nationally and locally over the last four years, mainly at School Action.

5.8 Slough schools have developed a culture of inclusivity over the last 15 years. This is about educating pupils wherever possible within the Local Authority in local mainstream schools of parental preference. This is specified in the Local Authority's Inclusion Policy (2010) and the Schools' Accessibility Strategy (2013-15). Associated with this approach to inclusion, emphasis has been placed on reducing as far as possible fixed term and permanent exclusion based on the importance of pupils being in school and in receipt of appropriate education to increase their educational success and life chances. The aspiration across the community of schools has been towards substantially reducing exclusions and achieving and maintaining zero exclusion wherever possible. This is something which has been achieved across the primary schools over the last five years. Slough schools have increased their capacity and capability in dealing with challenging behaviour which has reduced the need to exclude pupils. However, there are still some situations where exclusions are an appropriate and a necessary step to take where they are in the best interests of the pupil, other pupils and staff. Where this is required it is incumbent on the school to follow the national guidance to the letter for the protection of all involved.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

This information has not been considered by any other committees.

7. **Conclusion**

Slough has well established processes and procedures for preventing exclusions involving close working between officers, schools and panels. This has resulted in lower levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions in comparison to national figures. There are now fewer pupils out of school and for shorter periods of time compared with previously; and more pupils engaged in meaningful and appropriate education which contributes to the overall success of the Authority in improving educational standards at all Key Stages.

Key issues for the Authority:

- Maintain the low levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions across the Authority.
- Recognise and celebrate this sustained success in maintaining such low levels of exclusions.
- Share the good practice between schools and with other authorities.
- Be vigilant in ensuring that the guidance is adhered to and applied consistently across the town.

8. **Appendices**

'A' -Case Study

'B' - Secondary Fair Access & Managed Transfer Protocol

9. **Background Papers**

DfE Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England (2012) at website:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269681/Exclusion_from_maintained_schools_academies_and_pupil_referral_units.pdf

Local Authority's Inclusion Policy (2010)

Schools' Accessibility Strategy (2013-15)