

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

28th September, 2023

Report of the Head of Education Development – Chris Millis

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All

PUPIL EXCLUSIONS FROM SCHOOLS

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with information and data in relation to pupil exclusion rates for Neath Port Talbot schools for the 2022/23 academic year.

Background

2. Pupils can only be excluded from school for disciplinary reasons. They cannot be excluded because a school cannot meet their needs or for something which their parents did or did not do. Only the headteacher can make a decision to exclude a pupil. Pupils should be given an opportunity to present their case before this decision is made.
3. The Welsh Government guidance document "Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units" states that "a decision to exclude a learner should be taken only in response to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy and if allowing the learner to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the learner or others in the school".

4. There are two types of exclusion: permanent and fixed. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for a short period of time, must be formally and accurately recorded. 'Informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending a pupil home to cool off are unlawful. Unlawful exclusion of a pupil with a disability may amount to disability discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
5. A decision to exclude a pupil from school permanently is a serious one. It will usually be the final step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences following a wide range of other strategies, which have been tried without success. Examples of such reasons might include: serious actual or threatened violence against another pupil or a member of staff; sexual abuse or assault; supplying an illegal drug; use or threatened use of an offensive weapon.
6. Early identification of need along with early intervention should be used to support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This should include: an assessment of whether appropriate support is in place to support any additional learning need or disability that a pupil may have and the use of a multi-agency assessment for pupils who require support with behavioural issues.
7. Exclusions from schools needs to be looked at in the wider context including, adverse childhood experiences, links to poverty, the impact of education funding, reduction in grants, a high number of movers into the area with complex needs and how schools/headteachers are held accountable.
8. A number of headteachers have reported a notable increase in behavioural issues by pupils since their return to school following the Covid pandemic which in turn has had a consequential increase in the number of exclusions issued.

Exclusion Data

9. For the 2022/23 academic year the number of pupils given a fixed exclusion was 760. This is a 39% increase from 2018/19 (last full year pre-Covid) where 545 pupils were given a fixed exclusion.
10. The rise in exclusions from 2018/19 to 2022/23 is markedly different between boys and girls with boys exclusion rates increasing by 22% (93 additional exclusions) and girls by a 92% (122 additional exclusions). Whilst there remain more exclusions of boys than of girls the gap between the two has narrowed significantly from three times as many to twice as many (66% and 33% respectively).

11. There is little difference between FSM and non-FSM pupils in terms of the number of pupils given fixed-term exclusions. This mirrors the position from 2018/19.
12. There is a negligible increase in percentage terms of CLA (Children Looked After) pupils subject to a fixed exclusion; in headcount terms this equates to 49 pupils. The proportion of the number of days CLA pupils are excluded in comparison to the overall total number of fixed days for all pupils has fallen since 2018/19 from 11.2% to 8.6%.
13. The number of pupils with a formal SEN/ALN status (School Action, School Action+, Statemented, School or LA maintained IDP) who received a fixed-term exclusion during 2022/23 fell by 14% compared to 2018/19. This is likely to be a temporary reduction as schools and local authorities across Wales transition to the new requirements of the ALNET system (Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal).
14. Year's 8, 9, and 10 were the cohort year groups with the highest number of exclusions throughout the year. The same three year groups had the highest number of exclusions in 2018/19.
15. Persistent disruptive behaviour was the reason for the highest number of exclusions during the year. Followed by verbal/threatening behaviour towards an adult. Persistent disruptive behaviour has seen a significant increase since 2018/19 accounting for 597 incidences of exclusions during 2022/23.
16. 47 pupils were permanently excluded from school in 2022/23. This is an increase from 19 the previous year and from 17 during 2018/19.
17. Boys are repeatedly permanently excluded more than girls, however, as with fixed-term exclusions the ratio has reduced from 3:1 in 2018/19 to 2:1 in 2022/23 with a significant increase in the number of girls being excluded. Girls accounted for 50% of all permanent exclusions during 2022/23 whereas they accounted for just 25% of permanent exclusions in 2018/19.
18. There were increases in permanent exclusions of both FSM and CLA pupils, however, the increase of both categories were in proportion to the increase of exclusions across the wider pupil population of both 2018/19 and 2022/23. FSM pupils accounted for 80% majority of permanent exclusions during the year. This follows a similar trend in 2018/19.
19. In a similar vain to the picture of fixed exclusions, the percentage increase of pupils with a formal SEN/ALN status (School Action,

School Action+, Statemented, School or LA maintained IDP) who were permanently excluded was lower than those pupils who did not have any SEN/ALN. This is likely to be a temporary reduction as schools and local authorities across Wales transition to the new requirements of the ALNET system (Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal). The number of pupils permanently excluded with a formal SEN/ALN status increased by 7 to 22, whilst the number of pupils without increased by 24 to 27.

20. The majority of pupils permanently excluded were in the Year 9 cohort followed by the Year 10 cohort.
21. The majority of the reasons for the permanent exclusions during the 2022/23 year related to physical violence towards a pupil or persistent disruptive behaviour.
22. While the figures present a challenging picture it must be remembered that many schools are doing excellent work to avoid exclusions and support those vulnerable learners and marginalised groups to succeed within our education system.

How do we compare across Wales

23. Exclusion data across Wales has not yet been published for the period up to 2022/23 that this report refers to. The most recent national data available relates to 2020/21, however, Members will be aware that during this period the country was subject to several lockdowns and regular pupil attendance at school was severely affected. The last officially published full year exclusion data, therefore, relates to academic year 2018/19.
24. Welsh Government measures exclusions rates per 1,000 of the pupil population in three areas: permanent exclusions, fixed exclusions over 5 days in length and fixed exclusions less than 5 days in length. Over the three years to 2021/22 Neath Port Talbot has been in the lower half of the Welsh average in all three areas.
25. Anecdotal evidence from officer conversations with colleagues in other local authorities suggests that many other local authorities have seen a significant increase in behavioural issues over the past year or two and exclusion rates have increased across Wales. To what extent is yet to be understood.

Alternatives to avoiding exclusion

26. Exclusion should not be used if alternative solutions are available. Examples include:
- Pastoral Support Programmes (PSPs) for pupils who are not responding to schools' general actions to combat disengagement and disaffection and are in need of longer-term intervention. PSPs are plans for learners to better manage their behaviour and should be drawn up using a multi-agency approach (including the pupil and parents/carers) and reviewed on a regular basis. NPT guidance on PSPs has recently been reviewed and issued to schools and the local authority now has in place a PSP Monitoring Group comprising of senior officers who undertake a critical oversight of individual plans to ensure suitable arrangements are in place and pupils are not on inappropriate reduced timetables.
 - Internal exclusion, which can be used to diffuse situations that occur in school that require a pupil to be removed from class but may not require exclusion from the school premises. The exclusion could be to a designated area within the school where pupils can receive the appropriate support needed and may continue during break periods.
 - Managed move: if a school feels that it can no longer meet the need of a particular pupil, the school may arrange, normally through the LA, for another school to take over the pupil's education. This should only be done with the full agreement of all parties involved, including the parents/carers and the local authority. Schools are responsible for ensuring appropriate transition support is in place.
 - Restorative justice, which gives pupils the opportunity to redress the harm that has been done to a victim and enables all parties with a stake in the outcome to participate fully in the process. All professionals need to be involved in the process and all parties must consent to participate.
 - Access to a more appropriate curriculum that better meets the needs of pupils. This can include vocational training or work placement.
27. Within NPT a great deal of work is being undertaken across services to address pupils' needs more holistically, to remove barriers to learning and address their wider needs. Examples of this include:

- Creation of a new Case Assessment and Progression Team that will identify pupils at future risk of detachment from school and/or those who are struggling with behavioural problems, academic achievement, attendance and exclusion challenges that are already open to more than one service area and who would benefit from a co-ordinated and collective approach to supporting that pupil with solutions that will allow continued engagement.
- Education Transition Workers engaging directly with pupils who need support at key points of transition in order to improve engagement, reduce the risk of exclusion and ensure a successful passage into a new school/placement. The main focus are: Children/young people moving into the LA and in-year transfers with complex needs; Children/young people who have been permanently excluded from school within the LA, and Children/young people who are Looked After and movers into the LA.
- Wellbeing Team & Cynnydd support pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), undertaking direct work with pupils, families and schools, along with training and strategic multi-agency working around areas linked to wellbeing & behaviour. Helping schools and services understand the drivers of behaviour is the most important aspect of this.
- Multi-agency and cross service/directorate working is continually improving and developing, for example education sit on Early Intervention Panel (EIP); Social Services colleagues sit on the Education PSP Monitoring Group and Police continue to share important information regarding domestic incidents involving children via PPNs (Public Protection Notifications).

Financial Impact

28. There is no financial impact associated with this proposal.

Integrated Impact Assessment

29. There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes only.

Valleys Communities Impacts

30. The report is for information purposes only, however, the exclusion data contained within the report covers all schools across Neath Port Talbot.

Workforce Impacts

31. There are no workforce or staffing issues directly associated with this report.

Legal Impacts

32. There is no legal impact associated with this report.

Risk Management

33. There are no risks associated with this information report, however, Members will be fully aware of the educational risks for those pupils subject to being excluded from school and likewise, the detrimental impact disruptive behaviour has on other pupils wishing to learn.

Consultation

34. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

35. That Members note the contents of this report.

Appendices

36. Appendix A: List of schools with individual exclusion rates.

List of Background Papers

37. None.

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Appendix A

Academic Year 2022/23				
School Name	Number of Fixed Term Exclusions	Number of Fixed Term Exclusions per 100 pupils	No. of Pupils given Fixed Exclusions per 100 pupils	No. of Days per 100 pupils
Abbey Primary				
Alderman Davies Church-in-Wales Primary	2	0.7	0.3	1.7
Alltwen Primary				
Awel y Môr Primary				
Baglan Primary				
Blaenbaglan Primary				
Blaendulais Primary	7	6.4	1.8	22.3
Blaengwrach Primary	1	0.7	0.7	1.8
Blaenhonddan Primary				
Bryncoch Church-in-Wales Primary				
Catwg Primary				
Central Primary	6	1.3	0.6	4.3
Cilffriw Primary				
Coed Hirwaun Primary				
Coedffranc Primary				
Creunant Primary				
Croeserw Primary	17	10.8	5.1	10.8
Crymlyn Primary				
Crynallt Primary	58	14.2	2.4	18.1
Cwmafan Primary	5	1.2	1.0	3.3
Cwmnedd Primary	3	1.6	0.5	3.1
Cymer Afan Primary	1	1.0	1.0	0.5
Eastern Primary	13	7.3	3.4	13.8
Glyncorwg Primary				
Gnoll Primary				
Godre'rgraig Primary	2	1.6	0.8	3.1
Llangiwig Primary	1	1.0	1.0	0.5
Maesmarchog Community Primary	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
Melin Primary				
Pen Afan Primary				
Rhos Primary				
Rhydyfro Primary	5	3.0	1.8	6.0
Sandfields Primary				
St Joseph's Catholic Infant				
St Joseph's Catholic Junior	1	0.7	0.7	0.7
St Joseph's Catholic Primary	1	0.8	0.8	2.1
St Therese's Catholic Primary				

Tairgwaith Primary	1	1.0	1.0	1.9
Tonnau Primary Community				
Tywyn Primary				
Wauanceirch Primary				
YGG Blaendulais	2	2.1	1.0	6.3
YGG Castell-nedd	7	1.7	0.7	3.2
YGG Cwm Nedd				
YGG Gwaun Cae Gurwen	7	3.6	1.6	7.8
YGG Pontardawe	1	0.3	0.3	0.9
YGG Rhosafan				
YGG Tyle'r Ynn				
YGG Cwmllynfell				
YGG Trebannws	6	5.9	2.9	16.7
YGG Tregeles				
Ynysfach Primary	19	11.3	2.4	19.0
Ysgol Carreg Hir	2	0.5	0.5	0.3
Ysgol Bae Baglan (Yrs 1-6)	5	1.7	1.0	1.5
Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur (Yrs 1-6)	2	1.4	1.4	2.1
Ysgol Cwm Brombil (Yrs 1-6)	6	2.4	1.2	3.2
Ysgol Bae Baglan	344	28.7	9.7	70.8
Ysgol Gymraeg Ystalyfera-Bro Dur	77	5.5	3.8	8.9
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive	295	34.6	10.8	61.7
Cwmtawe Community School	93	7.9	5.1	33.7
Dwr y Felin Comprehensive	92	8.2	3.9	22.4
Llangatwg Community School	102	13.5	7.4	33.4
St Joseph's Catholic School & 6th Form Centre	279	31.2	10.8	66.6
Ysgol Cwm Brombil	332	29.0	10.8	49.7
Ysgol Hendrefelin	127	82.5	30.5	142.9
Ysgol Maes Y Coed				

Permanent Exclusions

YGG Gwaun Cae Gurwen	1
Cefn Saeson Comprehensive	3
Cwmtawe Community School	8
Dwr y Felin Comprehensive	8
Llangatwg Community School	6
St Joseph's Catholic School & 6th Form Centre	11
Ysgol Bae Baglan	2
Ysgol Cwm Brombil	10