

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

11 October 2012

SCHOOL EXCLUSION AND ATTENDANCE

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report is to update the Panel in relation to school attendance and exclusion including comparative data.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Scrutiny Panel notes the increase in school exclusions during the last academic year and the steps being taken to reduce exclusions.

2.2 That Scrutiny Panel notes the positive performance in relation to school attendance across the authority and officer activity that supports the schools in this issue.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Since May 2010 there have been significant changes in the governance arrangements for schools with changed responsibilities for the local authority. All three secondary schools moved to academy status and this appears to have impacted on the way that school absence and exclusion was managed within schools.

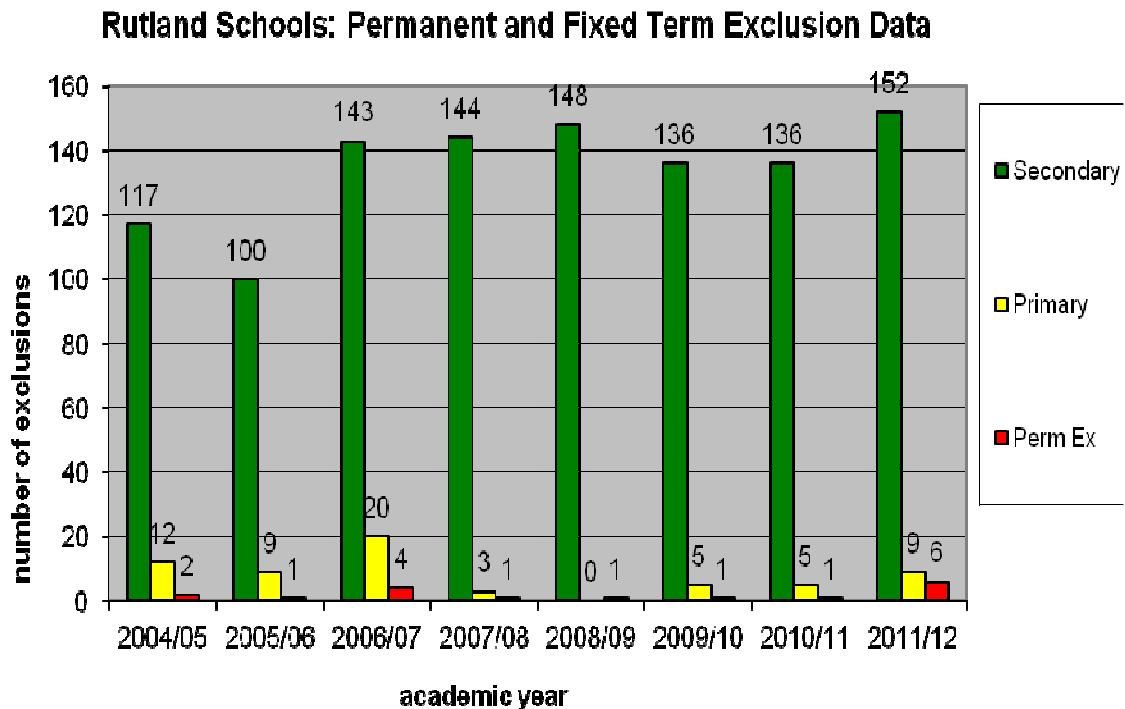
3.2 The duties of the local authority:

- To regularly access and monitor all attendance in schools and colleges by reviewing data held in school and interrogating the use of absence codes.
- To home visit persistently absent pupils.
- To monitor fixed term and permanent exclusions by collecting and holding relevant data.
- To attend Governor Disciplinary meetings to ensure Policy and Legislation is followed.
- To ensure that education is in place from day 6 of Exclusions and provide education from day 6 for permanently excluded students of compulsory school age.
- To facilitate the prosecution of Parents/carers under the Education Act.
- To regulate the Licensing of Child performance licensing and work permits where the issuing of licenses would impact on attendance at school.
- To investigate Children Missing Education.

- To collate attendance, absence and exclusion data for Department of Education collections.
- To ensure Permanently Excluded children living in Rutland but being educated out of County have access to support services and education after the 6th day of exclusion.

3.3 School exclusions

The table below shows the numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions since 2004. Prior to the conversion to academy status, a Behaviour and Attendance Partnership was in place with informal managed moves arrangements across the 3 secondary schools and cross border links with Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. Since academy status, 2 of the 3 academies have continued with managed moves. The cross border arrangements did not continue.



3.4 There were 6 permanent exclusions in this academic year (2011/12) compared to only 1 in the previous year. This seems to have been due to the reduced opportunities for managed moves and less referrals to the Engage Project. Key Stage 4 young people are especially hard to place in Year 11 due to the difficulty in aligning curriculum programmes. In addition, there is no specialist provision (such as a Pupil Referral Unit) within Rutland so options are limited for children who are permanently excluded. The School Inclusion Development Officer explores a range of options such as use of the Engage Project, Melton Learning Hub or 5 hours a week English and Maths tuition at VAR or home. This means that in practice, these small cohorts of children have their possibilities for academic achievements curtailed drastically at that stage.

3.5 Although the academies have continued to engage with the involvement of the School Inclusion Development Officer, this input did not stem the increase in exclusions this year. They are under increasing pressure to focus on academic achievement and they have to balance the needs of an individual pupil with the impact on the learning of other students. The local authority only has to be informed at the point of exclusion rather than when a student is at risk of exclusion. This could mean that the preventative work can be limited and the creative solutions that could be available with increased support / Common Assessment Framework or referral to social care are offered 'too late' with the likelihood of reduced success.

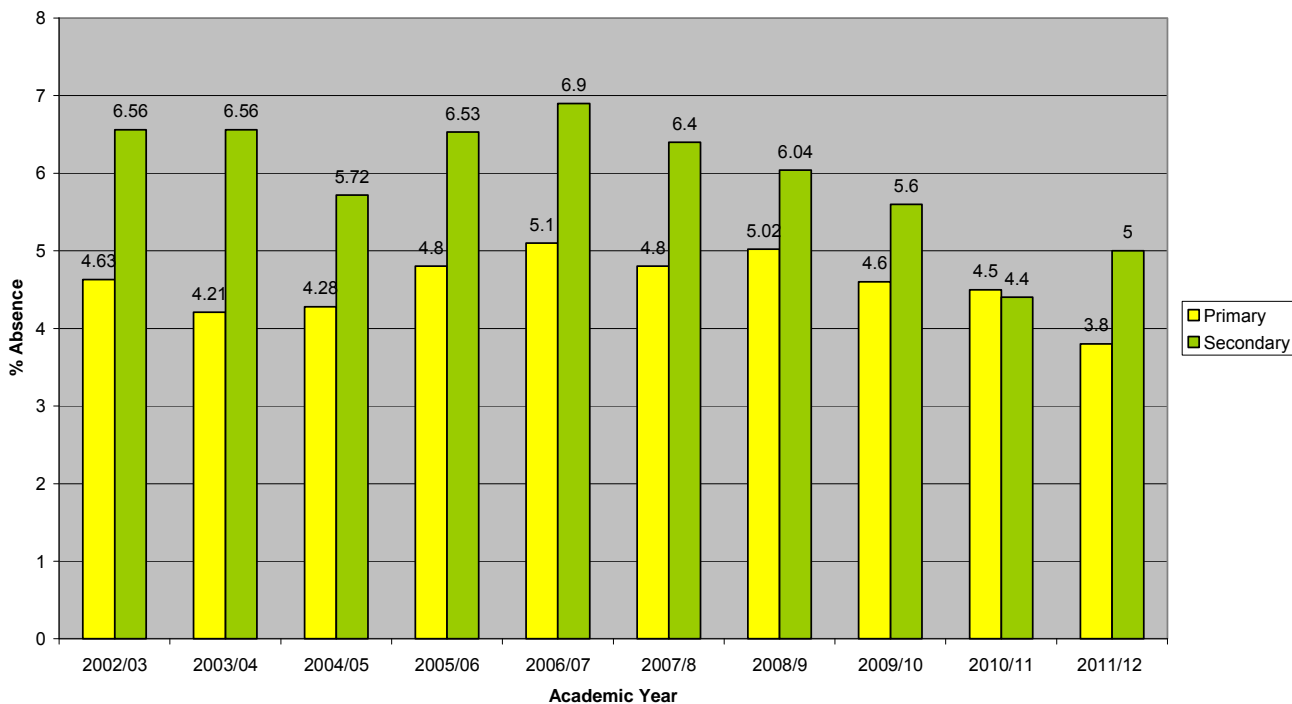
3.6 However, the academies have recognised that they need to collaborate and have proposed a 'hard to place' panel and sought local authority assistance to achieve this. In addition the School Inclusion Development Officer and the Inclusion Team continue to provide support, advice, and guidance as exclusion is often linked to behaviour and the school has to balance the needs of an individual child and the impact on the class or whole school. It is planned that this issue will be given further consideration in the work planned to improve Services to adolescents and their families.

3.7 Although the budget for excluded and home schooled pupils is not overspent, the costs for the last financial year increased considerably to a total of £11, 538.24 compared to zero costs in the previous year. The Local Authority can claim back the remaining Average Weighted Pupil Unit where students have been permanently excluded.

3.8 School absence

There has been a recent review commissioned by the government (Taylor Review April 2012) which addressed the need to publish school absence data, holding schools to account in OFSTED inspections, simplifying the penalty notice system and strengthening the rules governing leave of absence. The review also recommended that the current responsibility for prosecution does not remain solely with the local authority. Although it is not definitive that schools below 95% attendance would not be graded 'outstanding', this appears to be a minimum expectation with children below that level being deemed to need intervention to improve. Current national data differentiates between authorised and unauthorised absence and the absence rate in England is 6.52% authorised absence and 1.41% unauthorised absence.

Rutland Schools Percentage Absence Rates 2002/2012



3.9 The above table shows that this year’s performance across Rutland is 95% for the secondary schools and 96.2% for the primary schools.

3.10 Currently in Rutland, the School Improvement Development Officer (SIDO) becomes involved when a pupil’s attendance is below 87%. The comparative data in the above table shows that Rutland primary schools are generally on the cusp around 95% and for secondary schools, the general trend of performance is improvement since 2006. Currently data collected does not include ethnicity as it is not statistically significant. However this information would be useful and should be collected in future. This year, 20 fixed penalty notices have been issued and 55 warning letters have been sent to parents.

3.11 Schools have a range of strategies to improve attendance: developing a positive environment where children want to learn, first day calling, not authorising all holiday requests, raising awareness with parents about the link between achievement and attendance and robust responses where felt appropriate like fixed penalty notices. The School Improvement Development Officer assists with this by regular meetings with schools, providing advice and support, taking legal action as needed, promoting involvement of other agencies and ensuring that families where other unmet need is identified are referred where appropriate for other interventions. This work links in with supporting schools to manage behaviour using for example, parenting contracts, involvement of specialist teachers, and ensuring that families get effective levels of support.

3.12 Why has the cost risen from nothing to £11000 despite the 142 exclusions?

Please be advised that the 142 exclusions in the previous year are fixed term exclusions (out of school for fixed period of time and return to school, remaining school's responsibility) in contrast to permanent exclusions which means that the

child/young person is off role at the school and becomes the responsibility of the Local Authority. Liz Odom (SIDO) provides alternative education which comes out of 'Education Otherwise budget 5314'.

The anomaly this year was that we had to fund IGCSE's (International GCSE) for 3 of the permanently excluded students. Also as previously reported to cabinet the numbers of permanent exclusions has risen from 1 in 2010/2011 to 6 in 2011/12, also the one student permanently excluded in 2010/11 the funding had to be carried forward in to funding 2011/12 as he was a Year 11 student without a school place.

3.13 What did we do differently this year and why?

We provided education for the permanently excluded students, as we have a statutory duty to fund alternative education for permanently excluded students.

3.14 Is the cost directly related to the number of permanently excluded students?

Yes, as explained above hence the concerns regarding the amount of growing academies in Rutland including Primary Schools which is likely to increase our statutory obligations and financial responsibility.

3.15 Is the AWPU (age weighted pupil unit funding for the permanent exclusions) used to mitigate the costs that occur or is it just an under spend in the DSG (Deligated School Grant)?

Yes, it off sets the cost for re-settlement, assessments and reports as well as exams, room hire, private tuition, transport etc.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	Medium	'Hard to Place' panel needs to make an impact during this academic year
Viability	Medium	Finding alternative provision can be a challenge for the local authority
Finance	Medium	Costs will increase if exclusions remain at this level or continue to rise
Profile	Medium	Levels of exclusion can be an inspection risk for schools
Equality and Diversity	Medium	The needs of a diverse cohort must be met

Background Papers
None

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