



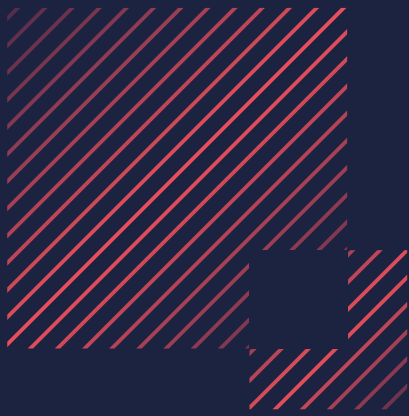
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Martin-Denham, Sarah and Donaghue, Jacob (2020) Executive Summary: A review of fixed-period and permanent school exclusions in children with SEN and no SEN designation in the City of Sunderland. Project Report. University of Sunderland, Sunderland.

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Executive Summary

A review of fixed-period and permanent school exclusions in children with SEN and no SEN designation in the City of Sunderland

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Commissioned by Together for Children, Sunderland

March 2020



**University of
Sunderland**

Executive summary

Together commissioned this report for Children (TfC) to the University of Sunderland, School of Education in the autumn of 2018. The purpose of the report was to review school census data on school exclusions and allow TfC to better understand the extent of and reasons for fixed and permanent exclusions across the City. The series of analyses presented in this report relate to fixed-period and permanent exclusions that were issued in Sunderland between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

Aim

The aim of this research was to analyse the extent and type of school exclusions allocated to children with special education needs and/or disability across the City of Sunderland and to examine the reasons why they were excluded.

Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of those with social-emotional mental health (SEMH) needs who have experienced fixed-period and/or permanent exclusion from school.
- To produce a report with supporting evidence to inform provision planning and training for education professionals within the local area of Sunderland.
- To make a national recommendation on the modifications needed to the school census return.

The findings of this report are that Sunderland is not the highest nor the lowest excluding Local Authority (LA) in the North East of England. However, the findings support national concerns in that both fixed and permanent exclusions are most evident in national statutory assessments years (Martin-Denham et al., 2017; House of Commons Education Committee, 2018). Despite Sunderland children with SEN in Sunderland representing 16.4% of 4-18-year-olds, they account for 36.22% of all exclusions and are most prevalent in children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of permanent exclusions has doubled in children with SEN (17 to 35) and almost tripled in children with no SEN designation (12 to 32). During the same period, fixed-period exclusions doubled in children with SEN (714 to 1,414), and quadrupled in children with not SEN (555 to 2,520).

This report raises an issue for consideration at a national level as to the intended purpose of the miscellaneous category 'other' in the school census (DfE, 2017a). In Sunderland, 37.0% of all fixed-period and 16.0% of all permanent exclusions issued to all children in 2017/18 were recorded as other, which illustrates that the category is not being used as intended. In light of this, the category needs to be reviewed to ensure the reasons children are excluded from school are captured accurately.

Recommendation 1: For further, more in-depth local training on Social, Emotional Mental Health needs, Moderate Learning Difficulties and Autism to ensure evidence-based approaches, knowledge and understanding of the multi-faceted strengths and needs of children are identified, assessed, and planned for in partnership with the child and caregivers on entry into school.

Recommendation 2: Due to the increase in multiple fixed-period exclusions in Sunderland, a best practice debrief process should be agreed and introduced. A debrief should take place immediately after the event (when the child is regulated) to capture the issues that led up to, during and following the incident(s). This will allow schools to understand, respond to and potentially reduce further exclusions.

National Recommendation: There needs to be a review of the use of 'other' as a category for excluding children on school census returns as it does not give any indication of the reason for the exclusion. If the category remains, there should be a requirement to state the reason(s) for the exclusion for accountability, scrutiny and to allow for planning of training needs and in-school training in local areas.

Sarah Martin-Denham
March 2020

