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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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March 2020



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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



Sarah Martin-Denham: Principal Investigator, Project Director and Author

Sarah is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, a Vice-Chancellor Teaching Fellow, Chair of an independent SENCO network and a Convenor of an Interdisciplinary Research Network for developing knowledge, understanding and approaches for supporting children who are experiencing adverse childhood experiences. She has extensive knowledge of learning and teaching in the North East of England in a variety of settings ranging from Early Years to Higher Education. Sarah has successfully developed and led four programmes and research projects in the School of Education at the University of Sunderland and is the Programme Leader for the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination. Through her work with children and families over the last twenty years and her neurodiverse abilities, she has developed a particular interest in Special Educational Needs and disabilities

Publications:

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (written for submission) 'The impact and measure of Adverse Childhood Experiences: Reflections of undergraduates and graduates in England.'

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *'A review of school exclusion on the mental health, well-being of children and young people in the City of Sunderland.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *'An investigation into the perceived enablers and barriers to mainstream schooling: The voices of children excluded from school, their caregivers and professionals.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. (2020) *'The enablers and barriers to successful managed moves: The voice of children, caregivers and professionals.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (2020) *'What is the prevalence of primary and secondary types of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the City of Sunderland? A national comparative analysis of school census data.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (2020) *'Excluding children for no real reason: What is the extent of the use of the category 'other' in school census returns in England? A Policy Brief.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. and Watts, S. (2019) *SENCO Handbook: Leading Provision and Practice.* London: Sage Publishers.

Martin-Denham, S., Benstead, H., Donaghue, J. and Ripley, S. (2017) *'The prevalence of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) identified in young people, aged 3-16, across the City of Sunderland.'* Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. and Stewart, C. (2017) SENCO magazine: 'Ports in a Storm'. Teach Primary.

Martin-Denham, S. (Eds.) (2015) *Teaching Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 0-25 years*. London: Sage Publishers.



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Publications:

Deacon, L., Macdonald, S. and Donaghue, J. (forthcoming). 'What's wrong with you, are you stupid?' Listening to the biographical narratives of adults with dyslexia in an age of 'inclusive' and 'anti-discriminatory' practice', *Disability and Society*

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (written for submission) 'The impact and measure of Adverse Childhood Experiences: Reflections of undergraduates and graduates in England.'

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (2020) 'A review of fixed-period and permanent school exclusions in children with SEN and no SEN designation in the City of Sunderland.' Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S. and Donaghue, J. (2020) 'Excluding children for no real reason: What is the extent of the use of the category 'other' in school census returns in England? A Policy Brief.' Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Martin-Denham, S., Benstead, H., Donaghue, J. and Ripley, S. (2017) 'The prevalence of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) identified in young people, aged 3-16, across the City of Sunderland.' Sunderland: University of Sunderland.

Glossary of acronyms

AD(H)D Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

AP Alternative Provision

ASD Autism Spectrum Disorder

BAME Black, Asian minority ethnic

BERA British Educational Research Association

DfE Department for Education

DoH Department of Health

EHCP Education, Health and Care plan

EYFS Early Years Foundation Stage

FE Further Education

FSM Free School Meals

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

HI Hearing Impairment

HIV Human, Immunodeficiency Virus

LA Local Authority

LAIT Local Authority Interactive Tool

MLD Moderate Learning Difficulty

MSI Multi-Sensory Impairment

NC National Curriculum

NE North East

Ofsted Office for Standards in Education

Ofqual Office for Qualifications
and Examinations Regulation

ONS Office for National Statistics

OTH Other Difficulty/Disability

PD Physical Disability

PMLD Profound and Multiple
Learning Difficulties

SEN Special Educational Needs

SEMh Social, Emotional Mental Health

SENCO Special Educational Needs Coordinator

SEND Special Educational Needs
and/or Disability

SIRO Senior Information Risk Officer

SLCN Speech, Language and
Communication Needs

SLD Severe Learning Difficulty

SpLD Specific Learning Difficulty

UPN Unique Pupil Number

VI Visual Impairment

Glossary of terms

Classification of Primary Need: When children and young people are entered onto the Special Educational Needs register they are entered for their primary need

Descriptive Statistics: Statistics used to describe and show basic summaries of numerical data.

Early Years Foundation Stage: The framework for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years.

Education Health and Care Plan: Details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child with SEN and/or disabilities

Local Authority: Leading integration arrangements for children with SEND.

Prevalence: How common a type of exceptionality is within a population, either at a point in time or over a given period of time.

School Census: A statutory census which collects information about pupils and schools, including all local authority maintained schools, some non-maintained academies including alternative provision.

SEN Support: Extra or different support that is provided in addition to the school's usual curriculum.

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO): A qualified teacher in a school or maintained nursery school who has responsibility for coordinating SEN provision

Special Educational Needs: A child has an SEN if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made

Stakeholder: An organisation/individual with interest in a topic, including public sector providers and commissioners of care or services.

Unique Pupil Number (UPN): A 13-character code that identifies each pupil who attends a state-funded school in England. UPNs are generated when a pupil first enters state-funded education.

For ease of reading, the terms:

- 'Children' will be used to refer to children and young people.
- 'Caregiver' for all of those with guardianship of children.
- 'School' will be used to refer to any educational establishment.
- 'Mainstream school' this relates to the following: maintained, academies, free and faith schools.
- 'Code' refers to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (DfE, 2015)

1. Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1. Rationale for the report

This research was commissioned by Together for Children (TfC) in response to the findings of the Martin-Denham et al. (2017) report that highlighted higher than national prevalence of particular primary types of special educational needs (SEN) in the City of Sunderland. Following analysis of school census data, they reported that children with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) categorised with SEMH as their primary type of need was +14.0% higher than the national rate. TfC was interested in exploring if this increase continued in the 2017/2018 school census data and to examine if there were other primary and secondary types of SEN that were above the national average. The findings and recommendations from this report are to be used by TfC and Sunderland City Council to inform the strategic plan for the next five years. The information will also be used to guide self-evaluation of progress, to reform how services are commissioned and to identify increases in service demand alongside training needs for education professionals over the coming years.

1.2. Context: Sunderland

Sunderland is a North East (NE) City which lies on the NE Coast of England with a long and illustrious history of shipbuilding, heavy engineering and glass-making (Short and Fundinsland-Tetlow, 2012). Dodds (2011) states Sunderland is the regions second largest City with the River Wear being one of the principal waterways. She adds that the south of the river is the most populated area of Sunderland. Sunderland has changed over the years, growing from being a small trading port into a substantial industrial City in light of rural-urban migration from Ireland and Scotland (Cookson, 2015). In the 2011 census, the total number of residents in Sunderland was 275,506, within the City and 39.9% of households had no adults who were currently in employment (Nomis, 2019).

1.3. Research question

What are the prevalence of fixed-period and permanent exclusions for children with primary and secondary types of Special Educational Needs (SEN) in the City of Sunderland?

1.4. Aims and objectives

The project had the following aim and objectives:

Aim

The aim of this research was to analyse the extent and type of school exclusions given to children with SEN across the City of Sunderland and to examine the reasons why they were excluded.

Objectives

- To determine the prevalence of those with 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.

2. Background

2. Background

This section presents literature on the legality of school exclusions in preparation for the presentation of findings on the school census data relating to school exclusions.

2.1. What is school census data?

The school census is a statutory census that is carried out every Spring, Summer and Autumn term (DfE, 2019a). It includes school exclusions data which is collected from state-funded schools and released by the DfE on an annual basis through a statistical first release (Martin-Denham and Donaghue, 2020a). There are two elements to the data return ‘school’ and ‘pupil’ each has modules of data that relate to a theme or topic such as the number of children with SEN, SEN provision, SEN type, exclusion category and exclusion reason (ibid). The guidance (DfE, 2019a) clarifies that the ‘pupil SEN type ranking’ relates to their most significant or primary need as ‘1’ with any secondary need allocated a ‘2’. A concern with this data capture is that it only collects two needs and not the multi-faceted needs of the population. Furthermore, some categories of need do not require a formalised assessment to be allocated as the child’s primary or secondary type of SEN. In addition, the ‘No Specialist Assessment’ code (NSA) is only used in rare instances where the school is still assessing the child’s needs and when special educational provision is in place.

2.2. School exclusions

Within the UK, school exclusion refers to a ‘disciplinary sanction that prevents pupils from attending school either for a fixed period or permanently’ (Gazeley, 2010, p. 451). School exclusion in England is currently receiving attention at a national level, through a recent inquiry into alternative provision and increasing school exclusions (House of Commons Education Committee, 2018) prompting the Timpson Review (Department for Education, 2019b). Alongside other key findings and recommendations, Timpson identified variation

in how exclusion is used and that more needs to be done to support schools in how to understand and respond to children with special educational needs (SEN).

2.3. Types of legal exclusions

There are two official and lawful types of exclusion. These are known as permanent and fixed-period and only the headteacher of a school (or the teacher in charge of a pupil referral unit or the principal of an academy) can exclude a child (National Children’s Bureau, 2018). The Education Act (2011) provides the legal duties for school exclusion and clarifying that a child is either in school full time or excluded, informal or unofficial exclusions such as sending a child home for the afternoon following an incident are unlawful. Only a headteacher can issue the fixed-period or permanent exclusion when there is serious breach of the school’s behaviour policy and where it is felt that allowing the child to remain would harm the education or welfare of other children, the decision must be lawful, rational, proportionate and fair (European Convention of Human Rights, 2010; Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2011, the School Discipline Regulations 2012). If a caregiver is asked to keep them off school it is an exclusion, whether it is leaving early, at lunchtime or being part-time, all exclusions must be recorded in school and reported to the LA (Martin-Denham and Watts, 2019). When a headteacher excludes a child, they must inform the caregivers of the period of exclusion and the reason(s) for it.

2.3.1. What are permanent exclusions?

Permanent exclusions refer to a child who is excluded and who will not return to that school unless the exclusion is overturned on appeal (DfE, 2016). The consequence of a permanent exclusion is that the child will have their name taken off the school roll (National Children’s Bureau, 2018). The decision to exclude a child permanently should only be taken ‘in response to a serious breach, or persistent breaches, of the school’s behaviour policy and occur where

allowing the child to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of themselves or others in the school’ (DfE, 2017b, p.6). Both of these tests have to be satisfied in order for the exclusion to be legal (National Children’s Bureau, 2018). Any exclusions need to be made with the knowledge that they are lawful. Therefore, schools must ensure there is no breach of the Equality Act 2010 and that the exclusion is rational, reasonable, fair and proportionate (DfE, 2017b).

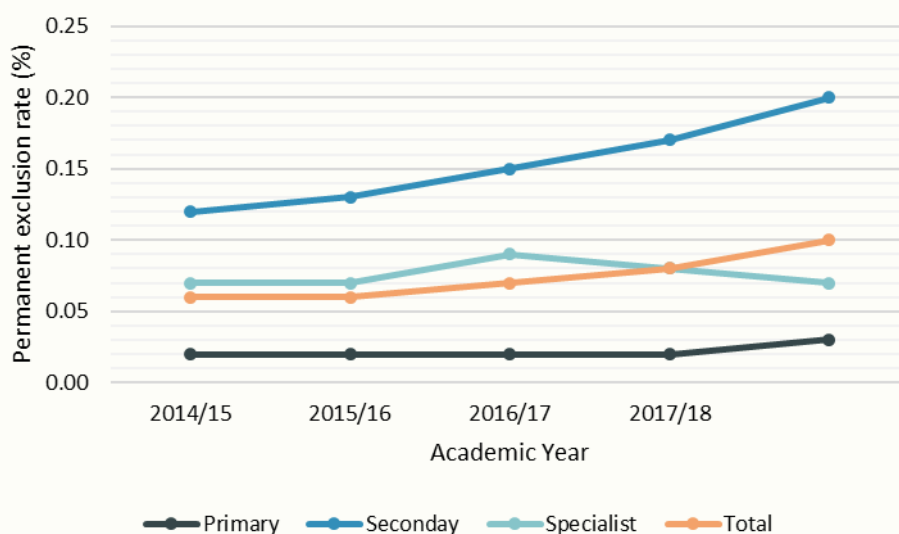


Figure: 1. National rate of permanent exclusions in state-funded Primary, Secondary, Specialist schools from 2012/13 to 2016/17 (DfE, 2018)

These latest figures show that national permanent exclusions are continuing to rise, with the highest percent increase visible in state-funded secondary schools. Only specialist schools have shown the opposite trend in recent years (DfE, 2018).

2.3.2. What are fixed-period exclusions?

Fixed-period exclusions refer to the process whereby children are excluded from a school for a set period of time during the school day, for example, a lunchtime. If a child is excluded for the lunchtime period, it is counted as a half-day exclusion (National Children’s Bureau, 2018). A child can receive multiple fixed-period exclusions during the academic year, but the total number of days must not exceed 45, even when there is a change of school (DfE, 2017b; *ibid*). The DfE (2018) clarify that where a child

has been subject to a fixed-period exclusion for more than five school days, schools must arrange Alternative Provision (AP). AP can be provided full or part-time, with long or short placements. These are usually provided by AP Academies, AP free schools and pupil referral units. The need for alternative provision varies, including:

- Behaviour resulting in permanent or fixed-period exclusions or an off-site direction by a school.
- Health reasons (including physical or mental health needs; and
- Where a child is awaiting a mainstream placement

(DfE, 2018)

2.4. Types of unlawful exclusion

These are exclusions which are not formally recorded. Examples would be sending a child home to 'cool off' and unexplained exits for unknown reasons (Hutchinson and Crenna-Jennings, 2019). These exclusions have implications for the school census data and the accuracy of the data captured

Unofficial exclusions: These are always unlawful, even if there is agreement from the child and caregiver.

Part-time timetables: These are unlawful and are when the child is asked to attend school for only part of the day, such as starting or leaving school at lunchtime. The National Children's Bureau (2018) adds that in very exceptional circumstances a school may put in place a part-time timetable if it is temporary to meet an individual need, usually when a medical condition prevents them attending full-time education or as part of a reintegration package. For the remaining part of the day, the child must be recorded as having an authorised absence.

Offrolling: Nationally, there is a significant issue with off-rolling, where schools push children out of the provision, for instance when the school determines that the child will not do well academically (Martin-Denham and Watts, 2019). Ofsted (2018; 2019) report that the scale of the use of off-rolling is increasing and that schools are off-rolling children before they can take part in national examinations, despite this being illegal. They reported that between January 2016 and January 2017, 19,000 children dropped off the school roll between years 10 and 11 equating to 4% of all pupils. The data indicate that half of these did not reappear on the roll of another state-funded school (ibid). The data presented in the school exclusion technical note for the Timpson Review (DfE, 2019c) highlights that school exclusions for children with SEN in years 7-11 are most prevalent in the year 11 and in the Autumn term.

Gaming: This is also unlawful and is similar to off-rolling and is where schools decisions and actions to exclude are made to favour school or academic league tables (National Children's

Bureau, 2018). Both off-rolling and gaming are forms of unlawful permanent exclusions. Schools can only legally remove a child from the admissions register for reasons set out in Regulation 8 of The Education (Pupil Registration (England) Regulations 2006) 'that he has been permanently excluded from the school'.

The next section in the report shares the methodological approaches used to answer the following research aims and objectives:

Research aim

The aim of this research was to analyse the extent and type of school exclusions given to children with SEN across the City of Sunderland and to examine the reasons why they were excluded.

Research objectives

- To determine the prevalence of those with 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 national recommendations on the modifications needed to the data school census captures.

3. Methods

3. Methods

3.1. Method

The methods section specifically refers to the approach employed when collecting data. As the current publication presents analysis using census data that were already in existence, the method of data collection is defined as secondary data collection (O’Leary, 2004). To adhere to information governance arrangements and the data management plan, the school census data were collated by the Local Authority and transferred encrypted to a secure server within the University of Sunderland. The data were received between November 2018 and January 2019.

3.2. Participants

Participants refer to all children who were on school roll at the time of the annual census. This meant children and young people who attended academies, local authority maintained schools, free schools, specialist schools and alternative provision between years 2014/15 and 2017/18 were included. It is important to note that given the nature of research and the participant data collected, the strictest protocols and processes were in place to protect the anonymity of each child and any school.

3.3. Ethics

The project was submitted and approved by the University of Sunderland Ethics Committee in March 2018. To adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) was carried out with Sunderland City Council and Together for Children. A DPIA is a self-assessment to ‘minimise the data protection risks of a project’ (ICO, 2019, p. 187). On completion of the DPIA where risks were identified and mitigated and following approval from the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) from Sunderland City Council, the data were transferred using AES-256 encryption and saved onto the secure University drives whereby access was given solely to the research team. Data did not include directly identifiable information (e.g.

names or address), however, it did include Unique Pupil Numbers (UPN) which was used to link data and to differentiate pupils. The data also included the Unique Reference Numbers to identify education phases for schools (see section 3.4). These were replaced with pseudonymised numbers.

3.4. Data cleaning and preparation

Data used for this research were taken from two datasets. The first set included data on pupil census information and the second included school exclusion data. Both datasets were linked using the Unique Pupil Numbers (UPN), as the exclusion dataset did not include additional information such as the primary type of SEN. Individual cases were removed when it was not possible to link the data (see Table 1). Unless made explicit, only single entries per pupil, per year were used for analysis purposes. If a child was enrolled in multiple education provisions, they were only counted once to prevent inflating the exclusion rates. Data were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2016.

Table: 1. Number of children and exclusions that were removed from analysis

Academic Year	Number of children	Number of exclusions
2014/15	4	6
2015/16	5	13
2016/17	12	14
2017/18	19	29
Total	40	62

3.5. Analysis strategy

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE) annually publishes statistics across a range of topics, from Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and school achievement rates to school exclusion. Where possible, this report will emulate the presentation of data typically seen in statistical first releases, however not all metrics presented in ONS reports were utilised in the analysis for this report. One noticeable omission includes how DfE and ONS report the rate of exclusion, which is calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Number of all exclusions recorded per year}}{\text{Number of all sole and dual enrolled pupils per year}} \times 100$$

The rationale behind this measure, according to the DfE and ONS is that the rate is ‘more appropriate for comparisons over time as they take into account changes in the overall number of pupils’ (DfE, 2017a, p.9). However, a limitation with this measure is that as children can receive multiple exclusions per year, the rate could technically surpass 100%. It was felt by the authors that using this measure would make dissemination confusing and not reflect the nature of exclusions in Sunderland. The authors felt it was more appropriate to present the following descriptive statistics:

- Number of children who received an exclusion (e.g. single fixed-period, multiple fixed-period and permanent exclusion)
- Percentage or rate of children excluded, expressed as a percentage of a specific pupil population (e.g. the SEN population in year 9)
- Number of exclusions issued to children as children can receive more than one exclusion per year (e.g. fixed-period and permanent exclusion).
- Percentage or rate of exclusions.

4. Findings

4. Findings

This section of the report will present the number and rates of fixed-period and permanent exclusions in children with SEN and no SEN designation over the previous four years in Sunderland. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify whether there were any disproportionate levels of exclusion across SEN and non-SEN cohorts and specific types of primary SEN in Sunderland. For ease of reading, the findings section is divided into six main components: regional exclusion (3.1), overall exclusion in Sunderland (3.2), Sunderland exclusion across SEN designation (3.3), school type and year groups (3.4), reason for exclusion by SEN designation (3.5) and reason for exclusion by primary type of need (3.6).

4.1. Overall number of fixed-period and permanent exclusions in the North East of England (2014/15 - 2017/18)

The number of exclusions issued in schools in England over 2017/18 is higher than in previous years. The DfE (2019d) confirm that this is due, in part, to the increase found in the North East (NE) of England. The rates of both fixed and permanent exclusions in the NE are higher than comparable figures for England as a whole (see Table 2). The coloured cells presented in Figure 2 and Table 2 show the percentiles of exclusion rates in the NE of England. The 90th percentile or highest rate of exclusion is presented in red and the 10th percentile or lowest rate of exclusion is presented in dark green.

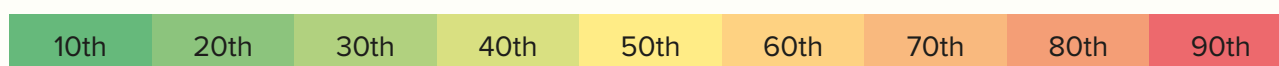


Figure: 2. Percentile colour key

Table: 2. National and regional rates of permanent, fixed-period and multiple fixed-period exclusions across primary, secondary and specialist maintained schools (2017/18)

	Permanent		Fixed-Period		Multiple Fixed Period	
	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)
England	7,905	0.1	410,753	5.08	188,503	2.33
North East	559	0.14	36,113	9.34	10,846	2.81
Darlington	10	0.06	929	5.74	423	2.61
Durham	88	0.12	3,461	4.83	1,546	2.16
Gateshead	57	0.20	1,487	5.23	659	2.32
Hartlepool	11	0.07	4,868	32.04	1,002	6.60
Middlesbrough	42	0.17	4,075	16.84	969	4.01
Newcastle upon Tyne	59	0.15	1,993	5.03	1,009	2.55
North Tyneside	18	0.06	768	2.50	447	1.46
Northumberland	85	0.19	4,320	9.55	1,173	2.59
Redcar and Cleveland	59	0.27	4,350	19.84	1,018	4.64
South Tyneside	37	0.17	567	2.61	336	1.55
Stockton-on-Tees	40	0.13	5,505	17.53	1,134	3.61
Sunderland	53	0.13	3,790	9.43	1,130	2.81

Note. Data includes primary, secondary and special schools only. Fixed-period exclusions will include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions. The rate of exclusions was calculated by expressing the number of exclusions as a percentage of the total number of sole and dual registered pupils.

Source: DfE, 2019e

The data presented in Table 2 shows how the rate of permanent exclusions in Sunderland is in the 40th percentile, meaning permanent exclusion rates are higher than 40% of other local authorities within the NE of England. Fixed-period and multiple fixed-period exclusion rates are comparably higher in the 60th percentile. These figures represent a substantial increase from the previous year, where Sunderland exclusion rates were among the 10th percentile among local authorities within the NE of England in 2016/17.

4.2. Overall number of children excluded in Sunderland by type of exclusion (2014/15 – 2017/18)

Table 3 presents the overall number and percentage of children excluded in Sunderland and illustrates how more children were excluded from school in 2017/18 than in previous years. For permanent exclusions, the percentage of children excluded remained stable at 0.08% of the pupil population (30

children) between 2014/15 and 2016/17. However, from 2017/18, the percentage of children permanently excluded increased to 0.17% of the pupil population (66 children).

For fixed-period exclusions, the percentage of children excluded increased each year incrementally from 0.99% (369 children) in 2015/15 to 1.47% (555) in 2017/18. This pattern was not observed in children who received multiple fixed-period exclusions as the percentage increased sharply in 2016/17 from 0.67% (253 children) to 1.61% (610) in 2017/18. This change followed relative stability between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Table 3. Number and percentage of individual children aged 4-18 who received a permanent or one or more fixed-period exclusion from school in Sunderland (2014/15 – 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Pupil Population in Sunderland	37,274	37,499	37,830	37,812
Number of children with a permanent exclusion	30	32	29	66
Percentage of pupil population (%)	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.17
Number of children with a fixed-period exclusion	369	415	451	555
Percentage of pupil population (%)	0.99	1.11	1.19	1.47
Number of children with multiple fixed-period exclusions	179	240	253	610
Percentage of pupil population (%)	0.48	0.64	0.67	1.61
Total number of children excluded	578	687	733	1,231
Overall percentage of pupil population (%)	1.55	1.83	1.94	3.26

Note. Data includes education provisions recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

4.3. Overall number of children excluded in Sunderland by type of exclusion, SEN and non-SEN designation (2014/15 – 2017/18)

Building on the above analysis, the number of children excluded with SEN were compared with children with no identified SEN. The number of children with SEN excluded from

school has increased from 344 in 2016/17 to 502 in 2017/18, representing an increase from 5.62% to 8.10% of the SEN pupil population (see Table 4). By comparison, the number of children excluded who did not have a designation of SEN, increased from 389 in 2016/17 to 729 in 2017/18, representing an increase of 1.02% to 2.31% of the non-SEN population.

Table: 4. Number and rate of individual children aged 4-18, with and without SEN designation who received a fixed and/or permanent exclusion from school in Sunderland (2014/15 – 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN pupil population in Sunderland	4,850	5,973	6,116	6,198
Number of children with a permanent exclusion	9	14	17	35
Percentage of SEN pupil population (%)	0.19	0.23	0.28	0.56
Number of children with a fixed-period exclusion	133	184	173	200
Percentage of SEN pupil population (%)	2.74	3.08	2.83	3.23
Number of children with multiple fixed-period exclusions	105	132	154	267
Percentage of SEN pupil population (%)	2.16	2.21	2.52	4.31
Total number of children excluded	247	330	344	502
Overall percentage of SEN pupil population (%)	5.09	5.52	5.62	8.10
Non-SEN pupil population in Sunderland	32,424	31,526	31,714	31,614
Number of children with a permanent exclusion	21	18	12	31
Percentage of non-SEN pupil population (%)	0.06	0.06	0.04	0.10
Number of children with a fixed-period exclusion	236	231	278	355
Percentage of non-SEN pupil population (%)	0.73	0.73	0.88	1.12
Number of children with multiple fixed-period exclusions	74	108	99	343
Percentage of non-SEN pupil population (%)	0.23	0.34	0.31	1.08
Total number of children excluded	331	357	389	729
Overall percentage of pupil population (%)	1.02	1.13	1.23	2.31

Note. Data includes education provisions recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

The increases in both cohorts were mainly attributed to the annual differences observed across multiple fixed-period exclusions between 2016/17 and 2017/18. Overall, a greater proportion of the SEN population received multiple fixed-period exclusions than the non-SEN population. For children with SEN, there was a large increase from 2.52% to 4.31% of the SEN population and a smaller increase from 0.31% to 1.08% of children with no SEN. Multiple fixed-period exclusions were not the

only type of exclusions that saw an increase. The number of children who received a single fixed-period exclusion between 2016/17 and 2017/18, increased from 2.83% to 3.23% of children with SEN and 0.88% to 1.12% of children with no SEN designation. Permanent exclusions represent a much smaller percentage compared to fixed-period, but they also showed increases in both cohorts, 0.28% in 2016/17 to 0.56% in 2017/18 for children with SEN and 0.04% to 0.10% in non-SEN cohorts.

The overall rates presented in Table 4 not only highlight the annual increase in the numbers of children excluded but also present the difference between children with and without SEN. Children with SEN amount to 16.40% of the pupil population in Sunderland (calculated using age-matched figures from 2017/18), however, they account for a disproportionately large percentage of children who received an exclusion from school (40.78%).

4.4. Number of children excluded in Sunderland by school type, type of exclusion, SEN and non-SEN designation (2014/15 – 2017/18)

To examine where exclusions occur in Sunderland among SEN and non-SEN cohorts, a summative account of the fixed-period and permanent exclusion rates in primary,

secondary and specialist education are given in the subsections below.

4.4.1. Primary school children with fixed-period exclusions in Sunderland

The overall number of children who received a fixed-period exclusion from primary school has increased from 114 children in 2014/15 to 165 in 2017/18, an increase from 0.55% to 0.78% of the pupil population (see Table 5). For children designated as SEN, the increase was more pronounced. In 2014/15, 2.71% of primary school children with SEN were excluded (62 children) rising to 3.69% (121 children) in 2017/18 (see Table 5). Among the SEN cohort, year groups 3, 5 and 6 had the highest proportion of children who received a fixed-period exclusion in 2017/18 (4.53%, 5.64% and 6.59% respectively).

Table 5. Percentage of children aged 4-11 who received a fixed-period exclusion from primary school, by national curriculum year group and SEN designation (2014/15 - 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN population in Sunderland	2,284	2,931	3,189	3,279
Year Group				
Reception	0.69	-	0.78	2.02
Year 1	2.08	1.99	1.10	1.13
Year 2	1.63	0.77	2.75	2.27
Year 3	2.56	1.54	1.19	4.53
Year 4	4.69	3.98	2.82	2.40
Year 5	0.95	4.35	4.48	5.64
Year 6	6.06	2.86	3.85	6.59
SEN exclusion percentage (%)	2.71	2.29	2.51	3.69
Non-SEN population in Sunderland	18,493	18,148	18,186	17,989
Year Group				
Reception	0.07	0.04	-	-
Year 1	-	0.04	0.04	0.04
Year 2	0.22	0.04	0.16	0.11
Year 3	0.19	0.07	0.04	0.20
Year 4	0.46	0.15	0.08	0.51
Year 5	0.43	0.64	0.39	0.23
Year 6	0.66	0.33	0.28	0.64
Non-SEN exclusion percentage (%)	0.28	0.18	0.14	0.24
Total pupil population	20,777	21,079	21,375	21,268
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	0.55	0.47	0.49	0.78

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-11. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

Data in Table 5 indicates that for children with no SEN designation, the percentage of fixed-period exclusions was declining year-on-year from 0.28% to 0.14% between 2014/15 and 2016/17. In 2017/18, this trend was reversed as fixed-period figures saw an increase to 0.24%. Children in year groups 4 and 6 accounts for the largest proportion of children with a fixed-period exclusion among the non-SEN population (0.51% and 0.64% respectively). Additionally, there were no exclusions for children in reception since 2016/17.

Overall when comparing the number of primary school children who received a fixed-period exclusion, children with SEN account for 73.33% of all fixed-period exclusions in 2017/18. This is despite children with SEN reflecting 17.17% (3,279 children) of the primary school population (21,268). This reflects the overall trend where there are a disproportionately number of children with SEN excluded from school (DfE, 2019d).

4.4.2. Primary school children with permanent exclusions in Sunderland

The rates for permanent exclusions in primary school are lower than fixed-period; however, a disparity can still be observed between children with and with no designation of SEN. Figures in Table 6 show that for children with an identified need, permanent exclusion rates peaked in 2016/17 with 12 children (0.38%) following 2015/16 where fewer exclusions were issued. In 2017/18, 9 children (0.27%) were permanently excluded from primary school, which were similar to earlier figures observed in 2014/15. When examining across year groups, there were no permanent exclusions issued to children in Reception or year 1 in 2017/18 and overall there was a greater proportion of children with permanent exclusions in Key Stage 2 and year groups: 4 (0.66%) 5 (0.38%) and 6 (0.38%).

Table 6. Percentage of children aged 4-11 who received a permanent exclusion from primary school, by national curriculum year group and SEN designation (2014/15 - 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN population in Sunderland	2,284	2,931	3,189	3,279
Year Group				
Reception	-	-	0.52	-
Year 1	1.04	0.25	0.22	-
Year 2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.21
Year 3	-	-	-	0.21
Year 4	0.59	0.00	0.40	0.66
Year 5	0.32	0.46	0.61	0.38
Year 6	0.30	-	0.85	0.38
SEN exclusion percentage (%)	0.31	0.10	0.38	0.27
Non-SEN population in Sunderland	18,493	18,148	18,186	17,989
Year Group				
Reception	-	-	-	-
Year 1	-	-	-	-
Year 2	-	-	-	-
Year 3	-	0.04	-	-
Year 4	-	0.04	-	-
Year 5	-	0.04	-	-
Year 6	0.08	-	-	-
Non-SEN exclusion percentage (%)	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00
Total pupil population	20,777	21,079	21,375	21,268
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	0.04	0.03	0.06	0.04

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-11. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

For children with no SEN designation, there were considerably fewer children who were permanently excluded from primary school. There were only five exclusions over two years between 2014/15 and 2015/16 and there were no permanent exclusions after 2016/17.

4.4.3. Secondary school children with fixed-period exclusions in Sunderland

In comparison to primary and specialist schools, secondary schools have consistently excluded more children (DfE, 2019f; 2015). This is true of schools in Sunderland, which saw the overall percentage of secondary school pupils receiving a fixed-period exclusion between

2016/17 and 2017/18 increase from 2.63% to 6.30% (463 to 900 children).

Figures presented in Table 7 show the rate of fixed-period exclusions among children with SEN increased from 8.61% to 14.40% between 2016/17 and 2017/18. Increases were observed in years 7-11, although the largest increases were found in years 10 and 9. When looking specifically at SEN data in 2017/18, over 17.24% of year 8s (65 children) and 18.84% of year 9s (68) and 16.91% of year 10s (53 children) received a fixed-period exclusion in Sunderland. Over the last four years, there have been no year 13 exclusions, and year 12 exclusions only occurred in 2015/16.

Table: 7. Percentage of children aged 11-18 who received a fixed-period exclusion from secondary school, by national curriculum year group and SEN designation (2014/15 - 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN population in Sunderland	2,284	2,931	3,189	3,279
Year Group				
Year 7	6.02	5.80	6.53	10.29
Year 8	6.79	11.19	12.47	17.24
Year 9	13.19	9.26	11.08	18.84
Year 10	10.98	11.86	7.06	16.91
Year 11	7.17	8.58	6.21	10.09
Year 12	-	5.88	-	-
Year 13	-	-	-	-
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	8.61	9.20	8.61	14.40
Non-SEN population in Sunderland	18,493	18,148	18,186	17,989
Year Group				
Year 7	0.66	1.60	1.58	3.34
Year 8	1.86	2.06	2.19	5.34
Year 9	2.25	2.83	3.02	6.70
Year 10	2.87	3.96	3.44	6.97
Year 11	2.25	1.93	2.99	4.89
Year 12	-	0.17	0.50	2.19
Year 13	-	0.22	-	0.21
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	1.84	2.28	2.43	5.10
Total pupil population	14,322	14,274	14,223	14,288
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	2.63	3.27	3.26	6.30

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 11-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

For children with no identified need, the rate of fixed-period exclusions also increased each year. There were 299 children with no SEN designation (2.43%) excluded in 2016/17 which increased for the third year in a row to 634 children (5.10%) in 2017/18. The year groups that saw the most notable increases between 2016/17 to 2017/18 were year 8 (125 children), year 9 (155 children) and year 10 (159 children). Overall, when comparing the 2017/18 rates of exclusion in secondary school, children with SEN account for 29.56% of fixed-period exclusion despite reflecting 12.93% (1,847 children) of the pupil population (14,288 children). Like primary school exclusions, children with SEN reflect a disproportionately large percentage of exclusions.

4.4.4. Secondary school children with permanent exclusions in Sunderland

The overall rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools increased over time from 19 children (0.13%) in 2014/15 to 54 children (0.38%) in 2017/18 (see Table 8). This increase occurred in both children with and with no SEN designation. However, children with an identified need saw a greater increase between 2014/15 and 2015/16 from 2 to 10 children (0.12% to 0.49%) and between 2016/17 and 2017/18 from 4 to 24 children (0.21% to 1.30%).

All year groups saw increases in the permanent exclusion rate between 2016/17 and 2017/18. The year group that received the most exclusions in both cohorts was year 9 in the majority of cases. The exclusion rate for children with SEN in year groups 8, 9 and 10 peaked in 2017/18 following high rates previously observed in 2015/16. The same year groups accounted for the greatest proportion of permanent exclusions overall in 2017/18.

By comparison, for children with no SEN designation, the rate of exclusion was on the decline from 2014/15 before peaking at 30 children (0.24%) in 2017/18, an increase from 12 children (0.10%) observed in the previous year. Similar to children with SEN, the year group that received the most exclusions generally in 2017/18 was year 9.

Year groups 8 and 10 saw the largest increase between 2016/17 and 2017/18 and similar to children with SEN, year groups 8, 9 and 10 accounted for the greatest proportion of permanent exclusions. Overall, in 2017/18, children with SEN represented 44.44% of all secondary school children who were permanently excluded. This is despite children with SEN reflecting 12.93% (1,847 children) of the secondary school population (14,288 children).

Table 8. Percentage of children aged 11-18 who received a permanent exclusion from secondary school, by national curriculum year group and SEN designation (2014/15 - 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN population in Sunderland	1,684	2,055	1,905	1,847
Year Group				
Year 7	-	0.70	-	0.25
Year 8	-	0.67	0.51	1.59
Year 9	0.61	0.82	0.50	3.32
Year 10	-	0.26	-	1.17
Year 11	-	-	-	0.31
Year 12	-	-	-	-
Year 13	-	-	-	-
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	0.12	0.49	0.21	1.30
Non-SEN population in Sunderland	12,638	12,219	12,318	12,441
Year Group				
Year 7	0.09	-	-	0.08
Year 8	0.05	0.22	0.04	0.38
Year 9	0.30	0.14	0.35	0.39
Year 10	0.17	0.26	0.05	0.31
Year 11	0.12	0.04	0.09	0.14
Year 12	-	-	-	-
Year 13	-	-	-	-
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	0.13	0.12	0.10	0.24
Total pupil population	14,322	14,274	14,223	14,288
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	0.13	0.18	0.11	0.38

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 11-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: *Sunderland School Census*

4.4.5. Specialist school children with fixed-period exclusions in Sunderland

The number of children in receipt of a fixed-period exclusion in specialist provision is fewer than primary and secondary school settings. However, due to the smaller population size, the exclusion rates appear greater. Unlike mainstream provision in 2017/18, the rates of fixed-period exclusion in specialist provision increased some years prior.

In 2014/15, there were 22 children (4.52%) who received a fixed-period exclusion, increasing to 46 children (9.35%) in 2015/16 and 55

children (10.40%) in 2016/17. In 2017/18, the rates of exclusion returned to below 10% with 50 children receiving a fixed-period exclusion. As shown in Table 9 below, the year group that received the most exclusions was year 9 in 2017/18, year 11 in 2016/17 and year 10 in 2015/16. Overall for 2017/18, year groups 7, 9, 10 and 11 accounted for the greatest proportion of children within special schools who received a fixed-period exclusion. Regarding permanent exclusions, over the last four years, there has only been two from specialist provision, one in 2015/16 and one in 2017/18.

Table: 9. Percentage of children aged 6-16 who received a fixed-period exclusion from special schools by national curriculum year group and SEN designation (2014/15 - 2017/18)

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
SEN population in Sunderland	487	492	529	527
Year Group				
Reception	-	-	-	-
Year 1	-	-	-	-
Year 2	-	-	5.88	-
Year 3	-	-	4.76	-
Year 4	1.89	-	4.65	2.22
Year 5	2.50	7.14	10.00	4.35
Year 6	-	2.50	8.33	11.54
Year 7	14.81	17.86	4.00	20.00
Year 8	4.00	25.71	20.69	6.67
Year 9	10.42	16.67	17.65	25.00
Year 10	12.50	28.57	15.22	21.31
Year 11	9.76	12.77	24.62	19.61
Year 12	-	-	-	-
Year 13	-	-	-	-
Overall exclusion percentage (%)	4.52	9.35	10.40	9.49

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: *Sunderland School Census*

4.5. Overall number of exclusions in Sunderland by reason for exclusion and primary type of SEN (2016/17 - 2017/18)

This section will present the reasons recorded for all fixed and permanent exclusions in SEN and non-SEN cohorts from 2016/17 to 2017/18 across all state-funded schools in Sunderland. The purpose of focusing on the number of exclusions rather than the number of children excluded was to establish the most frequently cited reasons for school exclusion. All state-funded schools are required to record the reason when excluding a child (DfE, 2017a) and headteachers have a choice of one of the following categories listed in the School Census return:

- Bullying
- Damage
- Drug and alcohol-related
- Persistent disruptive behaviour
- Physical assault against a pupil
- Physical assault against an adult
- Racist abuse
- Sexual misconduct
- Theft
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil.
- Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult.

(DfE, 2020)

Headteachers can record an exclusion using the miscellaneous category 'other' when the reason for the exclusion does not conform to any other reason listed above (DfE, 2017c; Martin-Denham and Donaghue, 2020b).

4.5.1. Number of exclusions issued to children with SEN by reason for exclusion

As shown in Table 10 overleaf, the number of fixed-period exclusions issued to children with SEN has doubled in one year from 714 to 1,414 exclusions in 2017/18. The reasons that saw the greatest increase were persistent disruptive behaviour (+302 exclusions) and other (+243). Additional exclusion reasons that saw increases were physical assault against a pupil (+76) and verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (+74). Conversely, the reasons that saw the greatest decrease were physical assault against an adult (-21) and damage (-20). It is important to note that one secondary school was responsible for more than 33% of all exclusions issued to children with SEN in 2017/18. The same school was also responsible for 39% of fixed-period exclusions categorised as persistent disruptive behaviour and 65% of fixed-period exclusions recorded as other. Overall, the most frequently cited reasons for fixed-period exclusion in children with SEN in 2017/18 were the following:

- persistent disruptive behaviour (31.90%),
- other (22.95%),
- verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (16.90%)
- and physical assault against a pupil (12.45%).

When combined, these reasons amount to 83.90% of all fixed-period exclusions issued to children with SEN.

Table: 10. Number and reasons given for fixed-period and permanent exclusions issued to children with SEN in Sunderland (2016/17 - 2017/18)

Reason for exclusion	Fixed-period exclusion			Permanent Exclusions		
	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	2016/17	2017/18	Difference
Bullying	4	5	+1	-	-	-
Damage	23	43	+20	-	1	+1
Drug and alcohol related	20	12	-8	-	1	+1
Other	76	319	+243	2	4	+2
Persistent disruptive behaviour	149	451	+302	3	14	+11
Physical assault against pupil	100	176	+76	2	4	+2
Physical assault against an adult	135	114	-21	9	4	-5
Racist abuse	8	3	-5	-	-	-
Sexual misconduct	2	-	-2	-	-	-
Theft	1	-	-1	-	-	-
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	31	52	+21	-	2	+2
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	165	239	+74	1	5	+4
Total number of exclusions	714	1,414	+700	17	35	+18

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: Sunderland School Census

The number of permanent exclusions issued to children with SEN doubled in a year from 17 in 2016/17 to 35 in 2017/18. Persistent disruptive behaviour (+11) and verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (+4) saw the largest increase from 2016/17 and physical assault against an adult (-5) saw the largest decrease. This meant for 2017/18, the majority of permanent exclusions were categorised as:

- persistent disruptive behaviour (40%),
- verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (14.29%),
- 'other', physical assault against a pupil, physical assault against an adult (all 11.43%).

Combined these five reasons out of the 12 reasons for exclusion amounted to 88.57% permanent exclusions issued to children with SEN in 2017/18. One alternative provision/pupil referral unit was responsible for 29% of all permanent exclusions and 43% of permanent exclusions recorded as persistent disruptive behaviour.

4.5.2. Number of exclusions issued to children with no designation of SEN by reason for exclusion

The number of fixed-period exclusions issued to children with no designation of SEN had more than quadrupled from 555 in 2016/17 to 2,520 exclusions in 2017/18 (see Table 11). The exclusion reasons that saw the largest annual increase were the miscellaneous category 'other' (+1,066 exclusions), persistent disruptive behaviour (+595), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (+149) and physical assault against a pupil (+98). The same secondary school that was responsible for 39% of fixed-period exclusions in children with SEN (see 4.5.1.) was also responsible for more than 58% of all fixed-period exclusions, 61% as persistent disruptive behaviour and 72% as 'other'. This meant that for children with no designation of SEN, the most frequently cited reasons for exclusion were:

- 'other' (45.12%),
- persistent disruptive behaviour (29.13%),
- and verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (10.71%).

When combined, these reasons account for the majority (84.96%) of all fixed-period exclusion for children with no SEN designation in 2017/18.

The number of permanent exclusions issued has almost trebled in one year from 12 children in 2016/17 to 32 children in 2017/18 (see Table 11). Reflecting on the increase in fixed-period exclusions, the reasons that saw the largest annual increase were other (+6 exclusions), persistent disruptive behaviour (+5), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (+4) where the reverse was observed in physical assault against an adult (-1) and racist abuse (-1). One secondary school was responsible for 22% of all permanent exclusions and 63% recorded

as persistent disruptive behaviour, whereas one alternative provision/pupil referral unit was responsible for 57% of exclusions recorded as 'other'. The most frequently cited reasons for permanent exclusions were:

- persistent disruptive behaviour (25%),
- 'other' (21.88%),
- verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (21.88%)
- and physical assault against a pupil (12.50%).

When combined, these reasons amount to 81.25% of all permanent exclusions issued to children with no SEN designation in 2017/18.

Table: 11. Number and reasons given for fixed-period and permanent exclusions issued to children with no designation of SEN in Sunderland (2016/17 - 2017/18)

Reason for exclusion	Fixed-period exclusion			Permanent Exclusions		
	2016/17	2017/18	Difference	2016/17	2017/18	Difference
Bullying	2	4	+2	-	1	+1
Damage	22	19	-3	-	-	-
Drug and alcohol related	22	19	-3	1	3	+2
Other	71	1,137	+1066	1	7	+6
Persistent disruptive behaviour	139	734	+595	3	8	+5
Physical assault against pupil	120	218	+98	1	4	+3
Physical assault against an adult	25	37	+12	2	1	-1
Racist abuse	4	13	+9	1	-	-1
Sexual misconduct	7	2	-5	-	-	-
Theft	2	4	+2	-	-	-
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	20	63	+43	-	1	+1
Verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	121	270	+149	3	7	+4
Total number of exclusions	555	2,520	+1965	12	32	+20

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: *Sunderland School Census*

4.6. Overall number of exclusions in Sunderland by reason for exclusion, type of exclusion and primary type of need (2017/18)

So far, this report has examined the rates of exclusion and the reasons for exclusions among SEN and non-SEN cohorts. This section will cross-reference the reasons for exclusion and the identified primary need in addition to the length of exclusion using data from 2017/18. The purpose of the evaluation was to identify whether there were any disproportionate levels of exclusion across SEN groups in Sunderland. According to figures presented in Table 12 below, the majority of fixed-period exclusions issued to children with SEN were for the following primary identified needs:

- Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) (687 exclusions, 48.59%),
- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) (477, 33.73%),
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (105, 7.43%).

For children with SEMH, persistent disruptive behaviour was the most commonly cited reason for exclusion accounting for 181 or 12.80% of all SEN exclusions. This was followed by verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (140 exclusions, 9.90%), physical assault against a pupil (106, 7.50%) and other (105, 7.43%).

For children with MLD, persistent disruptive behaviour was again the most common reason for fixed-period exclusion representing 197 or 13.93% of all SEN exclusions. This was followed by 'other' (158 exclusions, 11.17%), verbal abuse /threatening behaviour against an adult (54, 3.82%) physical assault against a pupil (39, 2.76%).

Children with ASD were the third-largest cohort to have received a fixed-period exclusion in 2017/18. The main reasons for exclusion recorded were persistent disruptive behaviour (28 exclusions, 1.98%), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour (adult) (25, 1.77%) and 'other' (17, 1.20%).

Table: 12. Reasons given for fixed-period exclusions issued to children with SEN in Sunderland (2017/18)

Reason for Exclusion	ASD	HI	MLD	OTH	PD	SEMH	SLCN	SLD	SPLD	VI	Overall Percent	Total number of exclusions
Bullying	0.14	-	-	-	-	0.14	0.07	-	-	-	0.35	5
Damage	0.14	-	0.28	-	-	2.62	-	-	-	-	3.04	43
Drug and alcohol related	-	-	0.21	-	-	0.57	-	0.07	-	-	0.85	12
Other	1.20	0.07	11.17	0.14	0.57	7.43	0.99	-	0.99	-	22.56	319
Persistent disruptive behaviour	1.98	0.14	13.93	0.07	0.35	12.80	1.56	-	1.06	-	31.90	451
Physical assault against a pupil	0.92	-	2.76	-	-	7.50	0.57	-	0.57	0.14	12.45	176
Physical assault against an adult	1.13	-	0.57	0.14	-	5.52	0.50	0.07	0.07	0.07	8.06	114
Racist abuse	-	-	-	-	-	0.21	-	-	-	-	0.21	3
Verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour (pupil)	0.14	0.07	0.99	-	-	1.91	0.42	-	0.14	-	3.68	52
Verbal abuse/ threatening behaviour (adult)	1.77	0.14	3.82	0.14	0.42	9.90	0.28	-	0.21	0.21	16.90	239
Overall percentage (%)	7.43	0.42	33.73	0.50	1.34	48.59	4.38	0.14	3.04	0.42	100	
Total number of exclusions	105	6	477	7	19	687	62	2	43	6		1414

Note. Data includes education provision recorded within the Sunderland School Census and includes data for children and young people aged 4-18. There were no exclusions issued to children with MSI, PMLD, NSA as an identified primary need. Fixed-period exclusions include a limited number of lunchtime exclusions.

Source: *Sunderland School Census*

The SEN groups that had the largest proportion of permanent exclusions in 2017/18 were SEMH with 25 exclusions (71.43%) and ASD with five exclusions (14.29%). In addition to accounting for 71.43% of permanent exclusions among SEN cohorts, children with SEMH also accounted for 37.31% of the all permanent exclusions from the pupil population (including children with no SEN designation). This meant that over one-third of all permanent exclusions in 2017/18 were issued to children with SEMH needs. There were no permanent exclusions recorded for children with Hearing Impairments (HI), Physical Disabilities (PD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Visible Impairments (VI) as a primary identified need.

5. Concluding Remarks

5. Concluding remarks

The overarching aim of this report was to examine school census data to determine the prevalence of reported fixed-period and permanent exclusions among children with SEN across the City of Sunderland and to examine the reported reasons why they were excluded.

The first objective was to determine the prevalence of children with identified SEMH needs who have experienced fixed-period and/or permanent exclusion from school. In 2017/18 and within the SEN population, those with SEMH as primary identified need were given the most fixed-period and permanent exclusions. This was followed by children with MLD (for fixed-period) and ASD (for permanent exclusions). The findings indicate that the most commonly cited reason for excluding a child with either SEMH, MLD or ASD was persistent disruptive behaviour. This could indicate a training need in the local area to support teachers and support staff through evidence based approaches for children with recognised SEMH, MLD and Autism to reduce the risk of exclusion from school, supporting the review by Carter (2015) and Driver Youth Trust (2015). The findings presented in this report support the national concerns that school exclusions are continuing to rise (DfE, 2019a). The DfE (2019d) reported that the North East region in 2017/18, had the highest overall rate of fixed-period and permanent exclusions across state-funded primary, secondary and specialist schools. Of the local authorities situated within the North East, Sunderland was among the lowest excluding local authority in 2016/17. However, Sunderland has risen to middle ranking in the 2017/18 school census return. This is most likely due to the number of permanent exclusions more than doubling for children with SEN and no SEN designation, and fixed-period exclusions doubling in children with SEN and quadrupling for children with no SEN designation.

In 2017/18, more than 37% of all exclusions in Sunderland were issued to children designated as having SEN, despite children with SEN representing only 16% of 4-18-year-olds. Put another way; the data show how more than

1-in-3 children who were excluded from school, also had special educational needs. When this is broken down by provision, the data show that in primary schools, children with SEN account for 73% of all fixed-period and 100% of permanent exclusions in 2017/18. For secondary education, figures improve as children with SEN reflect 30% of all fixed-period and 44% of all permanent exclusions. This again would highlight the need to implement continued training in teaching and support staff with evidence-based approaches to support children with SEN and whilst this would be required in all provisions; it would appear this is most needed in primary schools. For specialist provision, figures identified how, 1-in-4 children in year nine and 1-in-5 children in years 7, 10 and 11 received a fixed-period exclusion in 2017/18. However and more positively over the last four years, there have only been two permanent exclusions. Overall the data show the prevalence of fixed and permanent exclusions for all children is evident in some year groups more than others, years such as 5, 6, 9 and 10. This could reflect national concerns on national assessments and the impact of low attaining children on league tables (Gazeley, 2010; House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

Persistent disruptive behaviour continues to be the main reason for issuing a fixed-period and permanent exclusions to children with SEN (31% and 40% respectively), reflecting national trends (DfE, 2019d). This category concerns challenging behaviour, disobedience and persistent violation of school rules. It can be argued that these are ambiguous terms as there will be variation in the length of time children are disobedient and tolerance thresholds will vary between schools. Of national (DfE, 2019a) and local concern (Martin-Denham et al., 2017) is the number of children receiving fixed and permanent exclusions recorded on school census as 'other'. In Sunderland, 'other' account for 37% of all fixed-period exclusions and 16% of permanent exclusions. The extremely vague term has the potential to give rise to inequality for different groups of children. The use of 'other' means there is no local or national record of exactly why these children are being excluded from school and are of particular

concern for 1,467 children who were excluded due to 'other'. The guidance published by DfE (2017a) is explicit in that the category should be used sparingly; however, this is not the case in Sunderland. If the specific reasons that a child was excluded from school were known, 'similarities could be identified to inform new and relevant descriptions of why children are excluded from school. These additional reasons may highlight new patterns of behaviour among groups and reduce or eliminate the need for the 'other' category (Martin-Denham and Donaghue, 2020, p. 6).

This report has highlighted the disproportionate levels of school exclusions in Sunderland for children with SEN and in particular, children with SEMH who received the most fixed-period and permanent exclusions out of all children with SEN in 2017/18. This report has also identified a worrying trend concerning the repeated use of 'other' when issuing fixed-period and permanent exclusions to children with no SEN designation. It is both a local and national concern that a miscellaneous category is in use, particularly when its use is prolific. It should also be acknowledged that the school census return does not explicitly include children who have had managed moves or those who are transferred to alternative provision (Martin-Denham, 2019). Therefore the true scale of exclusions, based on currently available data may not be known and indeed may be greater than the figures presented here.

Despite this, the report provides an evidence base for local policy development surrounding school exclusion and will allow for cross-sectional planning of the local training requirements and service provision in preparation for meeting the many needs of children within Sunderland.

6. Recommendations

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are based on the analysis of the school census data sets.

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.

7. References

7. References

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