Exclusions: Best Practice

Overview Description

The information in this section seeks to compliment rather than replace MCC's Exclusion Guidance and Toolkit which can be found in our Schoolshub. (https://www.manchester.gov.uk/schoolhub/site/index.php)

Manchester Exclusions Guidance and Toolkit

School Exclusion Guidance and Toolkit

- Exclusions Toolkit 2021 (DOCX)
  Size: 93.61 KB
- Toolkit B Inclusion Panel Terms of Reference (DOCX)
  Size: 56.22 KB
- Toolkit C The Ladder of Support (DOCX)
  Size: 66.03 KB
- Toolkit D Early Help Referral (DOCX)
  Size: 54.92 KB
- Toolkit E SEMH Screening Assessment Tools (DOCX)
  Size: 32.62 KB
- Toolkit F Voice of the Child - a summary (DOCX)
  Size: 33.7 KB
- Toolkit G Student Support Action Plan (DOCX)
  Size: 29.53 KB
- Toolkit H MCC Managed Move Protocol (DOCX)
  Size: 65.45 KB
- Toolkit I Bridgelea Outreach Service (DOCX)
  Size: 846.03 KB
- Toolkit J Steps to Exclusion - a Headteacher's Checklist (DOCX)
  Size: 34.44 KB
- Toolkit K DFE Exclusion Codes (DOCX)
  Size: 47.27 KB
- Toolkit L Suspension - Step by Step (DOCX)
  Size: 34.5 KB
- Toolkit M Permanent Exclusion - Step by Step (DOCX)
  Size: 35.03 KB
- Toolkit N How to Record an Exclusion (DOCX)
  Size: 460.28 KB
- Toolkit O Permanent Exclusion Reporting Form (DOCX)
  Size: 41.73 KB
- Toolkit P Information on Attendance Codes (DOCX)
  Size: 32.13 KB
- Toolkit Q Model Exclusion Letters (DOCX)
  Size: 51.08 KB
- Toolkit R Governing Body Intervention - Step by Step (DOC)
  Size: 100 KB
- Toolkit S - Governors Exclusions Guidance (PDF)
  Size: 272.91 KB
- Toolkit T Exclusion Process on-a-page (DOCX)
  Size: 517.94 KB
- Toolkit U Glossary of Acronyms (PDF)
  Size: 93.7 KB

Information in this section instead describes MCC commissioned research undertaken by One Education EP Service which explored the factors that supported children and young people who had previously been considered to have been at risk of exclusion to subsequently succeed in school.

Readers are also encouraged to consider if the policies and practices in their education setting are informed by:
   a) MCC's guiding principles listed in Section One of this document
   b) One or more approaches described in Section Two of this document (inclusion, diversity and children's rights, promoting belonging, attachment, aces and trauma aware practice, nurturing principals, restorative approaches and developing a setting-wide mental health and wellbeing framework).

Research title: **How do Secondary Schools make positive change in preventing permanent exclusions? Sept 2020.**

The research sought to explore what the factors were that helped Year 11 pupils to maintain their school place when they had been at serious risk of permanent exclusion in Key Stage 3.
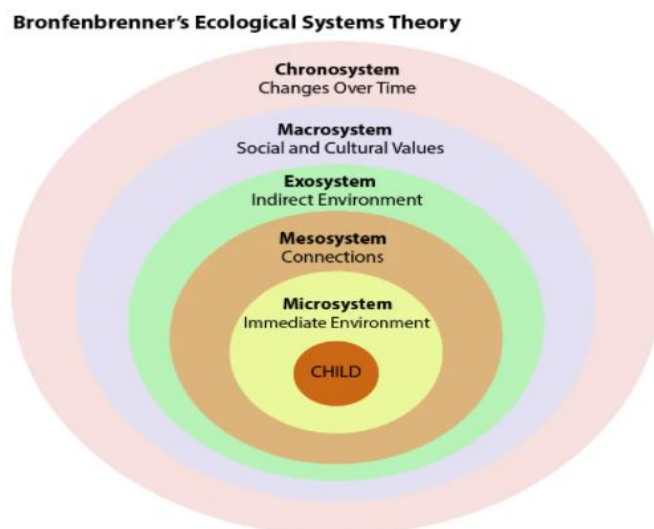
Background

Secondary school aged-pupils are the most vulnerable group to permanent exclusion and are over six times as likely to be excluded from school when compared to primary pupils (Department for Education and National Statistics, 2019). It is positive that in Manchester, permanent exclusions from secondary schools (as a percentage of the school population) reduced from 0.34 in 2016/2017 (the highest figure since 2010/ 2011 in Manchester) to 0.20 in 2018/2019 (compared to the national highest rates in Blackpool of 0.82 and the national lowest rates of 0 in Cambridge). (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait).

Persistent disruptive behaviour is the most commonly cited reason for permanent exclusions and given for 34% of exclusions nationally ((Department for Education and National Statistics, 2019). Despite the legislation protecting the rights of vulnerable pupils, it has been found that excluded children are much more likely to have multiple and complex needs. Permanent exclusion correlates to negative short and long-term implications for pupils, has been associated with negative implications for school as well as a substantial societal cost.

Methodology

The research encompassed a strengths-based approach (Harvey, 2014) in line with the, 'preventative' aim of the research; to generate strategies and solutions. Therefore, pupils, families, staff and leadership were interviewed in two secondary schools (school A and schol B) that were identifed as having low permanant exclusion rates.

Within the small-scale study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) was used as a core theoretical framework to explore individual and wider factors that might impact on preventing permanant exclusion in the Manchester context.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Demographic description of case A and case B (https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk and https://files.ofsted.gov.uk)

Information	Case A	Case B
Religious Character	Roman Catholic	Church of England
Gender of Entry	mixed secondary	mixed secondary
Size	slightly smaller than average	larger than average
Proportion of disadvantaged children and those supported by pupil premium	higher than the national average	higher than the national average
Pupils with an Education Health Care Plan	average	below average
Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	below average	below average
Attainment 8 score (score based on how well pupils have performed in up to 8 qualifications)	44.8 compared to local authority average of 43.3 and England average of 46.7	45.8 compared to local authority average of 43.3 and England average of 46.7
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds	well above average	higher than average
The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	above average	above average

Key Findings

The study highlighted that the factors that increase pupils agency and sense of belonging to their school community help to prevent exclusion. Supportive relationships were percieved as the most influential and the significance of supportive pupil-staff relationships were discussed in the greatest depth although the influence of parents, siblings and friends were also explored. The findings highlighted the value of consistent and affirming relationships with key members of staff.

Behaviour managment strategies that were percieved as helpful in preventing exclusion were delivered in a way that protected positive interpersonal relationships and in in particular pupil-staff relationships. The importance of having of systems, structures and a school ethos in place which promoted inclusive values and supported positive interpersonal relationships was also highlighted in this research

Central Themes

Agency

Within this theme the pupils spoke about taking ownership of their behaviour, understanding the potential consequences of negative behaviours and non-compliance and experiencing a desire to change. The research indicates that young people can play a pivotal role in preventing their school exclusion and as such they should be positioned as potential solution holders who actively participate in the planning of how the school can support them to prevent permanent exclusion throughout the decision-making process. Hence the findings provide support for the use of a person-centred approach in preventing exclusion.

Through supportive relationships, people within the individual's microsystem (for example, teachers, parents and siblings) can positively influence a pupil's sense of agency and help to facilitate their participation in the decision-making process. The pupils in the study were able to identify key people who helped them indicating it is beneficial when support is structured in a way that enables these key people to be involved in the process of prevention. Influential people can play a role in increasing an individual's motivation to change by helping them understand the potential consequences of certain behaviours as well as supporting them in realising their goals and aspirations for the future. In addition, influential others may also increase an individual's sense of self-efficacy by communicating that they believe in them and providing affirmation. Experiences of success were also found to influence an individual's sense of self-agency and key people within a young person's microsystem could play a role in supporting young people to find opportunities to experience success.

Relationships

The influence of immediate environmental factors was dominated by the theme 'relationships' (which operates at the level of microsystems) and was arguably perceived as the most dominant factor that helped to prevent school exclusion. This theme was explored by every participant group within the research. The finding that relationships were viewed as key to preventing exclusion is perhaps unsurprising as attachments have long been identified as an innate human need (e.g. Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Maslow 1968) and attachments have been argued to influence outcomes such as psychological well-being (Maslow, 1968), physical health (Feeny,2001) and adjustment (Bowlby, 1968). Baumeister and Leary (1995) link attachments to an individual's **sense of belonging within a community**. (See Section Two of this toolkit)

Pupil – staff relationships

Of the relationships discussed, staff-pupil relationships were explored in the greatest depth and nearly all of the pupils spoke about key members of staff who had helped them. Key Factors identified:

Never giving up!
The pupils and senior leader in the current study spoke about the significance of school staff believing in pupils and not giving up on them whereas the staff spoke about valuing and caring for pupils. There appears to be a strong body of evidence to suggest that positive pupil-staff relationships help to prevent school exclusion. Pupils and staff identified a number of behaviours which staff adopted that enabled them to develop positive relationships with pupils:
- Staff being non-judgemental, forgiving them when situations go wrong
- Staff actively restoring relationships when situations have been managed.
- Pupils said they valued been given second and sometimes numerous chances.

It is likely that these features of staff-pupil relationships help to communicate to pupils that they are valued, that staff believe in them and that they are not willing to

give up on them, all of which were identified as characteristics of positive relationships.

Strong staff working relationships and good internal systems
The discussions with staff and the senior leaders revealed the importance of staff having positive working relationships with each other at the microsystem level enabling them to manage situations effectively as it meant that they as practitioners felt supported. The staff in school A spoke about the importance of having formal systems in place including having staff allocated and available to manage and respond to situations as well as the value of having the capacity to allocate key people to individual pupils who were identified as vulnerable. The findings that certain systems and conditions need to be in place to enable effective staff-pupil relationships is perhaps unsurprising. It is difficult to contest the argument that in order for staff to be able to offer frequent and responsive support to individual pupils they need the availability and time to do this.

Key workers
School A highlighted that vulnerable young people are likely to benefit from being allocated to a key person/ key people who can listen to their views, advocate for them, and offer them frequent, consistent and responsive support which features plenty of affirmation. These key people could also help a young to manage difficult situations as they arise. The findings also indicated that in order for staff to be able to deliver this support enabling systems need to be in place to allow for their capacity.

Restorative Approaches
The findings suggest that behaviour management approaches which promote conflict resolution by: listening to the young person's view, giving them numerous chances, being non-judgemental and working restoratively with a young person when a situation has been managed are likely to be effective in helping to prevent exclusion. The implication of this is that behaviour management policies and practices which align with these approaches are likely to help to reduce school exclusions (see **Restorative Practices** in Section One of this toolkit).

Extra-curricular activities

The findings indicate that such participation can provide pupils with: experiences of success, opportunities to experience an emotional state of flow and opportunities to develop interpersonal skills. At an individual level these experiences may enhance pupil's feelings of efficacy. The implication of this finding is that pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion may to benefit from having opportunities to participate in enjoyable shared activities that reflect their interests and skill set.

Sanctions

The role of sanctions in preventing exclusion appeared of particular significance to participants and the theme was discussed by every participant group. The key sanctions discussed included: managed moves, respite and internal exclusions. It is argued that the use of sanctions in school stem from behaviourist principles about

punishment and stimulus avoidance which do not account for internal processes that govern behaviour. The research findings, highlighted that the use of sanctions is interpreted internally and lead to emotional and cognitive responses. Perhaps unsurprisingly the pupils reported that they did not like the use of sanctions and they associated their use with feelings of anxiety, anger and a sense of injustice. With this in mind, it could be predicted that the use of sanctions would produce less than optimal results in relation to behaviour management and reducing the risk of school exclusions. In contrast to this, the findings in this study indicate that pupils, staff, senior leaders and parents all perceived that the use of sanctions can help to prevent exclusion.

However, the findings and discussion highlight that there are risks associated with the use of sanctions as they can potentially damage inter-personal relationships and reduce opportunities for pupil participation. This could have a detrimental impact on a pupil's sense of belonging to their school. In order to mitigate these risks, staff can take steps to maintain pupils' sense of belonging during sanction periods and can take measures to restore relationships once situations have been managed.

Systems and Structure

This theme was predominately discussed by the senior leaders. The importance of consistency within school structures and systems has been highlighted in research with inconsistences being found to be associated with increased behavioural incidents (Mayer, 2001). The discussion highlighted that school staff and senior leaders believe that preventative practice that occurs at the microsystems level is facilitated and enabled by the systems that are in place within the school's exosystems. Systems which were perceived as helping to prevent exclusions were argued to be: based on inclusive principles, developed collaboratively with pupils, cohesive in nature, enabling of a flexible response to pupil's individual needs and communicated effectively to all members of the school community.

School Ethos

The link between school ethos and exclusion rates has been well established (Hatton, 2013; Turner and Waterhouse, 2000). The current research findings are supportive of the ever-growing body of literature which highlights an association between low-exclusion rates and a school ethos that promotes inclusive principles and emphasises the value of interpersonal relationships. The implications here are that to help to reduce exclusion school communities should strive to develop and communicate a clear set of values that promote inclusion and positive inter-personal relationships. These values should be known and where possible shared by all within the school community. This can be achieved by consistently interpreting values into policy and practice and reviewing the translation of values to practice regularly. This should help to create an inclusive lived school ethos.

References

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Turner, E. & Waterhouse, S. (2003) Towards inclusive schools: Sustaining normal in-school careers, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 8* (1), 19-31.

Key Documents

- School suspensions and permanent exclusions (DfE) Statutory Guidance: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusion

- School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children May 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf

- Timpson Review of School Exclusion (2019). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf

- The Timpson Review Government Response (May 2019). http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2019-0527/Timpson_Review_of_School_Exclusion_Government_Response.pdf