
Report to Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Thursday 21st October 2010

Subject: School Exclusions and GIRFEC

Report by: Interim Head of Education

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. At its meeting of 24 June 2010 the Committee asked that the Interim Head of Education prepare a report for the October 2010 Scrutiny Committee on exclusions from secondary and primary schools taking into account the trends in the last five years, the "Getting it Right for Every Child" agenda and repeat exclusion incidents for individual children. This report addresses the request.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee notes the content of the report and welcomes the actions that are being undertaken to reduce exclusions in Clackmannanshire Schools

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. The authority has a range of policies which are consistent with the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act (ASL) and which are covered by the term 'inclusion'.
- 3.2. Inclusion is as important internationally as it is locally and nationally. Most countries have groups of children who are excluded and or underachieve. The ASL Act and code of practice, and 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) have influenced strategic development and policy. A number of initiatives to support inclusion are currently in place in the authority including More Choices More Chances, The Skills Strategy, the Youth Strategy and the Early Years Framework.
- 3.3. The GIRFEC agenda highlights the need for early identification and for multi agency collaboration to support children and young people effectively. The Authority's Staged Intervention Framework is consistent with these principles. The Staged Intervention documentation and processes are currently being reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with GIRFEC and compatible with the documentation and processes used by our partners in Police and Health across Forth Valley.

- 3.4. Access to a range of additional resources for young people who require support is monitored through a monthly 'Access to Education' group. Membership of the group is cross service and comprises representatives from finance and HR, psychological services, teaching and support services and the school transport team.
- 3.5. Young people giving significant cause for concern are considered by a monthly multi agency screening group in order to assess and address concerns. School exclusions are now monitored monthly at the group in order to track pupils behaviour and ensure that they are supported as early as possible to remain in school. Membership of the group is cross service and comprises representatives from schools, child care services, support services, and psychological services
- 3.6. Resources are currently being refocused to ensure they are fit for purpose and provide the response required. Electronic data systems which will enable more effective communication are also under revision. This process, consistent with the principles of GIRFEC, is so far proving to be an improved, and therefore more effective, means of ensuring targeted joint working to support young people.
- 3.7. Training of staff is focussed on ensuring that all staff are as well equipped as possible to meet the needs of all pupils. For example, in the pre - 5 and primary sector, new materials have been introduced to help pupils develop the social skills which they need to operate effectively in the classroom and in the playground; staff training in 'Crisis Prevention Intervention' is regular and on going to make sure all staff are confident when pupils' behaviour is challenging; in the secondary sector all schools are implementing restorative practices to supplement their positive behaviour and discipline systems.
- 3.8. There is 'outreach support' to pupils in their mainstream setting provided by the 'Inclusion team' and the Primary and Secondary Support Services to try to ensure that all pupils needs are met as effectively as possible. Access to support of this nature is through the groups described in paragraph 3.4 & 3.5. This helps to ensure that resources are allocated fairly and according to the greatest need.
- 3.9. The right to education of every child of school age is stated in the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. The act also states that all children and young people will be educated in a mainstream school, commonly referred to as 'the presumption of mainstreaming'. Alternative educational provision should be in 'certain exceptional circumstances'. Therefore, at times, schools can experiences significant challenges in balancing the needs of one pupil whose behaviour may be challenging, with the needs of all pupils in the school.
- 3.10. Sometimes, in spite of all the resources available, some pupils behave in such a way in school that their behaviour is a danger to others or is such that it prevents other pupils' rights to education and exclusion from school is used as a sanction. Local policy on exclusion has to be consistent with national policy and with statutory requirements.

- 3.11. There is no doubt that the impact of repeated or extended periods of exclusion from school is likely to be damaging to any pupil's education and long-term life prospects. However, it is equally clear that schools cannot allow situations to persist in which an individual pupil's behaviour seriously disrupts the educational progress of classmates. The challenge for schools is to minimise exclusion, with its attendant undesirable consequences for the individual concerned, whilst ensuring that the effective education of other pupils is not disrupted.
- 3.12. As a result, exclusion is seen as a last resort and is used when there is no other available option. Exclusion procedures are set out clearly and form part of Council policy. The procedures must be compliant with the statutory duties placed upon the Council.
- 3.13. Within Clackmannanshire there is strong evidence of a range of good practice in schools and, in particular, the contribution of:
- a strong professional commitment by staff to inclusive education
 - the promotion of a positive ethos of good behaviour and high achievement
 - effective collaborative working practices between different groups of staff, and between teachers and other professionals.

4.0 Exclusions 05-06 to 09-10

Committee specifically requested data on exclusions for the past 5 years. Exclusion statistics are published annually by the government. Recently reported data (27Jan 2010) relates to the 2008 - 09 school session. For the purposes of this paper, exclusion data for session 09-10 has also been included. For the purposes of comparison, national data for session 09-10 will not be available until January 2011

- 4.1 Exclusion statistics can be presented in a range of ways and this can make tracking data difficult: numbers of pupils excluded; numbers of exclusions; the number of pupil days lost to exclusion can all be used to illustrate figures. Without interrogation, these figures can be misleading. A simple example of this would be to confuse the number of pupils excluded with the number of exclusions. Two pupils could be excluded on 3 occasions. This would generate the total of 2 for the number of pupils excluded. The total number of exclusions would total 6. The number of days lost to exclusion could range from 1 (a half day for each pupil) to 120 (3 x 20 half days x 2 pupils). Therefore, it is essential that conclusions are drawn from data that is directly comparable.
- 4.2 In general, there are more boys than girls excluded in both primary and secondary sectors. This is consistent with the national picture. Nationally, 100 pupils / 1000 are excluded in areas of greatest deprivation (as described using the national indices of multiple deprivation (SIMD) compared with 13 pupils / 1000 in the least deprived areas. Exclusion data for the local secondary schools would be consistent with this trend. In 02-03 , exclusion rates nationally were 49.1 / 1000 pupils. This figure peaked in 06-07 when the national figure rose to 63.9 / 1000. National data published on 27 January 2010 describing the figures for 08-09 showed that they had returned to just above the 02-03 level at 49.9/1000.

4.3 Pupils can be excluded for a range of reasons. Some of these are listed below.

- Persistent/general disobedience and verbal abuse of staff are the most likely causes of exclusion nationally and locally.
- Assault and offensive or insolent behaviour are also reasons for exclusion.
- Rarely, pupils are excluded for alcohol/substance misuse and threats of violence.
- Parental non co-operation can also be a reason. Locally, this can lead to repeat exclusion at the point of the readmission to school interview.

Local data (see appendix A)

Local data has been provided for the last 5 years. This includes the number of repeat exclusions on a year by year basis. Whilst much remains to be done to support pupils to remain in their mainstream setting and not be excluded, the general trend is downward. The number of openings (i.e. half days lost to pupils through exclusion) is down as is the number of pupils who have repeated exclusions. For the first time, this session, figures for exclusion will be monitored on a monthly, school by school basis in order to monitor the progress of schools to reduce these figures further and to support them in this way, pupils who require additional support will be identified as early as possible.

Conclusion

The vast majority of young people in schools are very well behaved. For a small number, their circumstances are such that they can require support to make and maintain positive relationships with their peers and the adults in school. All young people make mistakes; this is part of the transition from childhood to adulthood. A few do so so persistently that they require to be reminded of the standards of behaviour that are expected of them in school. The health and safety of all who attend school is of paramount importance, as is the learning experience. Where these come under threat, it is essential that sanctions can be applied. Exclusion as one of a range of sanctions. Strenuous efforts will continue to be made to ensure that it is only used as a last resort in the authority's schools.

5. Sustainability

N/A

6. Resource Implications

6.1 *Financial Details*

6.2 The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate.

Yes

6.3 Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

6.4 *Staffing*

7.0 Exempt Reports

7.1 Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

8.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities 2008 - 2011** (Please double click on the check box)

- The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses
- Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive
- People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment
- Our communities are safer
- Vulnerable people and families are supported
- Substance misuse and its effects are reduced
- Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing
- The environment is protected and enhanced for all
- The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

9.0 Equalities Impact

9.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes No

10.0 Legality

10.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

Appendix A

12.0 Background Papers

12.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes (please list the documents below) No

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Approved by

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