

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>Children and Families Scrutiny Panel</b>
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>28.11.2024</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Bryn Roberts, Service Manager for Inclusion</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Permanent Exclusions and Suspensions - Current Position and Action Plan</b>

## 1. Summary

This report provides an overview of the status of school suspensions and permanent exclusions within Southampton. This progress is aligned with the local authority's broader goals of promoting inclusion, reducing school suspensions and exclusions, reducing school absence and raising educational attainment for all students.

### Summary Data

Nationally available data for suspensions and permanent exclusions is available annually but will be up to 2 academic years prior. The data we have used for the academic year 2022/2023 comes from this statistical data release from the DfE.

To benchmark against more recent data, we use a variety of local information and the use of NCER data, which is shared information by local authorities to a centralised record on a termly basis. Whilst this is not nationally confirmed data, it has proven to have a high level of accuracy in predicting performance nationally. This has been used for the purpose for the 2023/2024 data provided below.

**For the purposes of measuring exclusions and suspensions, being 'below' national is positive.**

### DfE Statistical Data Release – Academic Year 2022/2023

The academic year 2022/2023 saw a significant rise in suspensions and permanent exclusions nationally and in Southampton. Suspensions rose in Southampton by 4.91% against a national increase of 2.53%. This equates to 3,623 suspensions for Southampton.

For the number of pupils with more than 1 suspensions, Southampton had an increase of 1.19% against a national of 0.61%. The equates to 1,359 pupils.

In 2022/23 Southampton maintained its record of being below the national level of 0.08% to that of 0.07%, equating to 41 permanent exclusions. Southampton has been below the national level for permanent exclusions for over 3 successive years.

### Summary Headline Data (2023/2024)

Permanent Exclusions: Against the latest NCER available (Autumn and Spring 2023/24) Southampton remains below the national for permanent exclusions. This remains 0.07% against a national level of 0.08%, putting us in the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of local authorities.

Suspensions: In line with national trends, Southampton has experienced a rise in suspensions. Our Autumn and Spring 2023/24 data demonstrates a suspension level 1.94% above national.

## 2. **Contextual information**

In Southampton we have seen our suspensions and permanent exclusion rates follow the same path as the national trends, albeit at a higher rate. The reason for this rise is complex and considers many aspects of both societal and economic impacts. Simply requesting schools not to exclude or suspend would be misjudged and must be a collective response across all organisations to tackle the problem. This is not unique to Southampton, and our performance against statistical neighbours remains relatively positive.

In the academic year 2023/2024 we have seen the following trends and patterns, which informs our priorities and next steps.

- The highest ethnicity group for suspensions was White British.
- The highest excluding year groups were for year 6 and year 10.
- Pupils with SEN K (SEN Support) and FSM (Free school meals/pupil premium) had a disproportionate number of suspensions.
- The main reasons cited for suspensions was 'verbal abuse towards an adult' for the primary phase and 'disruptive behaviour' for secondary.
- There was evidence of improvement from some of the highest suspending schools in the summer term, owing to partnership working and (in some cases) new leadership.
- There has been an overall reduction in the number of permanent exclusions compared to 22/23, although we have seen a rise in the primary phase.
- We have also seen a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from Hampshire schools for Southampton residents. This has reduced from 9 in 2022/23 to 1 in 2023/24.

### **Academic Year 2024/2025**

#### **Current Update**

So far this year, we have seen some of our highest excluding schools continue to make significant progress in addressing their use of suspensions and exclusions. The 4 schools identified in 2023/2024 have seen a 53% reduction compared to the same period in the previous year.

We have also seen a significant reduction (62%) in the number of permanent exclusions compared to the same period.

#### **What are we doing now?**

As part of our focussed work on reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions, an action plan is in place. Areas of focus for delivery are:

- Begin developing the 5-year exclusions strategy with school leaders and key stakeholders. This focusses on not only schools' input, but also the voluntary sector and health colleagues.
- Earlier identification of pupils who are receiving high levels of suspension or multiple suspensions.
- Identification of key priority schools to offer support through a multi-agency response to develop practice.
- To increase the links between school improvement and reducing exclusions, with joint visits.
- Increase reporting tools to enable us to be more preventative.
- Early intervention aligned with the proposed SEND Cluster Models programme.
- Establish a new 'Front Door' solution for schools to access support and advice quicker. This will also include an escalation process where schools can refer

critical cases to a regularly met team of professionals as well as a centralised hub of information, explicitly for schools.

- Regular sharing of data with schools and working with school leaders to have collective responsibility, enabling them to not only look at their own school performance, but the impact across the city.
- Improve our offer of training for school leaders and governance around processes, expectations and how governors can have an impact on reducing suspensions.
- Improve the oversight of pupils who are on long-term waiting lists for CAMHs to be prioritised where there are adverse educational experiences to prevent long term issues.
- Continue to use our Awards for All programme to support those who are eligible for Free School Meals to be identified and increase the funding capability for schools to support disadvantaged learners.
- To explore through our HAF programme, how our summer pilot that focussed on transition for years 6-7 can be city wide.
- Provide improved guidance documents on key areas of Inclusion to empower schools to be more secure in the delivery of inclusive education.
- More direct work in schools to support earlier intervention and mediation.