

What to do if a Somerset Child Looked After is at risk of exclusion

Context:

In 2016/17, the Local Authority observed a steep increase in the number of children and young people excluded from both maintained schools and academies. A closer study of the data revealed the increase affected the number of Children Looked After (CLA) and that many CLA were being fixed term excluded on more than one occasion by a number of schools. In response, Somerset's Virtual School has designed an action plan to

- raise awareness of the impact of exclusion on CLA
- ensure an appropriate level of challenge to schools exists
- provide earlier intervention where schools are struggling to meet the needs of CLA

The role of the Designated Teacher

- Share any concerns regarding the education of CLA with the Virtual School as soon as they arise so timely action can be taken to avoid escalation and risk of exclusion
- Advocate on behalf of the child or young person with school staff and management to identify issues, seek effective support and look for alternatives to exclusion
- Promote school-wide attachment aware responses to behaviours from CLA, encouraging staff training and development in this area where possible
- Ensure that PEP meetings are used to bring all stakeholders together to plan on-going support and/or intervention where there has been an incidence of exclusion

The role of the Social Worker

- Share any concerns regarding the education of CLA with the Virtual School as soon as they arise so timely action can be taken to avoid escalation and risk of exclusion
- Attend multi-professional meetings to explore issues and offer support to children, young people and schools in relation to their care and development
- Advocate for the child or young person ensuring all information relating to exclusion is fully understood, accurate and that all reasonable action to avoid exclusion is being taken
- Ensure that PEP meetings are used to plan on-going support and/or intervention where there has been an incidence of exclusion

The role of the Virtual School

- Ensure that PEP meetings are used to bring all stakeholders together to plan on-going support and/or intervention where there has been an incidence of exclusion
- Attend multi-professional meetings to explore issues and offer support to children, young people and schools in relation to their care and development
- Advocate for the child or young person ensuring all information relating to exclusion is fully understood, accurate and that all reasonable action to avoid exclusion is being taken
- Deploy available resources effectively to support a child or young person in order to prevent exclusion

On receiving notification of a CLA being excluded from school (this notification is provided by attendance monitoring organisations)

1. The VS Advisory Teacher will make contact with the school and arrange for the Virtual School to be represented at the reintegration meeting
2. The VS Advisory Teacher will ensure the child's Social Worker is aware of the exclusion and gather any relevant information about the placement/carers/parents etc.
3. At the reintegration meeting the context and agreed support/actions to prevent a further exclusion will be recorded on the Exclusion Checklist pro forma, a copy placed on the child's file and a copy sent to the VSH
4. Consideration should be given at the meeting as to whether there is a role for an Education Support Worker (ESW) to play in reintegration post exclusion or support to address specific concerns
5. An assessment should be made as to whether there should be an assessment for an EHCP in the light of escalating needs
6. If further Pupil Premium Grant is needed to secure additional support, this should be agreed with the VSH and costed for a specific period with a review date agreed
7. The active PEP should be updated to take account of agreed action(s) and any additional funding recorded and logged with the PEP Co-ordinators
8. The VS register should be updated by the PEP Co-ordinator so show the date and duration of the exclusion

If a child or young person is excluded from school for a second time, the VS Advisory Teacher will alert the VSH and the Social Worker and agree a course of action which may include:

- a. a MPM to explore the wider context and appropriate intervention and ensure the school is managing their graduated response appropriately

- b. liaison with the Supervising Social Worker to ensure that carers are supporting/being supported appropriately to manage the impact of exclusion and actively prevent further incidents
- c. liaison with appropriate Local Authority education officers to secure support for the school/school leadership
- d. a visit to the Headteacher by VS staff
- e. if the school is not Ofsted rated as Good or Outstanding and the child is not making progress, there should be consideration of a school move (if all other factors are stable for the child)
- f. if further Pupil Premium Grant is needed to secure additional support, this should be agreed with the VSH and costed for a specific period with a review date agreed
- g. consideration of whether CSC should be addressing more holistic needs and therapeutic interventions to support the child's escalating needs
- h. the active PEP should be updated to take account of agreed action(s) and any additional funding recorded and logged with the PEP Co-ordinators
- i. the VS register should be updated by the PEP Co-ordinator so show the date and duration of the exclusion

Permanent Exclusion of Somerset CLA

Thorough and thoughtful work using an effective graduated response and a joined-up multi-professional approach that includes the Virtual School should enable CLA to be successful in their school community. The Virtual School will robustly challenge the permanent exclusion of any Somerset CLA. Headteachers will be actively encouraged to find alternative solutions to P/Ex and supported in seeking these alternative by the Virtual School.

National Policy and Guidance – Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England. A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion – DfE 2012

Statutory guidance on factors that a head teacher should take into account before taking the decision to exclude

- 'The decision on whether to exclude is for a head teacher to take. However, where practical, head teachers should give pupils an opportunity to present their case before taking the decision to exclude.'
- 'Whilst an exclusion may still be an appropriate sanction, head teachers should take account of any contributing factors that are identified after an incident of poor behaviour has occurred. For example, where it comes to light that a pupil has suffered bereavement, has mental health issues or has been subject to bullying. '

- ‘Early intervention to address underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN or disability that a pupil may have. Head teachers should also consider the use of a multi-agency assessment for pupils who demonstrate persistent disruptive behaviour. Such assessments may pick up unidentified special educational needs but the scope of the assessment could go further, for example, by seeking to identify mental health or family problems.’
- ‘Where a pupil has received multiple exclusions or is approaching the legal limit of 45 school days of fixed period exclusion in an academic year, head teachers should consider whether exclusion is providing an effective sanction.’

Statutory guidance to head teachers on the exclusion of pupils from groups with disproportionately high rates of exclusion

- ‘The exclusion rates for certain groups of pupils are consistently higher than average. This includes: pupils with SEN; pupils eligible for Free School Meals; looked after children; and pupils from certain ethnic groups. The ethnic groups with the highest rates of exclusion are: Gypsy / Roma; Travellers of Irish Heritage; and Black Caribbean communities.’
- ‘In addition to the approaches on early intervention set out above, head teachers should consider what extra support might be needed to identify and address the needs of pupils from these groups in order to reduce their risk of exclusion. For example, schools might draw on the support of Traveller Education Services, or other professionals, to help build trust when engaging with families from Traveller communities.’

Statutory guidance to head teachers on the exclusion of pupils with statements of SEN and looked after children

- ‘As well as having disproportionately high rates of exclusion, there are certain groups of pupils with additional needs who are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of exclusion. This includes pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN) and looked after children. Head teachers should, as far as possible, avoid excluding permanently any pupil with a statement of SEN or a looked after child.’
- ‘Schools should engage proactively with parents in supporting the behaviour of pupils with additional needs. In relation to looked after children, schools should co-operate proactively with foster carers or children’s home workers and the local authority that looks after the child.’
- ‘Where a school has concerns about the behaviour, or risk of exclusion, of a child with additional needs, a pupil with a statement of SEN or a looked after child it should, in partnership with others (including the local authority as necessary),

consider what additional support or alternative placement may be required. This should involve assessing the suitability of provision for a pupil's SEN. Where a pupil has a statement of SEN, schools should consider requesting an early annual review or interim / emergency review.'

This is a link to the latest DfE guidance document on exclusion from school – updated July 2017

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630169/Exclusion_Guidance_consultation_response.pdf

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