



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 13 July 2023

Managing and Improving School Exclusions including data

Purpose:	To consider the progression of the strategies to reduce exclusions
Content:	An overview of the work undertaken to promote school inclusion
Councillors are Being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Swansea Council is committed to promoting inclusion in education, as evidenced in the 2022 Estyn inspection of education services in Swansea. Learner wellbeing and welfare is critical to supporting this commitment which can only be achieved if every child is included and has an opportunity to succeed.

1.2 This approach is reflected in both Swansea Council's corporate priorities of: Improving Education and Skills - so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life and specifically:

- We want all children and young people to attend school regularly, to be safe, to be resilient and to be healthy.
- We want to encourage and support vulnerable learners and their families to be engaged in learning.

- 1.3 Reducing exclusion is a key aim set out in the Vulnerable Learners Service Inclusion Strategy, approved by Cabinet in May, 2023. The local authority aims to ensure that children and young people are engaged in education that meets their needs. The inclusion team aims to provide early intervention through a number of successful strategies such as early identification for education other than at school (EOTAS) services, bespoke education arrangements, managed moves, and the monitoring of pastoral support plans (PSPs).
- 1.4 The local authority uses data to support prevention and intervention strategies. A mobility audit is produced annually which is split into separate analysis of fixed term exclusions, permanent exclusions, managed moves, and pastoral support plans (PSPs). It analyses data and provides context and is shared with all schools. Additionally, an exclusions analyser has been created and again shared with all schools. Three inclusion officers work with a number of schools to collate effective practice and share accordingly.

2. Data highlights

- 2.1 Fixed term exclusions have almost doubled since the 2018/2019 (academic year) pre pandemic period. However, exclusion rates are in line with national trends. In Swansea it is interesting to note, that a few schools have not followed this trend. A few schools have fixed term exclusion rates that were lower last year than any year in the past 5 years. In general, primary school exclusions remain lower than that of secondary schools. Additionally, officers provide regular training to senior leaders and governors on exclusion processes and seek to reduce exclusions by earlier referrals to pupil referral unit (PRU) provision.
- 2.2 Any exclusion is ultimately the decision of the headteacher, and we acknowledge that permanent exclusion is a very difficult decision issue; no headteacher takes the decision lightly, and always puts the best interests of all learners at the heart of the decision making.
- 2.3 The Inclusion team ensure swift and tailored provision to ensure that any child who has been permanently excluded is provided with the most appropriate education for their needs. In the last academic year 13 children were enrolled in different mainstream schools and the remainder were educated with EOTAS provision.

3. Interventions to promote inclusion

- 3.1 A managed move offers a pupil the opportunity to move to a new school and have a fresh start. The transfer to the new school is carefully planned and the pupil is fully supported during the process. The inclusion team coordinates every managed move between schools in Swansea,

providing support to all parties involved. No child who was offered a managed move in the last academic year was subsequently permanently excluded, and only 2% resulted in an application for EOTAS.

- 3.2 A PSP is a time limited school-based intervention that is designed to support children and young people who have not responded to a range of interventions and strategies put in place to combat disengagement. Our records show that 43 pupils in secondary schools were supported by a PSP, including 27 from mainstream schools and 16 learners from Maes Derw PRU. Only one child was referred to EOTAS following a PSP and no learners were given a permanent exclusion following a PSP. A majority achieved an eventual full-time school provision.
- 3.3 Officers work with our schools to be proactive in seeking support, and thus minimise exclusions. An education inclusion officer has been seconded to scope targeted external provision which promotes engagement and contributes to the wellbeing of the learner. Bespoke packages that are developed in a person-centred way are being trialled, through use of a PSP. We are in the process of updating our PSP guidance, to ensure all bespoke experiences are captured through one document.
- 3.4 Officers recently took part in pan Wales problem solving and effective practice sessions in relation to improving attendance and reducing exclusions. On a local level education officers attend multiagency and cross directorate strategic and operational groups to ensure links are made between issues in school and the community.
- 3.5 Most Swansea schools are now implementing a trauma informed environment which seeks to de-escalate through a variety of emotion coaching techniques. Through additional funding the Education Directorate has been able to secure 90 places for school-based practitioners to attend a level 3 trauma informed diploma. Trauma informed practice in schools aims to increase teachers, staff, and practitioners' awareness of how trauma can negatively impact individual children and the whole school community. This includes children and young people's ability to feel safe and develop trusting relationships with others. It is too early to understand outcomes however, initial feedback is very positive.
- 3.6 In serious cases where exclusions are issued, the Education Directorate will assist the headteacher in exploring all avenues for support and signposting to appropriate agencies, such as the Early Help Hub referral, Youth Justice Service prevention referral, as well as third sector agencies such as Media Academy and BAROD if needed. Furthermore, each incident is logged so that schools are able to build up a picture of need. Most schools use 'My Concern' as a recording mechanism. We are currently reviewing the effectiveness of this as a tool to oversee incidents from a school wide perspective.

- 3.7 The Education Directorate works in partnership across the council and other partners. It is the best approach to develop a holistic response to behaviour issues within school. We are engaged in a number of groups, strategies and interventions which include the work around; Community focussed schools, NEET prevention, the Cynnydd fund and transition to Shared Prosperity Funding and the strategies to increase engagement via these funds, our strategy to reduce Emotionally Based School Avoidance, our multi-agency working with CMET, Youth Justice Services and Early Help Hubs and our work developing Whole School Approaches to Emotional Health and Wellbeing. We are also involved with regional partnerships including the Western Bay Safeguarding Board and West Glamorgan Children and Young Peoples Programme Board.
- 3.8 We are currently leading a cross directorate group to embed process and policy to become an Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) aware council. We are working with ACE HUB Cymru to gain accreditation.
- 3.9 The Education Directorate is committed to embedding a whole school approach to emotional and mental well-being through its EPHW forum and work with CAMHs in-reach and outreach services. This requires schools to develop a continuous process of reflection and improvement. By self-evaluating needs and strengths, schools can identify priority areas for action that specific interventions may help to address. The Education Directorate is embedding an emotional literacy (ELSA) intervention in schools, to support pupils identify their emotions which encourages less aggressive individual responses.
- 3.10 A language guide is being developed through the contextual missing exploited and trafficked (CMET) team's youth council in Swansea. Officers working with children and young people recognise language as a powerful tool, and when not used appropriately can be dehumanising and cause reactions. The language guide will be adapted and embedded across the directorate and with schools.
- 3.11 There remains a challenge in terms of securing impact and improvement as funding issues force implications on capacity of staffing. While our approaches focus on prevention and building capacity the importance of building positive relationship is significant and that requires more resource than we have available.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications within this report.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

6. Equality & Engagement Implications

6.1 The report is for information and discussion.

Appendices:

None.