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| Committee | Children's Services Scrutiny Committee |
| Date | 16 June 2014 |
| Report By | Director of Children's Services |
| Title of Report | Update on School Exclusions and Attendance Following the Peer Review |
| Purpose of Report | To report on progress against the recommendations from the Peer Review in November 2013 |

RECOMMENDATION: The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the progress made in delivering the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of School Exclusions in East Sussex and developments following the Peer Review into exclusions and attendance.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 The Peer Review into exclusions and attendance in East Sussex coincided with the twelve-month look-back on the progress made following the Scrutiny review in to school exclusions. This gave the Children's Services Department an opportunity to both evaluate progress towards the recommendations set down in 2012, and look forward to how we would address the ongoing challenges in relation to school exclusions and attendance.

2.2 Following comments made at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in November, this report will not only focus on performance over the past twelve months, but will look forward to some of the developments which are planned over the next year which we hope will have an impact on performance. Although the original scrutiny review only focussed on exclusions in school, performance data in relation to attendance has also been included in this report so as to address all the areas for development highlighted by the Peer Review.

2.3 Appendix 1 outlines the progress that has been made against the recommendations that came out of the Peer Review. This review, taken over two days, took a broad look at our performance in bringing about improvements to attendance and exclusions through consultation with key staff and stakeholders (including frontline staff, schools and governors). The team identified a number of strengths within the delivery in East Sussex, and also highlighted some areas for development which we have taken on board. A copy of the Peer Review outcome report can be found in Appendix 2.

2.4 The data profile of exclusion continues to paint a varied picture for East Sussex and highlights where there are areas of good and poor performance. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the main outturns from the 13/14 financial year (with comparisons to the previous two financial years). The headlines of these data are:

- Increase in secondary permanent exclusions in 13/14 by 21%, but a reduction by 7% from 11/12
- Decrease in secondary fixed term exclusions in 13/14 by 17%, continuing the downward trend with an overall reduction by 23% from 11/12.
- Increase in primary permanent exclusions in 13/14 by 25%, but a reduction by 13% from 11/12
- Increase in primary fixed term exclusions in 13/14 by 70%, going against the downward trend seen in 12/13.

- 86% of secondary schools issued permanent exclusions in 13/14; 38% maintained zero permanent exclusion levels or decreased.
- 13% of primary schools permanently excluded one or more children
- 63% of primary schools maintained zero fixed term exclusion levels or decreased; of the 37% who increased, 1 school accounted for 13% of the total increase.

2.5 Historically, East Sussex performance in attendance has also been poor compared to statistical and national figures. During the 12/13 academic year, 3.5% of primary-aged children were considered persistent absentees (attendance rates below 85%); 8.5% of secondary children fell into this category (see Appendix 4). Since April 2013, the service has reviewed its methodology to responding to attendance concerns, by taking a more targeted approach as well as the historical referral-based process. The results of this have been impressive and achieved two key outcomes:

- Persistent Absence (PA) levels for terms 1-4 of this academic year show rates at 2.6% for primary and 4.3% for secondary. As PA rates always drop off over terms 5 and 6, we are anticipating a significant improvement for the full 13/14 academic year.
- Confidence in the ability of CSD services has improved and more schools are buying in additional support from the Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) thereby increasing support in this area.

2.6 One of the significant developments, since the peer review, has been a focus on partnership working to address concerns in relation to attendance and exclusion. Not only has there been a clear drive to tie up strands of work across ESBAS and the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) so as to improve the visibility of inclusion-related indicators within the standards agenda, but we have taken a targeted approach with individual schools to improve practice. Appendix 5 outlines some new projects (started in April 2014) that have been agreed with individual schools who have high levels of exclusion with a view to testing different methodologies for reducing exclusions in targeted primary schools.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 Improving attendance and reducing exclusions remains a high priority for the Children's Services Department and this report goes some way to demonstrate the impact that we are having as well as the areas we still need to improve upon. The focus on this key area is prominent in the proposed newly re-structured services, to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which come on-line in September 2014.

3.2 It is recommended that Scrutiny consider the progress made on the recommendations contained in the review, and notes the on-going developments which we expect to have a positive impact on outcomes in this area.

STUART GALLIMORE
Director of Children's Services

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Local Member: All

Background Documents: Appendices 1 - 6

Appendix 1 – Progress Towards Recommendations Following the Peer Review of Attendance and Exclusions

| | Recommendation | RAG | Progress to date – June 2014 |
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| R1 | Utilise 'Excellence for All' as a basis to establish a shared language and understanding of standards, to include attendance and exclusions. | G | Excellence for All has been updated to include overt references to attendance and exclusion, clearly linking these to the standards agenda. Furthermore, an agreed change in the process for identifying schools requiring additional support, and their associated categorisation, has been agreed which will incorporate intelligence from the Education Support Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS), as well as the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES). |
| R2 | <p>a) Review the work of Alliances and Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships to ensure coherence</p> <p>b) Consider agreeing 2 or 3 county-wide (as well as local) priorities for the Alliances which could include attendance and exclusions</p> | A | <p>a) A review of the Primary B&A Partnerships has been undertaken with a view to rationalising these and ensuring that they have the most impact. Secondary B&A Partnerships continue to operate and we are working with them to make better use of data through partnership-wide dashboards.</p> <p>b) A review of the targets for school alliances is underway and, where appropriate, will include targets for reductions in absence and exclusion. The impact of these will be measured across alliances and linked to B&A Partnerships.</p> |
| R3 | Produce a single dashboard on standards, which includes Ofsted data | A | Exclusion dashboards have been produced. ESBAS is investigating the best way to incorporate up-to-date Ofsted information so as to ensure that it is both meaningful and relevant to partnership activities. |
| R4 | Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships need to secure enough time on their agendas for a regular focus on sharing of good practice based on data-sharing and the data dashboard. | G | Dedicated time is, now, given at partnership meetings to sharing good practice as well as analysis of partnership-wide data. This is already helping to facilitate peer challenge in meetings where individual schools appear to have disproportionate levels of exclusion. |

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| R5 | Develop the methodology of case studies of good practice. | G | We have developed the use of impact narratives across ESBAS with a requirement on all staff to complete at least three a year (see Appendix 6 for an example of one of these). These are not only to highlight good practice, but also to help understand where things have not gone as we would have expected and, therefore, aim to enhance self-reflective practice across the service. |
| R6 | Develop the tracking of pupil progress following the intervention of a service to measure sustainability. | A | This has already begun with attendance interventions and, from this, we are able to demonstrate the long term impact of interventions. As exclusions are not always the best individual measure for impact, we are working with our behaviour support teams to identify clear measures which can demonstrate progress and also contribute to the reduction in exclusions in schools. |
| R7 | Seek feedback from governors to further develop the training offer | G | Training programme has been adapted since the Peer Review to include importance of governors to review exclusion data as a matter of course (i.e. to reinforce that their role goes beyond reviews of exclusions at discipline committees. Feedback from governors to revised training has been universally positive (100% evaluations 'good' or better). |
| R8 | Clearly identify good practice in relation to individual schools | A | Good practice pro-forma have been developed and will be completed at the end of this academic year with a view to disseminating good practice guidance in 14/15. |
| R9 | Obtain greater clarity on how schools are using Pupil Premium to support vulnerable groups, who are disproportionately excluded or absent from school, to remain in schools and achieve | A | SLES are running targeted Pupil Premium visits focussed on schools with high levels of FSM and poor outcomes. Learning from these will be disseminated across SLES and SEND Provider Services with a view to targeting support in key areas of need. |
| R10 | With high numbers of SEN pupils being excluded, undertake a further analysis in relation to the skills of staff | G | As part of the SEND reform programme, we are undertaking a comprehensive Learning Needs Analysis of all staff. This will highlight gaps in the required skills of staff across the service and allow for a high quality CPD programme to be developed. Furthermore, a competency framework has been drawn up by SE7 Local Authorities which allows team managers to have a focussed conversation with staff around the expectations for supporting children with SEND. |

East Sussex Peer Challenge – Attendance and Exclusions
11th-12th November 2013

Introduction

This visit was undertaken in the well understood context of a changing landscape of local authority accountabilities, school governance and financial constraints. It is our view that, in pursuit of the shared ambition of improving outcomes for all children, the local authority and its partners have yet to exploit fully the opportunities that these changes and diversity provide. East Sussex County Council is well placed to move more from 'overseeing' to 'partnering' in a school led future for school improvement. Its statutory role as the champion of the wellbeing of all children and young people should continue to include robust challenge in such a future.

Strengths to build on

- Active engagement and challenge by elected members based on the scrutiny review of exclusions
- Development of Alliances (well received by schools)
- Development of Primary Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships focusing on transparent use of data and sharing of good practice.
- Committed, skilled professionals who provide support across services within Schools, Youth and Inclusion Support
- Broad training offer to schools which covers a range of needs.
- Focus on casework which is tracked by staff during the intervention
- Successful ASD support which has helped to develop school practice
- Evidence that the 6 nurture groups operating in primary schools are beginning to reduce the need for exclusion
- Provision of governor training offered across the county

Areas to develop further

- Utilise Excellence For All as a basis to establish a shared language and understanding of standards, to include attendance and exclusions
- Review the work of Alliances and Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships to ensure coherence
- Produce a single data dashboard on standards, which includes Ofsted data
- Consider agreeing 2 or 3 county wide (as well as local) priorities for the Alliances which could include, for this year, attendance and exclusions
- Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships need to secure enough time on their agendas for a regular focus on sharing of good practice based on data sharing and the data dashboard
- Develop the methodology of case studies of good practice

- Develop the tracking of pupil progress following the intervention of a service to measure sustainability
- Seek feedback from governors to further develop training offer
- Clearly identify good practice in relation to individual schools
- Obtain greater clarity on how schools are using pupil premium to support vulnerable groups, who are disproportionately excluded or absent from school, to remain in schools and achieve
- With high numbers of SEN pupils being excluded, undertake further analysis in relation to appropriateness of assessment, skills of staff, predominant need

Actions to consider

- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities of the local authority and schools to provide or commission statutory/strategic/traded functions
- SLES and ESBAS to be more joined up, streamlining the function of both services to secure best use of resources.
- Ensure that focused work to reduce the need for exclusions and improve attendance is outcome led rather than activity led.

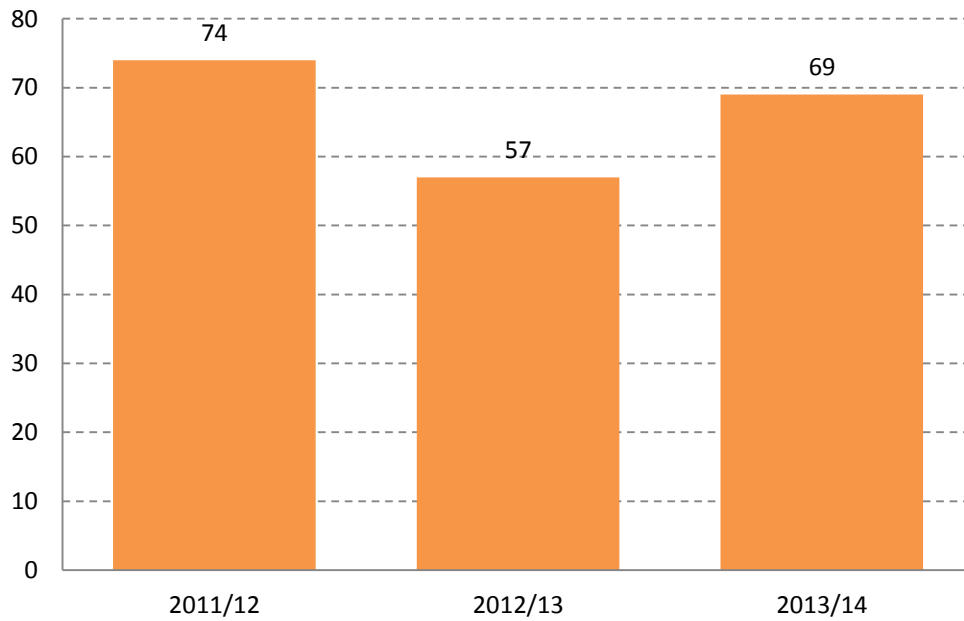
Concluding remarks

Those interviewed saw the opportunity for the new Director of Children's Services to work with all involved to steer a new vision across all aspects of school improvement as well as clarify accountabilities. Headteachers were keen to contribute to a group, facilitated by the local authority, to develop these core values. Local Authority services recognised the need to have a 'leaner, meaner, sharper' focus on targets and outcomes for children and young people, whether or not a service is traded. All involved recognised the need for pace of implementation.

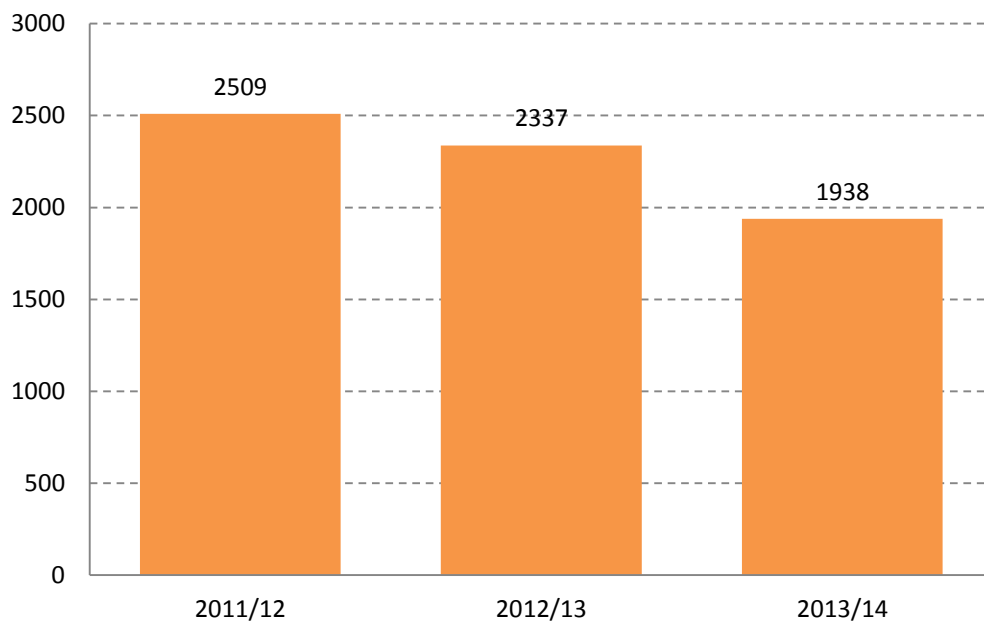
**Peer Challenge Team
November 2013**

Appendix 3:
Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusion Rates by Phase (financial year)

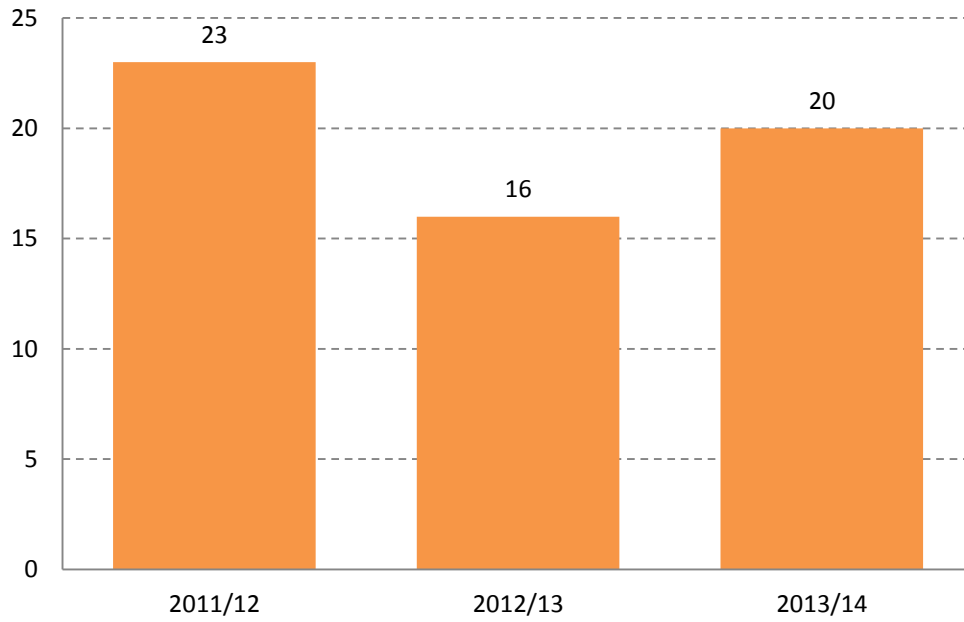
Secondary Permanent Exclusions: 3 year trend (financial)



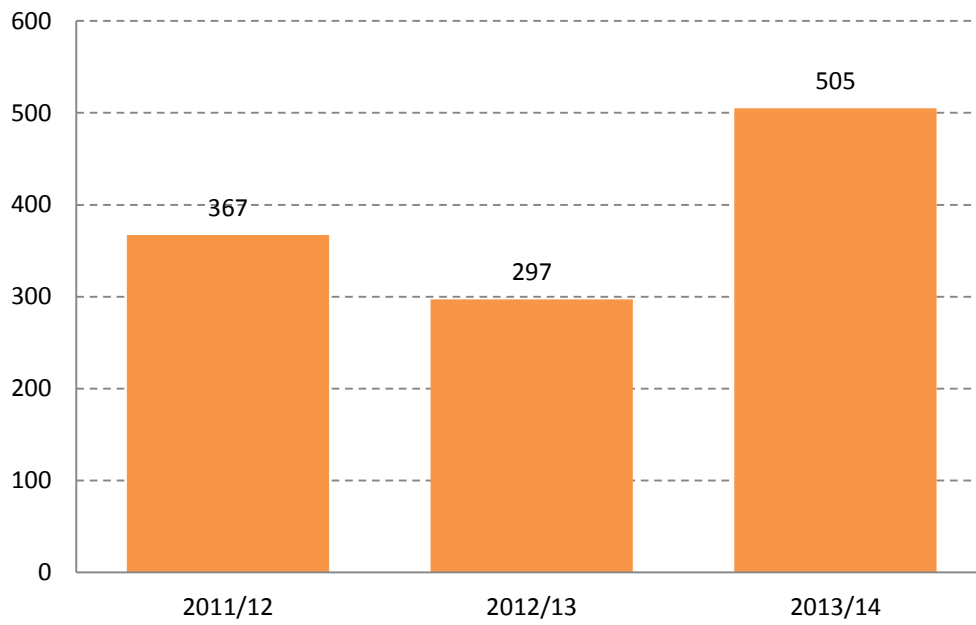
Secondary Fixed Term Exclusions: 3 year trend (financial)



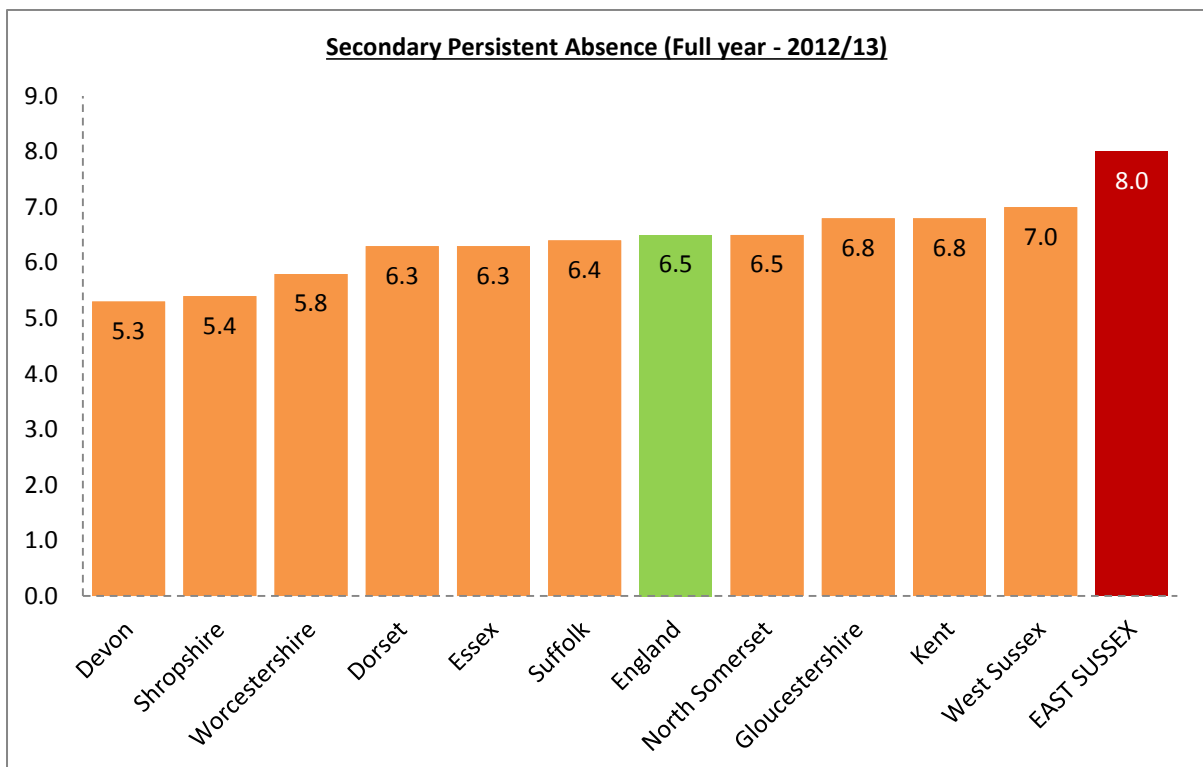
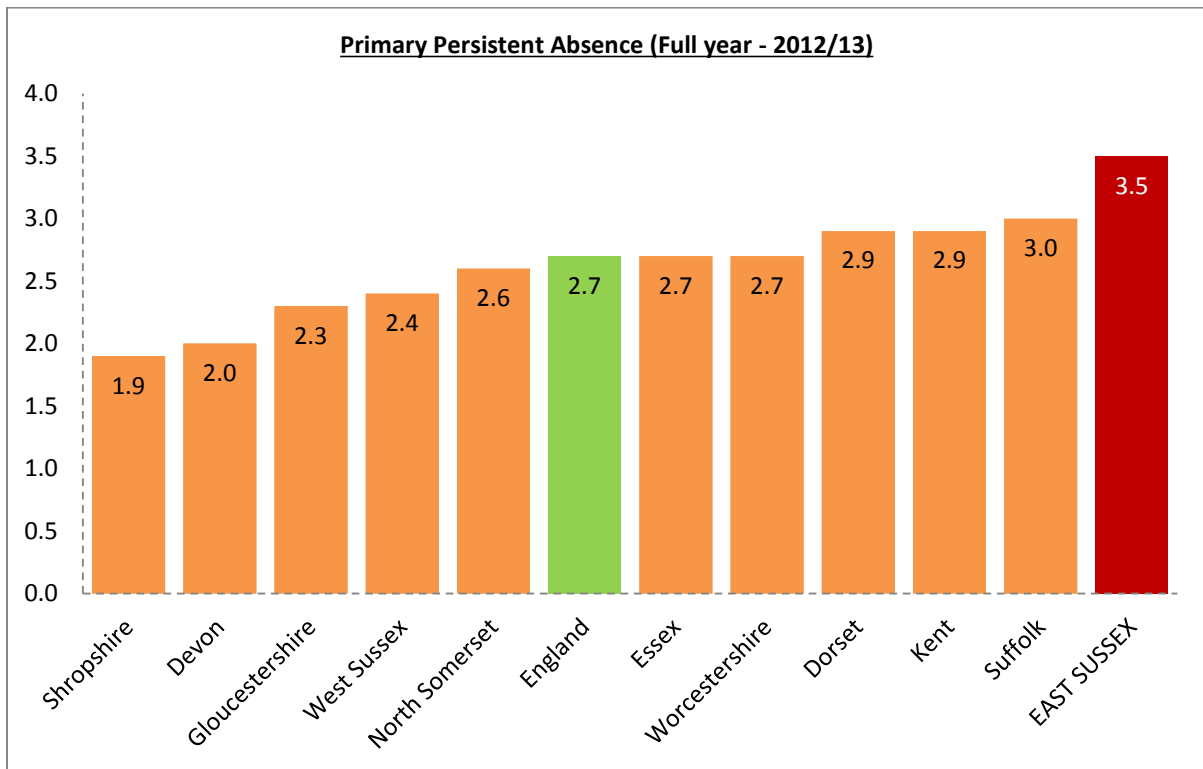
Primary Permanent Exclusions: 3 year trend (financial)



Primary Fixed Term Exclusions: 3 year trend (financial)



**Appendix 4:
Persistent Absence Rates 2012/13 (academic year) – Statistical Neighbour Profile**



Appendix 5 – School-Based Projects to Reduce Exclusions in Primary Schools

Behaviour and Nurture Inclusion Project (BNIP)

Primary Schools with the highest rate of exclusions were targeted for inclusion in the BNIP. The aim is to support the development of inclusive practice and increase schools capacity to meet the needs of pupils and prevent further exclusion. ESBAS primary advisers are in the process of meeting with schools to create and action plan and identify expected outcomes for pupils.

| School | Proposed Activity | Expected Outcomes |
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| Elphinstone/The Baird Academy | Development of Nurture Class for 6-9 staffed by two adults. Each child will have a Boxall Profile completed and this will form the basis of a personalised programme of academic and social learning. | Reduced incidents of challenging behaviour – behaviour logs Reduced exclusions – exclusions data Better academic attainment – Pupil progress meetings and teacher consultation Happier children – observations backed up by Boxall Profile assessments |
| Castledown Still in process of being agreed | 4 staff to complete the accredited Primary aged Thrive training. Enabling a systematic approach to the early identification of emotional developmental need so that differentiated provision to address needs can be put in place quickly. This can be done on the individual and class level. | Increase in staff knowledge and systems within schools to address needs Reduced incidents of challenging behaviour – behaviour logs Reduced exclusions – exclusions data Thrive assessments indicate improved well being measures |
| St Pauls | Extend the Pastoral and Inclusion department at St Pauls and the funds will be used as part of that build to provide a Nurture Classroom. This has been agreed by the Governors. Nurture class for both key stages. We will initially take advice in the setting up of the facility and the criteria used to select appropriate pupils. Each child will be profiled including using a Boxall and a number of key measures appropriate to each child will be used. | Reduced incidents of challenging behaviour – behaviour logs Reduced exclusions – exclusions data Better academic attainment – Pupil progress meetings and teacher consultation Happier children – observations backed up by Boxall Profile assessments |

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| Meeching Valley | <p>Development of Nurture Class Training for staff Boxall assessments for each child Pupil premium money to be used</p> | <p>Reduced incidents of challenging behaviour – behaviour logs Reduced exclusions – exclusions data Better academic attainment – Pupil progress meetings and teacher consultation Happier children – observations backed up by Boxall Profile assessments</p> |
| Peacehaven Heights | <p>Development of Nurture Class for both key stages Training for staff Boxall assessments for each child Pupil premium money to be used</p> | <p>Reduced incidents of challenging behaviour – behaviour logs Reduced exclusions – exclusions data Better academic attainment – Pupil progress meetings and teacher consultation Happier children – observations backed up by Boxall Profile assessments</p> |

**Appendix 6:
Example of Impact Narrative**

| | Impact Narrative |
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| <p>Context <i>e.g. background information.</i></p> | <p>ESBAS received a complaint from the headteacher of a secondary school around lack of support on attendance. An ESBAS Team Leader met with the headteacher and explored the persistent absence data that had been submitted by the school and compared these to the number of core referrals that had been received by the service to find that very few referrals for attendance support had been received.</p> <p>The headteacher stated that they had a persistent absence PA rate of 10.8% and wanted to reduce this urgently. The Team Leader suggested the possible use of Pupil Premium funding to enable a traded services early intervention project to take place in school to tackle all students over a period of time who were either at risk of or already persistence absence pupils with under 85% attendance. Each pupil's attendance was analysed individually ensuring that all information was known about the history of the child, in case there was a genuine reason for absence such as an underlying illness. Those pupils with largely unauthorised absence were tackled first with a series early intervention attendance panel planning meetings with young people and their families These involved investigating causes, action planning and goal setting. Following this, an action plan for each child was drawn up offering weekly 1:1 support in school, deciphering and treating the reasons for non-attendance, mediating with school and working collaboratively with other professionals to improve safety and wellbeing alongside attendance.</p> |
| <p>Desired outcome <i>e.g. what do you hope to achieve?</i></p> | <p>The desired outcome was to have a demonstrable positive improvement in attendance of persistent absence pupils. This would also provide evidence for the school, key stakeholders and Ofsted around improved attendance, improved safety and wellbeing and good evidence of pupil premium spend.</p> <p>Alongside these key outcomes, the service wanted to ensure that all Persistent Absence students had a plan and/or support from with ESBAS or other agencies that supported their individual needs.</p> |
| <p>Action taken <i>e.g. activities or support undertaken with the child or young person, parents, school or other key partners.</i></p> | <p>Audit of Schools attendance data, report produced for SMT at School; from this the following actions were put in place:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance meetings with Attendance Officer to identify those students who needed to be referred to ESBAS (PA students below 85%) • Advice given to School regarding sign posting to other agencies for support where ESBAS was not appropriate • Attendance meetings arranged and managed by ESBAS. Support plans drawn up in partnership with Student, Parent, School and ESBAS to support improved attendance • ESBAS attendance at other meetings i.e. CAF reviews and CP reviews / Core groups • Regular late swoops were arranged to tackle those students who were late on a number of mornings, letters were sent to parents informing them that the child had been late. • Weekly door knocking to those students whose attendance was a concern and parents had failed to notify the school that their child would be absent for safeguarding purposes. • Attendance reviewed, as per ESBAS policy and support plans revisited. Where the circumstances had changed for the young person, the plan was adjusted to suit the student's circumstances. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:1 support identified for those students who had complex needs i.e. ASB outside of school, sexual health advice along with Officer supporting those students in meetings with other professionals • Review meetings with Attendance Officer and SMT to track progress and highlight students at risk of PA students (at this stage we worked on attendance below 89% - as all PA students had a plan) • Attendance workshop arranged as part of the transitional programme (ESBAS and School identified students from feeder primary schools (year 6), where attendance had been a concern (below 88%). Those students were invited to a workshop where attendance scenarios were given, along with a treasure hunt around the school to enable new students to familiarise themselves with their new environment to make it less daunting and more of a seamless transition in September. ESBAS also made home visits to those students during the summer holidays to ensure continued support enabling a successful start to Secondary School. |
| <p>Impact <i>e.g. what were the positive outcomes for the child, young person, family, school etc?</i></p> <p><i>Are there examples of good practice to disseminate?</i></p> | <p>At the start of the intervention, the School's had 10.8% Persistent Absence rate. The intensive attendance intervention took place over a three term period, at the end of which PA was reduced to 7.1%.</p> <p>31 attendance meetings were held with an average attendance percentage at referral of 77%. At the point of closing 10 weeks later attendance average was 97%.</p> <p>The school have continued to use ESBAS on a traded and core basis continuing with many of the inventions such door knocking, regular attendance data meetings and continued referrals to ESBAS. PA was further reduced to 5.2% terms 1 – 4 2013/14 in comparison to the same period last year when it was 8.5%.</p> |
| <p>Learning <i>e.g. has there been any service wide learning to disseminate?</i></p> | <p>The biggest learning point from this exercise was the impact that targeted interventions can have combined with maximum flexibility of support methodologies. Following on from this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have based our traded services model in other Secondary Schools on this project with equally successful results. • We have introduced quality assurance documents such as data graphs showing the improvements made. • We have worked to demonstrate the longevity of impact of our work, after we have closed cases. • We have held regular reviews and consulted with partners. • We have introduced reflective practice and training to up-skill other team members to be able to deliver the same package cross county. • Schools have enjoyed the relationship built with ESBAS and quality assurance reviews by Managers. • Plans have been bespoke for schools and tailor made for each individual pupil. • We have transferred learning from traded work to our statutory interventions. |

