

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 11 June 2012

Present: Councillor Ensor (Chairman)
Councillors Field, Fawthrop, Kenward, Stephen Shing, St Pierre, Stroude, Webb
and Whetstone.

Mr Mike Wilson (Church of England Diocesan Representative), Mrs Carole Shaves MBE
(Police Authority Representative), Mr Jeremy Alford (Health Representative).

Also present: Councillor Bennett (Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness) and
Elkin (Lead Member for Children's and Adult Services).

1. Scrutiny Review of school exclusions in East Sussex

- 1.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has completed its Scrutiny Review of school pupil exclusions in East Sussex. A copy of the Committee's full report has previously been circulated to all members and is available on request from Andy Cottell (Tel: 01273 481955).
- 1.2 East Sussex is currently a 'high excluding' local authority area with numbers of permanent pupil exclusions weighted towards primary schools (27% in East Sussex compared to 11% nationally) and towards children with special educational needs (23% in East Sussex compared to 8% nationally).
- 1.3 The evidence indicates that excluding pupils from school is ineffective, either as a punishment or deterrent, in many cases where it is currently used. This review focussed on how those exclusions could be managed differently and how the parties involved could help bring about the necessary changes.
- 1.4 The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee **recommends** to the County Council that –
 - 1.4.1. The Lead Members with responsibility for Children's Services and Learning and School effectiveness, and the Director of Children's Services, should promote a clear vision to leaders in all our schools setting out our expectation that every school should aim to be amongst the lowest pupil excluders.
 - 1.4.2 All Council Members should be encouraged to support and promote the vision when in conversation with their local schools and in their role as school governors.
 - 1.4.3 East Sussex County Council should aim, when working with schools, to promote:
 - a) improved, more inclusive, SEN assessment and support practices with greater emphasis on preventing school exclusion;
 - b) good communication between schools: particularly between secondary schools and primary schools, and primary schools and children's centres to enable schools to be better prepared to manage any children with behavioural or learning issues;
 - c) a well developed offer of services and training, within the Services to Schools offer, to ensure schools are confident and better equipped to manage a wide range of pupil behaviour; and

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- d) effective special provisions within mainstream schools for children who are less able to learn.
- 1.4.4 The support, training and communication with school governors should aim to promote an active governing body role in:
- a) endorsing policies that focus on supporting challenging pupils within the school;
 - b) providing robust scrutiny and effective challenge of exclusion decisions by the headteacher;
 - c) monitoring the use of mechanisms such as part time timetables to ensure they are not being used as a means to exclude pupils unofficially;
 - d) monitoring Special Educational Needs (SEN) practices and exploring any link with exclusions; and
 - e) seeking and responding to the views and experiences of parents and carers of excluded children, and of the youngsters themselves.
- 1.4.5 The information provided by East Sussex for parents and carers of excluded children is good, but this is an opportune moment to review it to ensure that it:
- a) remains easily accessible and readily available;
 - b) includes information on what 'behaviour support' and 'Special Educational Needs (SEN) support' in schools should look like, including information about the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS), Information for Families and any other relevant services;
 - c) includes information that is 'preventative' rather than focused on the relatively limited options once a child has been excluded;
 - d) states simply what children's 'entitlements' are so that parents and carers can understand whether part-time timetables or other mechanisms are being used to exclude their child inappropriately; and
 - e) meets the needs of people with low levels of literacy, less confident communicators, people under severe stress and people with health problems: groups that are represented amongst excluded children's parents and carers.

[See also Report of the Cabinet, paragraph 4]

MICHAEL ENSOR
Chairman

5 July 2012