

Report to: People Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 24 September 2024

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Scrutiny Review of School Exclusions

Purpose: To provide the Committee with a six month update in respect of the action plan agreed upon the publication of the original Scrutiny review of School Exclusions

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The People Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Comment and consider the progress being made against the agreed actions at Appendix 1.**
 - 2. Note further actions planned regarding the voluntary transfer process.**
 - 3. Agree to receive a further update report in six months' time.**
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1. Background Information

1.1 In February 2024, Cabinet approved the report of Scrutiny Review Board on School Exclusions in Children's Services (CSD). There were twelve recommendations in the report. We submitted an Action Plan on the recommendations.

1.2 This report brings an update on steps taken in implementing the recommendations. R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12 are ongoing; and R1, R2, R3, R6, R10 are on track. More details can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Communication and Engagement

2.1 We have shared information and key learning from this report with services in the Education Division alongside our multi-agency partners, schools and settings.

2.2 Sharing of this information has been through a range of mechanisms, including conferences, board meetings, school visits and panels.

2.3 The impact of this communication and engagement has been positive with schools and multi-academy trusts working collaboratively to ensure that we are collectively trying to reduce permanent exclusions. However, progress has been hindered by the lack of preventative alternative provision placements at College Central, our commissioned Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provider. This has been particularly challenging for schools, especially in Rother, Rye and Hastings where the PRU has been closed to new pupils from November 2023.

2.4 There has been an increase in Permanent Exclusions (PEXes) both Nationally and in East Sussex. Nationally PEXes have increased by 44% in 2022-23 (2023-24 data is not available). In East Sussex the increase has not been as significant (18% for 2023-24), as outlined below:

- Primary – up by 15%; nationally Primary schools increased by 58% in 2022- 23.
- Secondary – up by 17.5%; nationally Secondary schools increased by 42% in 2022- 23.
- Special schools – 0% Permanent Exclusions; nationally Special schools increased by 53%.

2.5 There is more planned and ongoing work to ensure that all stakeholders are kept informed of the voluntary transfer timeline and how schools can access the additional capacity that has been brokered in advance of transfer (outlined in 3.3).

3. Voluntary Transfer of College Central (Sabden) to London South East Academy Trust

3.1 The transfer of College Central to a new provider, London South East Academy Trust (LSEAT), is scheduled to complete at the start of Term 3. We are still waiting for confirmation from the DfE on the timeline following a pause of activity during the pre-election period.

3.2 In response to the increased need for alternative provision, specifically at secondary, we will increase commissioned places by 56%. It is intended that these places can be used at Tier 2 (short-term places) and Tier 3 (long-term places).

3.3 From September 2024, in advance of the voluntary transfer, we have also commissioned LSEAT to provide an Outreach Service to schools which will provide Tier 1 provision across East Sussex. This will support with our on going work to address actions in R3, R6 and R10.

4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

4.1 The recommendations from the Scrutiny Review have been embedded within the work of the Department and the Committee will continue to be provided with updates in six months' time.

4.2 A full update of the progress made on the Review recommendations are outlined in the Action Plan at Appendix 1.

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