

Report to: People Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 17 March 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Scrutiny Review of School Exclusions

Purpose: To provide the Committee with a twelve-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:

Note that all the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review have been embedded within the work of the Department which has resulted in a reduction in permanent exclusions. A full update of the progress made on the Review recommendations are outlined in the Action Plan at Appendix 1.

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. The full details of our progress to date 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 (PEX). We have made significant progress with this in the Autumn term of 2024-25 with an overall reduction in permanent exclusions of 32%. This has been in part due to a 61% reduction in permanent exclusions across four secondary schools in Rother, Rye and Hastings.

2.4 Nationally PEXes have increased by 34% when comparing the Autumn Term 2023 – 2024 to the previous academic year 2022 - 23. In East Sussex, the increase was not as significant for primary and secondary schools:

- Primary – increased by 35% nationally in the autumn term 2023 - 2024; in East Sussex Primary schools increased by 30% in the autumn term of 2024 - 2025.
- Secondary – increased by 35% nationally in the autumn term 2023 - 2024; in East Sussex Secondary schools decreased by 46% in the autumn term of 2024 - 2025.
- Special schools – increased by 4% nationally in the autumn term 2023-24; in East Sussex there were 3 permanent exclusions in the autumn term, this is an increase from 0.

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), has been delayed further and is now scheduled to complete late Spring at the earliest. We are working in partnership with the DfE and LSEAT to ensure that the transfer is completed.

3.2 The Department continues 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).

3.3 The Outreach Service from LSEAT commenced in September 2024 and this is specifically supporting our on-going work to reduce exclusions (see Appendix 1).

4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

4.1 The recommendations from the Scrutiny Review have been embedded within the work of the Department and there has been a reduction in permanent exclusions as a result.

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

CAROLYN FAIR

Director of Children's Services

Officer Contact: Rachel Joseph – Strategic Lead Inclusion and Alternative Provision

Email: rachel.joseph@eastsussex.gov.uk