

Continuous Improvement Board

Action to reduce non-attendance and lateness and high rates of exclusion from school.

Agenda item:

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1. Purpose

This report outlines the current position regarding attendance, suspension and exclusion at and from Torbay's schools. It then details actions being taken to improve the current position.

2. Summary Data

Attendance

As of 30th October (the latest full shared DfE dataset) Torbay has the following picture for attendance.

Phase	Percentage Attendance	LA Rank Order
Primary	94.46%	141 st (improved in year)
Secondary	90.59%	136 th (improved in year)
Special	85.65%	121/149 (improved in year)

The most significant factor limiting attendance at Torbay's schools is illness. In this we are not unusual. What is unusual is the number of sessions missed with 6.5% of sessions vs a regional figure of 5.4%.

Suspension

As of 17th November (most recent data drawn from schools) Torbay is in the following situation.

Phase	Sep	Oct	Nov	Grand Total
Other Establishment	4	4	1	9
Primary School	46	38	7	91
Secondary School	337	332	243	912
Special School	70	39	1	110
Grand Total	457	413	252	1122

A concerning development is the inclusion of Brixham College's data which places them as the second most suspending school after St Cuthbert Mayne (StCM). StCM has suspended on approx. 420 occasions vice 480 approx. for all other secondary settings.

The 2 TSAT secondary schools are both in the top 3 most suspending schools.

Exclusion

As of 29th November, the following exclusions have been issued.

SEN	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
EHCP	1	1	2	4
SEN Support	2	4		6
No SEN	1	4		5
RSA Submitted	2			2
Total	6	9	2	17

The most common reason for exclusion across all phases has been assaults on adults and peers. As the academic year progresses, we are seeing a greater variety of reasons, but abusive behaviour remains most frequent.

Only two schools have excluded more than once. The Spires College and Paignton Academy have both excluded 3 times.

3. Actions

Attendance

- Two Attendance Officers have been added to the establishment for the next year and will work in town areas.
- They will be supported by a new Attendance Youth Worker.
- Links are being drawn to the new Youth Clubs and the Youth Service.
- Attendance forums are being held termly for Attendance Leads.
- Drop-in advice clinics are being held in each town area for school staff.
- Ongoing coproduction of a school absence graduated response.
- Penalty Notice processes are being brought onto IT systems to increase Attendance Improvement Officer capacity.
- Attendance is a focus at Youth Justice Service Education meetings.
- Virtual School Extended Duties Officers are providing guidance to social care colleagues.
- School attendance target setting meetings will be held starting in the Spring Term 2024.
- Head of Service is liaising with the Head of Business Intelligence and colleagues in Plymouth to share challenges and solutions.
- A training package being drawn up for new children's services staff.

These actions are all current and will start to show impact in the Spring Term. The Plymouth meeting went well and we are sharing processes around data analysis and dissemination.

Suspension

- Primary schools are being canvassed to provide lists of Yr6 children at risk of suspension on transfer to secondary phase.
- This list will then be cross referenced with parental preferences for admission to secondary phase.
- From this, enhanced transitions will be promoted and supported for those with a social worker by the Virtual School Extended Duties Officers.
- Support and challenge are provided to school leaders around suspension.
- Support is provided to governors and trustees when reviewing repeat suspension.
- Case conferences and risk of exclusion meetings are held on demand and fortnightly respectively with multi agency representation.

- Challenge is provided to partners where delays in referral are preventing a full understanding and therefore addressing of a child or family's need.
- Enhanced Resource Provisions are being scoped to provide support before repeat suspensions without the need for an EHCP.
- Vulnerable Pupils Team is working with the Mentors in Violence Prevention Project to deliver bystander training and mentors in most secondary schools.
- This is also now being moved into Yr6 to provide ongoing understanding.
- Regular sharing of data and discussion of challenges with the Exploitation Team and partners including the Youth ASB group.
- Torbay is an active member of the SW Inclusion forum around exclusion and suspension.

The work on suspensions is showing impact with most primary schools seeing a steadying of suspension levels, particularly of those children with increased risks.

Exclusion

- The Vulnerable Pupils Casework Officer and Head of Service report to governing bodies on all exclusion review evidence packs.
- They also attend meetings when invited by academies and whenever possible for maintained schools.
- Regular meetings with Chestnut and Lodestar leaders to reintegrate children to mainstream as soon as is appropriate.
- Links to the Community Safety Policing Team to provide support to children at risk of exclusion through potentially criminal acts.
- Training has been delivered to governors and will be offered in the next term again.
- Virtual School and Extended Duties Officers are auditing school practice around restorative and trauma informed practice after delivering training to schools over an extended period.
- Trust leads are increasingly involved in reviewing decisions before heads exclude leading to a rise in rescinded exclusions.

We are working with schools to identify ways in which section 29 processes can be used to prevent exclusion.

4. Recommendations

The author recommends that the committee:

1. Recognises the challenges in the local area and the ongoing work.
2. Promotes school inclusion across all council activity to secure better outcomes for children, families and the community.
3. Has a regard to children and young people's sense of belonging when making decisions.