**Research Report
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Reasons for Exclusion from School

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACE   Advisory Centre for Education

BSP   Behaviour Support Plan

CRC   Community Relations Council

CRE   Commission for Racial Equality

DfE   Department for Education

DfEE   Department for Education and Employment

EBD   Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

EDP   Educational Development Plan

FE   Further Education

GCSE   General Certificate of Secondary Education

GM   Grant Maintained (now Foundation) School

HMI   Her Majesty's Inspector

IEP   Individual Education Plan

INSET   In-Service Education and Training

IT/ICT   Information Technology/Information and Communications Technology

LEA   Local Education Authority

NSPCC   National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

NQT   Newly Qualified Teacher

NUT   National Union of Teachers

OFSTED   Office for Standards in Education

PRU   Pupil Referral Unit

SEN   Special Educational Needs

SENCO   Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

SIMS   Student Information Management System

TES   Times Educational Supplement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper summarises research into the reasons behind exclusion from school, which was carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Employment by a team of researchers at the Centre for Citizenship Studies in Education at the University of Leicester, School of Education, directed by Professor Audrey Osler.

We report on the underlying reasons behind school exclusions and identify practices at both school and Local Education Authority (LEA) levels which contribute to minimising the number of exclusions from school. We report on the specific actions which schools and LEAs are taking to reduce exclusions, and highlight ways in which these actions address the current disproportionate number of exclusions among certain groups of pupils. We consider children with special educational needs, children looked after by Local Authorities, and children from particular ethnic minority communities.

The research was commissioned in response to the Social Exclusion Unit report *Truancy and School Exclusion,*[1] which identified a direct link between exclusion from school and long-term social exclusion. Our research sought to explore the extent to which recommendations from the Commission for Racial Equality[2] on reducing the disproportionate numbers of exclusions among pupils from particular ethnic groups, which were endorsed by Education Minister Estelle Morris and distributed to directors of education and secondary schools throughout England, had been useful.

The research team found evidence to support OFSTED[3] that exclusion from school is a school management issue. In seeking to reduce the number of exclusions, headteachers need to consider a wide range of factors, including racial equality, special educational needs, and school policies and practices relating to pastoral care and behaviour. There has been a tendency, both in LEA responses to the problem and in the research, to address *either* the issue of racial equality *or* that of special educational needs. If effective remedies are to be found to the current high levels of school exclusion then researchers and policy-makers need to develop a more comprehensive analysis.[4]

Aims and objectives

The aim of the research was to understand more about the events which lead to fixed period and permanent exclusion, the procedures and practices which help minimise its use, and to identify similarities and differences between high and low excluding schools.

We had three specific objectives:

- to examine the different underlying reasons for exclusions in a selected sample of schools and LEAs

- to illustrate practices which other schools and LEAs might adopt or adapt in their own attempts to reduce exclusions

- to identify ways in which Government policy might more effectively support LEAs and schools in achieving their targets for the reduction of school exclusions, in various types of schools, and for particular categories of vulnerable pupils.

Our key research questions were:

1   *how do the reasons for exclusion differ between LEAs and schools?*
2   *how does the sanction of exclusion fit into the life of a school?*
3   *how can LEAs most effectively support schools in achieving their targets for a reduction in school exclusions?*

In order to identify what might be considered as 'good practice' in minimising school exclusions, we collected and analysed three types of information. These were:

- interviews with LEA officers, including those responsible for managing exclusions, educational psychologists, educational welfare officers, and officers with responsibility for special educational needs and for equality issues.

- interviews with headteachers, teachers and governors in 26 schools (primary, secondary and special) from 6 Local Authorities. The schools were selected in consultation with LEA officers, to include both schools which had addressed school exclusion and which had declining rates and others which had relatively high rates of exclusion to other schools in the Authority.

- documentary evidence made available to us by the schools and LEAs, including LEA Educational Development Plans and Behaviour Support Plans; school and LEA policies on behaviour, pastoral care and equal opportunities; reports on exclusion patterns and on specific initiatives to reduce exclusions.

We did not observe classroom practices, nor did we collect data from children, parents or community organisations. The issues of racism within education and its impact on the performance, inclusion or exclusion of ethnic minority pupils are complex, and will require complex institutional responses.

The case study LEAs included two shire counties, two metropolitan Authorities, a London borough, and a new unitary Authority. They were selected to cover wide geographical spread and to include Authorities which have varying levels of exclusion. In seeking to identify good practice at LEA level in supporting schools in developing more inclusive practices, we have compared the perceptions of LEA officers with those of headteachers and school governors.

Context

The research was carried out in the first half of 1999 when schools and LEAs were considering draft guidance from the DfEE which is now published as *Social Inclusion: Pupil Support.*[5] Reducing exclusion from school is now an established Government priority and the broad framework in which exclusions are to be tackled is outlined in the Social Exclusion Unit's report. The main elements are:

- A one third reduction in the levels of both permanent and fixed period exclusions by 2002.

- A requirement on LEAs to set targets for permanent exclusions within their Education Development Plans (EDPs), which came into effect from September 1999.

- Guidance on exclusion to be given statutory force, including the creation of new grounds of appeal and the ending of exclusion altogether for 'minor' offences.

- A statutory obligation on LEAs to offer an excluded child full time and appropriate education. Each child is required to have a clear Individual Education Plan (IEP) including a target date for reintegration.

Early in 1999 the report of the Macpherson Inquiry into police handling of the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence was published. It also made a number of recommendations relating to schools, disciplinary procedures and to exclusions. In particular it recommended:

> That Local Education Authorities and school Governors have the duty to create and implement strategies in their schools to prevent and address racism. Such strategies to include:
>
> that schools record all racist incidents;
>
> that all recorded incidents are reported to the parents/guardians, school Governors and LEAs;
>
> that the numbers of racist incidents are published annually, on a school by school basis; and
>
> that the numbers and self-defined ethnic identity of 'excluded' pupils are published annually on a school by school basis.[6]

These recommendations have been accepted in part. Racist incidents are not published on a school-by-school basis, as this approach may discourage the accurate reporting of such incidents. Nor are details of excluded pupils' ethnic identity published annually school-by-school. The new OFSTED inspection framework, introduced in January 2000 [7] requires schools to identify the ethnicity of all excluded pupils over the previous 12 months.

Findings

Our full research report sets our findings within the context of other recent research into school exclusions. This research has tended to examine exclusion from school as either a special educational needs (SEN) issue or as a race equality issue. We argue

that exclusion is a school management issue, with important implications for the training and support of headteachers. It is the professional responsibility of all engaged in working to minimise exclusion, whether as practitioners, policy developers or researchers, to consider both its race equality and SEN implications.

Exclusion and school life

Teachers in our study generally welcomed recent DfEE guidance on exclusion. They believe that there are a number of factors behind current high levels of exclusion in some schools. These include high levels of pupil mobility in some areas and difficulties in accessing resources when excluded pupils are received from elsewhere.[8] Teachers recognise the important role which Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) can play in minimising exclusions and argue that it is critical that SENCOs in primary schools be given non-contact time to carry out their duties.

A number of schools have established effective partnerships with a range of organisations to ensure more inclusive practices. These include community groups, local businesses and other education providers, including further education.

Teaching strategies

Although most teachers acknowledge the need for a more inclusive and multicultural curriculum, which will motivate pupils from all backgrounds, many expressed the need for more training and support to enable them to develop this work. Secondary schools with low exclusion rates had generally developed alternative flexible curriculum arrangements for vulnerable pupils at key stage 4. Our research identified the need for monitoring to establish which groups of pupils are offered an alternative curriculum and whether they are able to gain access to mainstream qualifications.

Unofficial exclusions

We found evidence of increasing use of unofficial exclusions by some headteachers. This is sometimes recorded as authorised absence. LEA officers were sometimes aware of this, sometimes not. Unofficial and unrecorded exclusion may be used by some schools as a means of disguising the level of exclusion, or as a means of realising targets for a reduction in exclusion. It is also sometimes used 'in the best interests of the child' so that a child does not have the 'stigma' of exclusion on his or her personal record. Unofficial exclusions were generally short term measures although unofficial permanent exclusions may also operate particularly for some pupils in the final years of secondary school. These amount to long term truancy which is encouraged and condoned by the school.

When unofficial exclusions operate parents and carers forfeit any rights they may have to challenge the school's decision. Whether short-term or permanent, such exclusions lead to problems for children, their parents and schools. They may face difficulties when they are attempting to find an alternative school place, when the child starts in the new school, or when they transfer to secondary school.

The role of LEAs

LEAs have a key role to play in the management of exclusions, particularly in the provision of training, advice, monitoring and in feeding back information from the monitoring process. The specialist support services, including Education Welfare Officers, Educational Psychologists, Behaviour Support Services, Multicultural Support Services and curriculum advisers all have a key role to play. One of the difficulties encountered in this study in assessing reasons for exclusion from schools is the wide range in the quality of record keeping between LEAs. Although partially explained in terms of local priorities, it also reflects the stage in development of the LEA. In this area, as in a number of others, greater inter-LEA co-operation in expertise might enhance good practice in the management of exclusions and permit greater comparability between LEAs.

Inter-agency work

Inter-agency projects to minimise exclusion are at an early stage. While we found examples of co-operation between LEAs and other services, such as children's social services, health, and youth justice, to meet the needs of vulnerable young people, more work is needed in this area and there needs to be more systematic evaluation of projects.

Ethnicity

LEAs vary tremendously in the lead they able to provide in supporting schools in addressing the needs of vulnerable pupils from ethnic minority communities. The needs of certain groups, notably Travellers, have been overlooked. It is sometimes assumed that where there is a multicultural support service or a Traveller education service that other officers do not then need to give specific attention to the needs of Traveller pupils.

Due to difficulties in interpreting the records on reasons for exclusion, it was difficult to assess from our research whether reasons for exclusion differ significantly between schools and LEA's according to ethnicity. Nevertheless, some teachers and headteachers believe that there is sometimes differential treatment between ethnic groups, with some white teachers liable to misinterpret the behaviour of certain black pupils. OFSTED[9] found evidence that white excluded pupils are more likely to have been traumatised, be of below average achievement and to be excluded for verbal abuse. By contrast, black excluded pupils are more often of above average achievement and more commonly challenge teachers' judgements.

Looked after children

There is an urgent need for greater co-operation between LEAs and other agencies to address the needs of looked after children, who are over-represented among those excluded from school. Currently LEAs are often unaware of the numbers of such children, or even who they are.

The relationship between fixed period and permanent exclusion

The quality of data collected by LEAs makes it difficult to identify patterns in the relationship between fixed period exclusion across or between Authorities. Some schools have effectively used fixed period exclusions as part of a package of measures to prevent permanent exclusion.

A number of headteachers reported using both fixed period and permanent exclusion as a way of accessing support for special educational needs. Official statistics indicate that in 1998/99 1921 pupils with statements of SEN were permanently excluded from schools in England. They amounted to 18.5 per cent of all excluded pupils.[10] The overall numbers of pupils with SEN is likely to be much greater, if we take into consideration those who are on the SEN register but who do not have a statement, and those whose SEN have not been identified. Where SEN provision generally, and EBD school places in particular, were not available within an Authority, some headteachers reported using exclusion as a means of accessing appropriate support. However, LEA officers pointed out that this strategy was not always effective. Some excluded children who were subsequently placed in special schools outside the Authority ended up being excluded from those schools.

Developing an inclusive ethos

Where schools identified pupils vulnerable to exclusion, this was generally achieved through the pastoral system. However, since problems with behaviour are often linked to difficulties with academic work, this was sometimes the route by which particular individuals were identified. Low excluding schools have what we have termed an inclusive ethos. Permanent exclusion is generally seen as a failure on the part of an inclusive school. Such schools have a team approach to teaching and learning and pupils are given opportunities to be involved in developing codes of behaviour and are encouraged to participate in decision-making.[11] Inclusive schools are sensitive to diversity and have procedures in place to monitor both attainment and rewards/sanctions by ethnicity and gender. Inclusive schools have strong working relationships with parents and draw on community resources. The leadership of the headteacher is critical in establishing an inclusive school which minimises the use of exclusion.

Recommendations

Exclusion from school remains a serious problem which often results in social exclusion. Our research highlighted a number of actions on the part of central government, LEAs and schools which might minimise its use.

What the DfEE / central government can do:

- review the maximum length of fixed period exclusion, ending the current 45-day period

- ask all LEAs with racial or other disparities in the use of exclusions to demonstrate how this will be addressed in their Education Development Plans
- review procedures to check growing number of unofficial exclusions
- support LEAs in developing integrated databases on exclusions
- ensure that mainstream funding mechanisms (for example Standards Fund) for projects that tackle exclusion require monitoring by ethnicity and gender; encourage LEAs to require similar monitoring when they work in partnership with other organisations
- give priority, through funding mechanisms, to projects that enable co-operation between LEA services or between LEAs and other agencies, for example, co-operation with voluntary organisations and community groups
- provide additional advice to LEAs on monitoring by ethnicity, drawing on best practice in this field developed by schools and LEAs
- advocate non-contact time for SENCOs, particularly in primary schools.

What LEAs and schools can do:

- set targets for employment of qualified ethnic minority staff so as to enable the provision of an appropriate and professional service for all
- provide training for officers, teachers and school governors to enable them to examine how racial stereotyping affects school life and the education service
- supplement statistical data on exclusions with qualitative data from surveys and focus groups involving pupils, parents, and governors as well as teachers and inspectors
- report on ethnic monitoring processes and develop actions to address disparities
- ensure that flexible curriculum arrangements at key stage 4 are monitored by ethnicity and gender
- discourage the exclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs, recognising that exclusion will very seldom be appropriate for such children
- monitor exclusions by SEN at various stages of the code of practice, not just for pupils who have statements
- advocate non-contact time for SENCOs
- offer support to schools who accept excluded pupils

- consider how they may develop and strengthen inter-LEA co-operation
- set targets to work towards a no exclusions policy in EBD and other special schools
- ensure that parents and carers of vulnerable and excluded pupils are provided with appropriate information concerning their rights and sources of support.

1   INTRODUCTION

This report seeks to identify the underlying reasons behind school exclusions and to identify good practice at both school and Local Education Authority levels which might help reduce the number of exclusions from school. It examines the actions which schools and LEAs are taking to reduce exclusions, and in particular, whether any of these actions are designed to address the current disproportionate number of exclusions among certain groups of pupils, notably, children with special educational needs, children looked after by local authorities, and children from particular ethnic minority communities, in particular African Caribbean and Traveller children.

The aim of the research was to understand more about the events which lead to fixed period and permanent exclusion, the procedures and practices which help minimise its use, and to identify similarities and differences between high and low excluding schools.

We had three specific objectives:

- to examine the different underlying reasons for exclusions in a selected sample of schools and LEAs

- to illustrate practices which other schools and LEAs might adopt or adapt in their own attempts to reduce exclusions

- to identify ways in which Government policy might more effectively support LEAs and schools in achieving their targets for the reduction of school exclusions, in various types of schools, and for particular categories of vulnerable pupils.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

Each chapter focuses on a specific aspect of the research; findings from the literature and from our empirical research are integrated throughout the report. This chapter outlines our aims, provides some background to the study, some information about our research methods and a profile of each of the six LEAs where our work was carried out. Chapter 2 focuses on the broad national policy context and on the findings of other researchers. Chapter 3 reports on our findings, drawing on evidence from headteachers, teachers and governors to explore their understandings of the reasons for exclusion in the 24 schools we visited. Chapter 4 addresses the issue of exclusion from the perspectives of LEA officers. In chapters 3 and 4 we examine the differences between schools and LEAs in their use of exclusion, both in general terms, for particular groups of vulnerable pupils and types of school. We consider whether exclusion from special schools is appropriate, and, if so, in what circumstances. We also report on the actions that have been taken to reduce school exclusions, by schools and LEAs, in the context of the new responsibilities LEAs now have. In doing so we draw on existing good practice in particular schools and LEAs to support both partners in meeting their obligations.

In chapter 5 we bring together our findings from schools and LEAs, highlighting some of the issues which we faced in realising the aims of the study. The chapter provides recommendations for schools, LEAs and central government to support the overall goal of minimising the practise of exclusion from school.

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The practical focus of this project is to understand more fully the reasons and processes behind school exclusions in particular instances, in order to assist local education authorities and schools in reducing permanent and fixed period exclusions from primary, secondary and special schools. Through a qualitative analysis of the reasons for exclusion, and an examination of practices of six Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and 24 schools within these LEAs, our intention is to enable all concerned to understand more thoroughly the reasons behind exclusion from school, as a contribution towards minimising its practice and improving standards.

We examined general measures to reduce exclusions and those which focus on vulnerable groups, as identified in the recent report *Truancy and School Exclusion*[12], namely, children with special educational needs, children looked after by local authorities, and children from particular ethnic minority communities, notably Traveller and African-Caribbean children.

A recent study into school exclusions and race equality, funded by the Commission for Racial Equality[13] led to the publication of a good practice guide on school exclusions[14] which was endorsed by Education Minister Estelle Morris and distributed to directors of education and secondary schools throughout England. We examined the extent to which the recommendations from this earlier report have been useful in tackling the question of over-representation of specific ethnic groups in the exclusion statistics of particular schools and LEAs. We have also investigated other strategies which have proved successful in addressing this problem in the schools and LEAs under consideration.

In order to identify what might be considered as 'good practice' in minimising school exclusions, we collected and analysed three types of information. These were:

- interviews with LEA officers, including those responsible for managing exclusions, educational psychologists, educational welfare officers, and officers with responsibility for special educational needs and for equality issues.

- interviews with headteachers, teachers and governors in 26 schools from 6 local authorities

- documentary evidence made available to us by the schools and LEAs, including LEA Educational Development Plans and Behaviour Support Plans; school and LEA policies on behaviour, pastoral care and equal opportunities; reports on exclusion patterns and on specific initiatives to reduce exclusions

This research focused on school and LEA perspectives on the reasons for exclusion. We did not observe classroom practices, nor did we collect data from children, parents

or community organisations. Schools looking for additional strategies for addressing the disproportionate exclusion of specific ethnic minority groups among those excluded may find it helpful to consult these sources.

Selection of case study LEAs

The six LEAs were selected, in consultation with the DfEE, to represent a variety of types (two metropolitan, two counties, one London borough and one new unitary Authority). The sample covered a wide geographical spread across the North of England, the Midlands and the South, and included examples of relatively high and relatively low excluding Local Education Authorities.

Interviews with LEA officers

Within each LEA we examined the extent of special educational needs provision, including the availability of special schools for children diagnosed as having either Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties or Moderate Learning Difficulties; Pupil Referral Units; and other specialist support services. Through interviews with LEA officers, headteachers, teachers and governors, we collected information about the levels of support provided to low excluding and high excluding schools, giving particular attention to special schools. In particular we considered the degree to which high excluding and low excluding schools have accessed specialist services to support vulnerable pupils. Interviews were supplemented by documentary evidence collected from schools and LEAs.

We interviewed key LEA personnel responsible for exclusions. Practices in the management of exclusions at LEA levels vary considerably. We included the individual or team leader responsible for managing the process of exclusions in each LEA, and, in certain cases, other specialist staff who have an understanding of the reasons behind exclusion processes, such as leaders of educational social work teams. We interviewed 32 LEA officers across the six LEAs. Our aim was to understand the underlying reasons for exclusion, particularly permanent exclusion, and to identify the different ways schools use the sanction of fixed period and permanent exclusion.

Selection of schools

In each LEA we identified, in collaboration with LEA personnel, schools which are in the process of addressing, and others which have successfully addressed, the problem of exclusion. These were schools with low or declining exclusion rates. Parallel interviews were conducted with key personnel in a limited number of high excluding schools to increase our understanding of the contexts which lead to high levels of exclusion. We visited a total of 12 secondary, 7 primary and 5 special schools.

Interviews with teachers and school governors

Within these schools we interviewed headteachers and, where possible, members of governing bodies with some experience of exclusion and or school disciplinary matters, to establish management policies and procedures which enable schools to minimise exclusions. We also interviewed classroom teachers, some of whom were experienced members of staff, often holding key pastoral or curriculum

responsibilities, such as head of year or responsibility for the co-ordination of learning across a key stage. Others were inexperienced or newly qualified teachers. Our aim was to gather a variety of perspectives and to understand the impact of school policies and practices on discipline and exclusion on teachers. Within each LEA we also interviewed a number of teachers who are Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs). All interviews were semi-structured in nature. In total we interviewed 93 teachers and 17 school governors.

Documentary evidence

We also examined the available statistical data on exclusions in each LEA. Drawing on LEAs' own Education Development Plans and on the reports of OFSTED inspections, we considered the Special Educational Needs provision available in each LEA, including the availability of special schools for children diagnosed as having either Educational and Behavioural Difficulties or Moderate Learning Difficulties; Pupil Referral Units; and other specialist support services. We looked in particular at the provision within LEA Behaviour Support Plans.

Key research questions

We had a number of key research questions which we were able to pursue in our interviews with LEA personnel and with colleagues in schools. These questions also informed our analysis of the documentation made available to us by the participating LEAs and schools.

1   *How do the reasons for exclusion differ between LEAs and schools?* For example, is exclusion used consistently across different categories of pupils? Are schools able to use fixed period exclusion in order to minimise permanent exclusion or does fixed period exclusion tend to lead to permanent? Does the level of exclusion have any relationship to the degree to which local authorities statement children and allocate resources for special educational needs? Are some groups of pupils more likely to experience temporary as opposed to permanent exclusion, and vice versa?

2   *How does the sanction of exclusion fit into the life of a school?* For example, how do headteachers and governors view exclusion? What support is offered to pupils judged to be vulnerable to exclusion? How are such pupils identified? Are there identifiable differences in the ways high excluding and low excluding schools manage general discipline and the processes of exclusion? What are the headteachers' and school governors' perceptions of the relationship between the reasons for exclusion and excluded pupils' levels of attainment? How does the school seek to minimise exclusion through its curriculum, pastoral, behaviour and equal opportunities policies and practices? Do headteachers and chairs of governing bodies make direct links between school exclusions and school standards, and if so, what impact do their perceptions have on policy and practice?

3   *How can LEAs most effectively support schools in achieving their targets for a reduction in school exclusions?* Do LEAs need different types of strategy for different types of school? How do LEA strategies address those groups who are particularly vulnerable to exclusion, such as pupils looked after by the Local Authority, those with special needs, those from particular ethnic groups? What are LEA officers' views of

the way they support schools? How might support be improved? What are the views of headteachers and chairs of governors on the service offered by the LEA in relation to school exclusion? For example, how do they see provision for excluded pupils? If this provision were more comprehensive what impact would this have on their decisions to exclude or not exclude? What further support would schools and LEAs welcome from central government?

Drawing from the data gathered through this process, we make comparisons about the events leading to fixed period and permanent exclusion in various types of school, with the intention of identifying differences between higher and lower excluding schools. In fact many of the recorded reasons for exclusion in individual cases of exclusion do not necessarily or adequately explain why an individual exclusion takes place. The recorded reason may simply be the trigger for an exclusion. In seeking to identify good practice at LEA level in supporting schools in developing more inclusive practices, we have compared the perceptions of LEA officers with those of headteachers and school governors.

Over the six month period in which the research was carried out, members of the research team met three times with a DfEE steering group and had the opportunity to present their interim findings to members of HMI, DfEE and the Social Exclusion Unit.

THE SIX LEAs

Six LEAs were chosen for in depth case studies. They represented a broad geographical and demographic range and varied considerably in the levels of permanent exclusion.
(Table One)

	LEA A	LEA B	LEA C	LEA D	LEA E	LEA F
Type of Authority	Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Shire	Shire	London Borough	New Unitary
Number of schools	300	114	260	383	57	105
Approx school population	113,000	33,000	70,000	90,000	17,000	30,000
Permanent exclusions per 1000 pupils	1.8	4.0	1.2	1.3	3.5	N/A

Table One: Permanent exclusions from school per 1000 pupils in each LEA (1997-8). (National average 1.7)

The levels of fixed period exclusion also varied across this sample, but due to the differences in reporting and monitoring processes used by these Authorities it is not possible to summarise these accurately in tabular form. The same is true of different

levels of exclusion experienced by ethnic minority pupils and those with Special Educational Needs. Some of the LEAs were only just beginning to collect such data systematically at the time of our research. Others disputed the figures used by the DfEE to set their future targets for rates of exclusion. These factors and other key features of individual LEAs are discussed in the summaries below.

LEA A
This Local Authority is a large metropolitan Authority in the North of England. It has a school population of around 113,000, served by some 300 schools. Although the birth rate is currently in decline, the years 1986- 1991 saw a rise in the birth rate, which means that larger numbers of children are now currently going through primary school and lower secondary school. In terms of educational performance, children in this LEA are performing at or above the national average at primary level (key stages 1 and 2) while at key stages 3 and 4 (GCSE) they are performing marginally less well than the national average. The Authority has a computerised data base which allows it to monitor exclusions by gender, age, ethnicity and special educational needs.

While the LEA centres on an old industrial city, it also includes extensive semi-rural and rural areas. It has a predominantly white population (94 per cent of the school population was classified as 'White British' in 1991), but the black and ethnic minority school population is largely concentrated in particular schools and districts; 90 per cent of the city's ethnic minority pupils attend just 6 out of a total of 43 high schools. Using the Department of Environment 1996 Index of Local Conditions, 12 of the 33 wards in the Authority are among those with the poorest conditions nationally. 10 of these 12 are situated within the inner city in an area which is similar in size and geographical context to a London Borough. In 1999 the Authority noted that a significant number of parents living in the inner city, mostly with children of secondary school age were sending their children to schools out of this area. The Education Department is involved in much cross-departmental and multi-agency initiatives.

The LEA describes itself as very diverse in terms of health, wealth, ethnicity and other socio-economic factors. Thus, overall LEA statistics mask the variations across the area and within certain sectors of the population. For example, although the city has one of the lowest unemployment rates of any major city in the UK. The figures for 1997 show that among those leaving school at both 16 and at 18 just 7 per cent were unemployed. This average rate for the city as a whole masks a much higher rate in the inner area, and among ethnic minority communities who are resident in this area.

LEA B
This long-established metropolitan Authority in the North of England has a school population of over 33,000 served by 114 schools. There are 7 nursery schools, 21 first schools, 56 primaries, 9 middle schools, and 12 high schools. The 10 special schools are currently being reorganised and there will soon be only four of them.

There are high levels of poverty and disadvantage in the area which has suffered badly from the running down of the traditional industrial base.

In the past the Authority has only monitored exclusions by school, by type of exclusion (fixed period or permanent) and (more recently) by gender. It is now starting to monitor by ethnicity and whether or not a child is looked after by the Local Authority. The Authority is traditionally thought of as one with high levels of exclusion with, typically, 0.3 per cent - 0.4 per cent of the school population being permanently excluded in any one year. The 1996/7 figure of 0.33 per cent was almost twice the national average of 0.17 per cent. Boys are 6-8 times more likely to be excluded than girls. It recorded 247 fixed period and 137 permanent exclusions in 1997-8, which is the highest figure in recent years.

The Authority is keen to reduce the levels of exclusion as a matter of policy, and has been working strategically with schools and its own officers to bring about a reduction of a further 30 per cent by 2001. It has, in fact, had a dramatic reduction of 40 per cent (in fixed period) and 20 per cent (permanent) this school year and is seeking to sustain these figures through a range of initiatives. There are, however, some difficulties with the statistical data base in the Authority and it is not always clear whether they are quoting numbers of incidents leading to exclusion or numbers of pupils, some of whom may have experienced more than one permanent exclusion.

Targets are being set for individual schools, as well as the Authority as a whole. One of the main elements of the campaign to reduce exclusions is a small team of officers who have been visiting schools, analysing and developing behaviour policies, and running seminars with SENCOs, pastoral heads and other senior members of staff (but not always heads). The intention has been to review exclusion processes, develop more consistent approaches, highlight ways of avoiding exclusions, and promote 'ownership' of positive whole school approaches to behaviour. Reintegration of pupils into mainstream schools after an exclusion is another priority.

LEA C
This LEA is a large shire county situated in the Midlands. It has a school population of 70,000 and is divided into five district councils. These districts tend to work semi-autonomously, rather than co-operatively. Nevertheless, the Children and Young Persons Sub-Committee of the County Council oversees the process of initiating and sustaining action to tackle exclusions across the various districts. For example, there has been a County-wide collaborative project for primary school exclusions, incorporating some 40 local projects around the county 1996 – 1999. In the north-east of the county there are concentrations of industrial towns suffering varying degrees of poverty. In this area there seems to have been extensive collaborative working between schools and LEA agencies to tackle the problems of school exclusions in a preventative manner. In 1996-97 nearly 60 per cent of all permanent exclusions for the Authority came from this area, although this proportion had fallen to less than 30 per cent by 1997-98.

The centre and south of the county are different in character. For historical reasons, while in the south of the county there are well-established networks of schools which work together, the central area lacks an infrastructure which would allow schools to collaborate on reducing the levels of exclusions and tackling the problems which might lead to exclusions. The southern area also has a steering group which includes representatives from schools and various Local Authority agencies to provide support

to pupils in difficulty. Along with the northern area of the county, it is the area of the county with consistently the lowest levels of permanent and fixed period exclusions from 1995-99. The largest conurbation in the region is, however, a separate unitary Authority .

The LEA is being asked to reduce the level of its permanent exclusions in 1998 –99 from 102 to 71. These figures are disputed by the Children and Young Persons Sub-Committee which says that the number of exclusions in 1997-98 was around 10 per cent lower than the figure calculated by the DfEE. According to LEA data there were 77 permanent exclusions in County schools and 14 in Grant Maintained schools during the year in question.

The County-wide monitoring of permanent exclusions has created a ten-year data bank of permanent/indefinite and fixed period exclusions. This data is, however, incomplete, since Grant Maintained schools in the area, although invited to participate, only provided data on permanent exclusions.

The emphasis in the Authority's Behaviour Support Plan is on inclusivity. The aim is to improve schools and to avoid discrimination and social segregation, in line with the Government White Paper *Excellence for All.* To further this policy it proposes to develop strategies to identify and meet the needs of young people and to prevent exclusions rather than remedying them once they have occurred.

LEA D
This is a large shire Authority in the South of England with responsibility for 383 schools serving over 90,000 pupils. There is one nursery school, 324 primaries, 37 secondaries (including four Foundation, formerly Grant Maintained) and 11 special schools. Local government reorganisation has seen some of the larger conurbations turned into new Unitary Authorities, which has strengthened the largely rural nature of the remaining LEA. This reorganisation has presented the LEA with new challenges, as well as new boundaries, and many of its policies are still emerging, including some of those related to exclusion.

Exclusion rates have never been very high in this Authority, but the figures for permanent exclusions have risen steadily over recent years from 62 (in 1994/5) to 118 in 1997/8. This is the highest figure ever recorded by the LEA and accounts for 0.13 per cent of the school population, compared with a national average of 0.17 per cent. The majority of cases in all these years were boys, with girls accounting for between five per cent and 10 per cent in any one year. There has been a recent growth in the number of permanent exclusions from primary schools, with almost a third of the cases now involving pupils under the age of 11 as opposed to one in ten in 1996/7.

The most common reason for permanent exclusion in 1997/8 was disruptive behaviour (88 cases) followed by assault on another pupil (37), refusal to follow the school rules (20), and assault on a member of staff (19). By the end of the school term in which these exclusions took place, 60 of the pupils were receiving home tuition, 25 were in alternative mainstream schools or colleges, and 15 were in special schools.

Figures for fixed period exclusions are harder to analyse for two reasons. First, schools have only recently been reliably informing the LEA of exclusions lasting less than five school days. Reporting processes for all fixed period exclusions have now been amended. Secondly, the Authority acknowledges that there is a degree of unofficial exclusion for short periods, which are generally recorded as authorised absences.

Exclusion has become a main focus for the LEA, and they expect to be able to report significant progress within the next 6 months. The LEA's Education Development plan proposes to reduce exclusions by 30 per cent by the end of 2002, based on the 1996/7 figure of 75 permanent exclusions. Officers point out that, since the figures rose while these targets were being set, they now face a real reduction nearer 50 per cent. They also point out that, with a history of low levels of exclusion, they may have particular difficulties in making these improvements. Schools which, individually, exclude only a very small number of pupils may find it hard to contribute to the target. In addition there are many schools (particularly small rural primary schools) which have limited experience of handling exclusion issues and find them particularly difficult.

The Authority has a number of strategic measures in place or under development. These include three Behaviour Support Teams, some emerging cross-agency work and a joint Social Services/Education committee. The LEA also has an input into the Health Planning Cycle.

LEA E

This is a London Borough with a school population of less than 17,000. It has responsibility for 4 nursery schools, 1 early years centre, 36 primary schools, 8 secondary schools, 1 Foundation school, 6 special schools and 1 combined sixth form. Within the same Borough there is a large number of private schools. Pupils travel considerable distances to attend both sets of schools. Equally many local children travel to schools in neighbouring Authorities.

The socio-economic profile of the area is very mixed. Expensive owner-occupied or rented accommodation stands close-by old Authority-owned housing. There are pockets of notable poverty and deprivation next to areas of considerable affluence. The local population includes members of many ethnic groups including significant numbers of asylum seekers and refugees from Europe and Africa.

Exclusions in many of the Authority-controlled schools have been high in recent years, particularly in a number of schools which received poor OFSTED reports. Two of these schools made over 400 fixed period exclusions between them in one year. In 1996/7 there were 5.1 permanent exclusions per 1000 pupils (three times the national average). These figures have been an obvious cause for concern among officers, who are seeking to work with schools and other agencies to reduce them by 40 per cent across the LEA by 2002. It has a number of key strategies to address exclusions, including a multi-disciplinary steering group, a behaviour support team, special initiatives within the Pupil Referral Unit, mentoring programmes for pupils at risk of exclusion, and School Action Teams to develop policy and practice. The rate fell to 3.5 per 1000 in 1997/8 and is now lower still.

The LEA monitors exclusions closely, and breaks its figures down by gender, ethnic background, SEN and whether or not the child is looked after by the Local Authority. This monitoring helps to shape policy and practice at LEA and school levels.

LEA F
This is a new unitary Authority with a school population of some 30,000. It is responsible for 2 nursery schools, 87 primary schools, 6 special schools, 6 secondary schools, and 4 Foundation secondary schools. Significant numbers of pupils travel beyond the Borough to attend either private secondary schools or schools in a neighbouring LEA of which the Authority was, until recently, a part.

The area is generally prosperous with high levels of employment, but some pockets of deprivation. Some 15 per cent of pupils receive free school meals. Local employment opportunities have attracted many families into the area from other parts of the country and the proportion of children and young people in the community is high. Over 6 per cent of the local school population is from ethnic minority groups. A number of Traveller families and communities regularly stop in the area.

At Authority level there is some co-ordination of services for children, with education and children's social services being organised within a combined directorate. The Authority has recorded around 40 exclusions from school each year; however, a large proportion, between a quarter and one third, are from primary schools. The data available on fixed period exclusions is limited, and the Authority has yet to develop recording and monitoring systems which would provide us with reliable data on the profile of excluded pupils. The Authority places considerable emphasis on preventative strategies in tackling exclusion, including schemes run by voluntary sector agencies, and the development of alternative flexible curriculum arrangements at Key Stage 4 in both mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units. Some of this provision is made possible through an LEA partnership with the local Further Education College.

2 THE CONTEXT: A BRIEF REVIEW OF RECENT POLICY AND RESEARCH

THE NATIONAL PICTURE

Around 13,000 children were permanently excluded from primary, secondary and special schools in England in 1995/6. The figures for 1996/7 were very similar. It is estimated that a further 100,000 were temporarily excluded in each year. In the 1997/98 school year the recorded number of permanent exclusions fell by three per cent to 12,300.[15] Nevertheless, the rate of permanent exclusions is sharply higher than at the beginning of the 1990s when it was estimated to be around 11,000 per year.[16] Reducing exclusions from school is now a Government priority and the Government has set out a broad framework in which exclusions are to be tackled. As set out in the Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Truancy and School Exclusion,*[17] the most important elements of this framework are:

- A one third reduction in the levels of both permanent and fixed term exclusions by 2002.

- A requirement on LEAs to set targets for permanent exclusions within their Education Development Plans (EDPs), which come into effect from September 1999.

- Guidance on exclusion to be given statutory force, including the creation of new grounds of appeal and the ending of exclusion altogether for 'minor' offences.

- A statutory obligation on LEAs to offer an excluded child full time and appropriate education. Each child is required to have a clear Individual Education Plan (IEP) including a target date for reintegration.

The Government's concern about the current high level of exclusion from school, unjustified variation in exclusion rates between schools, and the disproportionate exclusion of pupils from certain ethnic minorities and children looked after by local authorities, was first expressed in the White Paper *Excellence in Schools.*[18] It is a concern shared by local education authorities, teacher unions, organisations working on behalf of children, and by a number of parents' and community organisations.[19] The inappropriate or excessive use of fixed period and permanent exclusion as a disciplinary measure in some schools threatens to undermine initiatives to improve school standards. In some cases exclusion from school effectively denies the child's right to education; for example, there may be no appropriate alternative provision for children who are excluded from special schools.

Policy makers at both national and international levels acknowledge the need to ensure social inclusion through access to education and training.[20] Yet for many pupils permanent exclusion from school currently marks the end of their formal education: a recent report by the Audit Commission suggests that only 15 per cent of permanently excluded secondary pupils return to mainstream schooling.[21] Exclusion from school has been linked to long term social exclusion[22], and to participation in juvenile crime.[23]

The publication of the report of the Macpherson Inquiry into police handling of the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence made a number of recommendations relating to schools, disciplinary procedures and to exclusions. In particular it recommended:

> That Local Education Authorities and school Governors have the duty to create and implement strategies in their schools to prevent and address racism. Such strategies to include:
>
> that schools record all racist incidents;
>
> that all recorded incidents are reported to the parents/guardians, school Governors and LEAs;
>
> that the numbers of racist incidents are published annually, on a school by school basis; and
>
> that the numbers and self-defined ethnic identity of 'excluded' pupils are published annually on a school by school basis.[24]

The Home Secretary's Action Plan, which sets out the Government's response to Macpherson, accepts these recommendations in part, outlining the lead responsibilities of the DfEE with regard to preventing and addressing racism. In particular it emphasises:

> (from September 1999 schools) will need specific strategies to prevent all forms of bullying. They must also aim to promote good relations and mutual respect and tolerance between different racial groups. The DfEE advises that schools should take seriously all incidents of racist harassment and bullying... Draft guidance on 'School Inclusion Pupil Support', ... emphasises the importance of schools having strategies in place to deal with racist incidents, including bullying. In addition, teacher training will support teachers in equipping them with the skills to handle racist incidents.
>
> ... (Measures) are now being implemented, including greater use of on-site facilities as an alternative to exclusion, and better reporting of minority ethnic exclusions, decisions on which must remain the responsibility of head teachers. We are reviewing, as part of the consultation on the future of the teaching profession, the training of teachers and Head Teachers to ensure that teachers are aware of cultural differences and able to respond appropriately to the needs of minority ethnic children. We are also planning to promote community mentoring as a proven approach to reducing the incidence of the types of behaviour which put some children at risk of exclusion.
>
> In considering further action in the light of the recommendation, the Government is determined to prevent pupils being tormented by racist bullying. This applies to all schools irrespective of the number of minority ethnic pupils. The DfEE will look at the best way of ensuring that all schools ... can deal effectively with any incidents of racist harassment.

The DfEE will make clear ... that ... all racist incidents are to be recorded and that parents and governors are informed of the incident and of the action taken to deal with it. Governing bodies will be expected to inform local education authorities on an annual basis, of the pattern and frequency of any such incidents.[25]

Most recent evidence shows not only wide disparities between schools but also between LEAs, both in the overall level of exclusions and in the degree to which particular groups may be over-represented amongst excluded pupils. An analysis of exclusion figures for the 1996/97 school year by the *Times Educational Supplement* found that black children were 15 times more likely to be excluded than their white counterparts in some areas.[26] An analysis of the most recent available data, for 1997/98, shows continuing disparities, with pupils from certain black groups in six LEAs up to 13 times more likely to be excluded from school than their white peers. Although nationally children of South Asian descent are less likely to be excluded than white children, in another seven LEAs, such children are being excluded at a higher rate than white children.[27] Overall, those classified as 'Black Caribbean' are the most vulnerable, being 4.5 times more likely to be excluded than white children.[28] Although the Commission for Racial Equality and others have called for the introduction of specific national targets to address the over-representation of certain minorities within the exclusion statistics and some LEAs have set their own targets,[29] the DfEE has adopted an alternative approach. 12 LEAs with exceptionally high exclusion rates for black and other ethnic minority pupils have been requested to produce action plans to address this. One difficulty with this approach is that in other LEAs disproportionate exclusion of children from particular ethnic groups may not be addressed. Research carried out on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality suggests that when schools do succeed in reducing the overall number of exclusions they do for all ethnic groups. This means that existing disparities between groups, and possible racial discrimination, continue to go unchallenged.[30]

Recent guidance from the DfEE *Social Inclusion: pupil support*[31] provides valuable and comprehensive advice to schools on children at risk of exclusion and truancy as well as providing the information about the legal framework for school discipline. It gives specific advice on monitoring the use of sanctions against black and ethnic minority pupils and highlights the problems of racial harassment such pupils might face, and the importance of schools recording and acting on reported incidents of harassment. It also warns against teacher stereotyping of pupils and draws attention to strategies which have been effective in enabling minorities to succeed. These include ethnic monitoring of achievement, community mentoring, high quality home school liaison, 'a Black perspective in the school curriculum', a focus on minority achievers and effective links between mainstream and supplementary schools.[32] Some of the measures listed in *School Inclusion* begin to acknowledge the possibility of the institutional racism which the Macpherson Report highlighted, but generally speaking racism and/or racial disadvantage are recognised as something which may occur between pupils and be expressed as a from of bullying. For example, the pernicious effects of teacher stereotyping are not spelt out, and one may infer that this is a rare, rather than widespread problem.

The Audit Commission has developed a set of performance indicators for LEAs by which their record on exclusions may be judged. The ethnic origin of excluded pupils is also to be monitored in a number of volunteer LEAs in a pilot project which the Audit Commission is running jointly with the Commission for Racial Equality. However, there are concerns, expressed by the Local Government Association, that some LEAs will be unable to meet their legal duties to provide full time education for excluded pupils because of the large numbers of such pupils.[33] Such LEAs need practical models which they can follow to reduce exclusions.

Our intention in this research project is to build upon existing research which has identified good practice in minimising exclusions, notably on the recommendations of the Commission for Racial Equality's good practice guide.[34] In this way we report on proven successful practice which can then be more widely disseminated and adopted.

THE ROLE OF LEAS

LEAs do not play a direct role in schools' internal disciplinary policies: these remain the prerogative of the head-teacher and the governing body, which appoints the head-teacher. *In extremis,* LEAs have the right to withdraw delegation of budgets and take over the running of a school.

The Social Exclusion Unit report proposes that LEAs be given new tools which can be used to tackle exclusions indirectly:

- the right to request an OFSTED inspection on the grounds of disproportionately high levels of exclusions - OFSTED has been instructed to carry out ten such inspections each year.

- the right to attend the governors' meeting.

- LEAs are encouraged to give schools 'dowries' as a support package to receive or hold on to children at risk of exclusion.

LEAs have a responsibility to provide a view on the appropriateness of exclusion in a particular case. They are also responsible for hearing appeals against permanent exclusions. Details of these responsibilities are provided in the DfEE documents on *Social Inclusion: pupil support.*[35] LEAs are therefore being given a central role in reducing exclusion. This fits in with their wider responsibility for raising school standards. An understanding of the ways in which LEAs keep good records on school exclusion, understand their role and work to support schools and minimise exclusions is therefore both timely and needed.

THE FOCUS OF RECENT RESEARCH

There has been extensive research into various aspects of school exclusion. For example, Parsons[36] assesses the public costs to the education, social services, and the police; Donovan[37] provides a useful overview of the problem; Osler[38] examines best practice in minimising exclusion; and Hayden[39]xamines the growing problem of children excluded from primary school, giving particular attention to the relationship between exclusion and special educational needs. The Audit Commission[40] deals with the wider debate about the relationship between LEAs and schools themselves.

Nevertheless, there has been a tendency, both in LEA responses to the problem and in the research, to address *either* the issue of racial equality *or* that of special educational needs. In other words, analyses of the problem have tended to focus on one or another of the groups of children judged to be vulnerable to exclusion (specific ethnic minorities, those with statements of special educational need) leading to strategies which fail to recognise that, in practice, there may be considerable overlap between these categories. If effective remedies are to be found to the current high levels of school exclusion then researchers and policy-makers need to develop a more comprehensive analysis.[41]

There is little qualitative research which enables us to understand how exclusions fit into the life of schools; how they are viewed by teachers and headteachers; and the procedures that lead some pupils to permanent exclusion while others remain in school or return after a fixed period exclusion.[42] Recent guidelines for minimising exclusion from school, developed out of research into 'good practice' schools, have highlighted the importance of whole school approaches to policy and practices relating to such issues as behaviour management, equal opportunities and the curriculum.[43] Yet exclusion from school has not been explored in depth as a school management issue. There is, however, some research which shows how young people's engagement in decision-making at school can support a more positive ethos and approach to discipline which enables schools to avoid the use of exclusion.[44]

Most recently, studies have sought to explore the relationship between exclusion from school and more general social exclusion. Cullingford,[45] for example, studied young offenders aged 16 to 21 to understand the relationship between exclusion from school, home circumstances and involvement in criminal activities. Many of the young people in his study were formally excluded from school, others adopted other strategies, including truancy, which led to their effective exclusion or self-exclusion. He found that the young people in his sample did not generally reject the system of schooling; some recalled a positive relationship with an individual teacher, conversely, problems of alienation and disaffection often developed as a result of particular poor relationships. This is in keeping with the findings of research which explores the ways in which various agencies, including the police, social services, health and local businesses, can work in partnership with schools to enable them to support individuals who have been excluded or who are at risk, thorough work with them, their families and communities.[46] A number of voluntary agencies are now publishing advice on ways of maximising school inclusion.[47]

Increase in exclusions

There is evidence of an overall increase in the number of exclusions across various types of schools. The OFSTED report *Education for Disaffected pupils*, based on inspections in 10 LEAs between 1990 and 1992 found a steady rise in exclusions in most LEAs and a 'notable increase' in primary school children being excluded. In the school year 1997/98 there were 1,500 permanent exclusions from primary schools.[48] Although the proportion of the primary school population was small at just 0.03 per cent, these exclusions nevertheless amounted to 13 per cent of the total number of permanently excluded pupils. Special schools have also seen an overall rise in the numbers of excluded pupils over the decade, with nearly one fifth of special schools excluding at least one pupil in 1997/98. Research in one metropolitan LEA noted a 'marked increase in exclusions from special schools, particularly schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties'. The author cited the case of one school which had excluded 6 children, the equivalent of a whole class, permanently but unofficially.[49] In 1997/98 the number of children recorded as permanently excluded from special schools was 570 or 0.58 per cent of the special school population. These special school exclusions amounted to 5 per cent of all permanently excluded pupils during this period. Nevertheless, the bulk of permanent exclusions occur in secondary schools, which in 1997/98 accounted for 83 per cent of all exclusions.[50]

Definitions

Circular 10/94 (DFE, 1994) defined two permissible forms of exclusion form school: **fixed term** which allows schools to exclude a pupil for a limited period, up to a maximum of 15 school days in any term, and **permanent**, following clear procedures involving the headteacher, governing body, parents, pupil and LEA. Fixed-term exclusions are made with the intention that the pupil will return to the school from which he or she was excluded. Such exclusions are now referred to as **fixed period**. In September 1999 the maximum length of a fixed period exclusion was extended to 45 days. Permanent exclusions are made with the intention that the pupil will <u>not</u> return to the school from which he or she was excluded, although this decision may be over-turned on appeal. Since January 1996 schools are required to inform the Department for Education and Employment of the numbers of pupils permanently excluded in a school year as part of the annual Schools' Census.

Unofficial exclusions
ACE[52] observes that the statistics on exclusion do not include 'the hidden numbers of children who have not been formally excluded but who are out of school because they have clearly been rejected by their schools'. Gillborn [52] also makes the point that the figures are only of official exclusions and claims: 'It is well known that some students and/or their parents are pressured into "volunteering" to leave a school's roll'. Other hidden or unofficial forms of exclusion occur when children are sent out of lessons, are sitting in a corridor or when they are excluded from the lunch break. It has been suggested that such exclusions might increase the official statistics twenty-fold.[53] A report by OFSTED into exclusions from secondary schools noted that 'the practice seems to be growing of "inviting" parents to find another school, in lieu of exclusion'.[54] The report notes that in such cases there is no provision for funding to

follow the pupil and the receiving school will not have adequate information about the child before admission. One LEA working party on exclusions suggested that as many as 4800 pupils or 8 per cent of the school population 'may be excluded from school either on a fixed term basis or permanently, or be absent for long periods of time other than for health reasons'.[55] All the available evidence suggests that the official statistics portray a conservative estimate of the actual numbers of pupils excluded from school.

Who is excluded?

Ethnicity
An OFSTED report on exclusions from secondary school it is noted that 'An increasing number of LEAs are aware of and concerned about the disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority pupils, in particular boys of Caribbean and African heritage (but increasingly also boys of Pakistani heritage), being excluded'[56]. The report observes that one response to this is the exploration of mentoring schemes in partnership with local communities. It highlights that when exclusions were monitored some schools were surprised to find that black pupils were being excluded in large numbers. The report also notes that the case histories of excluded Caribbean children differed markedly from their white peers and that in one case racial abuse was a factor.

The high representation of African Caribbean pupils amongst those excluded from school raises concern about the effects of exclusion on these particular pupils and on their access to examinations. Perhaps equally importantly, it also raises wider questions about the quality of pastoral care experienced by other pupils of African Caribbean descent.[57] Thus, beyond the numbers of African Caribbean pupils who are formally excluded there may be a much larger number who are subject to daily practices which are likely to leave them feeling alienated and excluded. This is a key issue that needs to be addressed.

Gender
Official statistics show that for primary schools boys are over ten times more likely to be excluded than girls.[58] For secondary schools the ratio of boys to girls excluded is around 4 to 1.

Age
Gillborn[59]identifies the peak ages for exclusion as 14 and 15 and the official statistics confirm that 7 out of 10 of all excluded pupils are in Years 9 to 11, the final three years of secondary school.[60] Thus a significant proportion of exclusions occur after pupils have commenced their GCSE courses and it is often difficult for such pupils to find places in alternative schools where they can do the same options and GCSE courses.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)
There is some debate about the extent to which pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are represented amongst excluded pupils. This partly reflects problems and discrepancies in defining which pupils fall into this category. A number of researchers have suggested that some children are excluded when what is required is assessment

and provision of special educational needs.[61] There is certainly evidence that exclusion is often linked to poor acquisition of basic skills, particularly literacy, although according to a recent OFSTED report African Caribbean pupils do not tend to fall into the general pattern of excluded pupils. They are more likely to be of average or above average ability, although they may be judged by their school to be achieving below their full potential.[62]

Evidence from Birmingham, the largest metropolitan LEA, showed that as more than half those excluded were on the schools' special educational needs register. The Code of Practice relating to Special Educational Needs requires each school to draw up an individual education plan (IEP) for each child identified as having SEN, and outlines a series of stages in which the school is responsible, in co-operation with support services, for meeting those needs. Out of the permanently excluded Birmingham pupils 40 per cent were on Stage 3 of the procedure. They are pupils whose learning needs or behavioural problems may be pacing stress on teachers but for whom there is no immediate prospect of additional support. Thus it is possible that exclusion may have been avoided if the school had been able to access additional support.[63]

Children looked after
There is evidence that children looked after by local authorities are massively over-represented among excluded pupils.[64]

Socio-economic factors
Hayden found some correlation between number of pupils having free school meals and number of exclusions in a school, but notes that some schools in socially disadvantaged areas have a very low level of exclusion, and vice versa.[65] Rowbotham also found that some schools with a high level of deprivation have a low rate of exclusion and concludes that successful behaviour management is 'a matter of ethos, policy and management'.[66] These findings are confirmed by research carried out on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality.[67]

School
It is generally recognised that there is wide variation between the rates of exclusion of different schools.[68] Macleod reports that Association of Metropolitan Authorities 'accused grant-maintained schools of avoiding pupils with special needs and moderate learning difficulties and carrying out covert selection'.[69]

Exclusion rates vary considerably between LEAs. Parsons and Howlett express the view that 'this variation is much greater than can be explained by the socio-economic characteristics of the area'.[70]

While ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and special educational needs all have an impact on the chances of being excluded from school it seems likely from the research evidence that the biggest factor influencing whether a pupil is likely to be excluded from school is the particular school s/he attends.

3   SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

This chapter outlines our observations from fieldwork in the sample schools. It begins with a brief description of the schools we visited, the interviews and documents we collected, and the process of analysis.

It then considers, in turn, the main issues of this research as we found them within schools:

- exclusion and pupils with special educational needs
- exclusion and pupils from ethnic minorities
- exclusion and other vulnerable groups
- the links between exclusion and school management.

Some of these issues apply to all schools, while others relate especially to primary, secondary, or special schools and are dealt with separately at the end of each section.

Finally we consider a range of other issues connected with exclusion in these schools and how they might move towards becoming more inclusive organisations.

Background

We visited 24 schools in 6 LEAs as part of this research. Schools were selected in consultation with LEA officers, and were chosen to represent a range of primary, secondary and special schools, with different experiences of exclusion. At each school we collected a variety of documentary evidence including School Development Plans, Behaviour Policies, OFSTED inspection summaries and, in some cases, particular reports on aspects of exclusion within the school. We conducted almost 100 semi-structured interviews with heads, teachers, governors and others associated with these schools. These were mostly individual interviews lasting between 30 - 45 minutes. We also interviewed a small group of SENCOs in each of the LEAs. These group interviews followed a similar framework and lasted for about an hour.

All interviews were transcribed in full, and files made for each of the schools. The data was analysed for each LEA in the first instance, before comparisons were made between the schools in different LEAs and commonalities and differences identified. Taken together with data from the LEA interviews and literature review, these methods provided us with the evidence on which this chapter is based.

As a result of our consultations with the LEAs who helped us to select our sample, we visited some of the highest excluding schools in the country (including one which was, a few years ago, excluding pupils at the rate of one a day and permanently excluding two a week). We also visited schools which have excluded hardly any pupils at all in the last three years. But we did not just look at the level of exclusion in each school. We also based our analysis on the schools' capacity to be 'inclusive' organisations. Some of the policies in low-excluding schools are still not what we would call inclusive. Some of the high-excluders demonstrate some excellent ideas and practices for inclusion that could be applied in other schools.

EXCLUSION AND PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

> *I think for the majority of children at high risk of exclusion because of their behaviour we can trace it back to a learning difficulty which is about being able to access the work or the frustration of not being able to spell or read and often literacy problems. And my feeling is that if we got that right, or if that problem had been addressed when it first revealed itself, way back, years and years ago, we might not be dealing with the issues we are dealing with now.*
> (SENCO, Primary School)

General issues

The SENCO quoted above was describing how mainstream schools are usually the place where children's special educational needs are identified, assessed, and managed. With the ongoing drive to keep all children in mainstream schools wherever possible, this will continue to be the case, she said, and pointed out how staff in these schools need to be equipped and enabled to support the children adequately.

The Code of Practice relating to Special Educational Needs (SEN) recognises that children can have Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) and/or Learning Difficulties. The two sorts of difficulty are often connected, but the links are by no means straightforward. The teachers we spoke to, for example, reported how children's challenging behaviour can often be linked with problems they are having with schoolwork and that these problems can often be associated with general or specific (and frequently unrecognised) learning difficulties.

Children whose special educational needs are linked principally to Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties are more likely to be excluded than those with learning difficulties alone. Indeed teachers reported how the early signs of such needs might be a series of behaviour-related incidents. Staff typically talked about children who have displayed inappropriate or aggressive behaviour at some early stage in their school career and who went on to develop a pattern of behaviour which the school eventually decided it was unable to manage. At this stage exclusion became the 'last resort'. Teachers explained that such children have serious problems which they, as ordinary classroom teachers, are unable to pinpoint or to diagnose. As a result of the exclusion process such children are brought to the attention of (for example) the Educational Psychologist and their precise needs can begin to be identified.

The exclusion process thus becomes a way of disciplining the child, and a way of initiating appropriate responses from other professionals. It is both reactive (to the child's behaviour) and proactive (soliciting outside intervention). Many of the teachers and headteachers we spoke to believed that if outside support was available more quickly the exclusion itself could have been avoided. Several of the Authorities were experiencing problems in assessing children quickly enough after they had been referred by schools. One was effectively 'rationing' the number of Statements of SEN it would issue - a practice which schools criticised strongly.

The schools in our sample nearly all spoke of the value of early outside support from specialist services managed by the LEA, especially when a child with SEN was thought to be at risk of exclusion.

A Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in one LEA we visited runs a special intervention programme for pupils thought to be at risk of exclusion. A total of 30 x 10-week placements are available throughout the year (10 a term) for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 who are identified as being at risk of exclusion. Decisions on suitability are made by a panel after referral by the school, and only with the approval of the parents and the pupil. After a two-week observation period in their own school, the pupil and parents have a chance to meet PRU staff, followed by a six-week placement in the PRU where the focus is on Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), behaviour, social skills, and interactions with other pupils and with teachers. Finally there is a stage of re-integration back into the original school, with support from the PRU, the Educational Psychologist, and Educational Social Worker. This programme is centrally funded by the LEA.

Heads and SENCOs were particularly adamant that external support of this kind needs to be accessed very quickly if it is to have the maximum impact for the benefit of the child, the family, the rest of the class, the teachers and the school as a whole. This is particularly true for children whose behavioural difficulties are connected with learning difficulties. In most of the schools we visited there are significant problems with the speedy availability of support for complex cases, and sometimes even the simplest requirements cannot be met:

> *We're trying to get a disabled student some proper furniture. He's been with us (for 7 months) and it still hasn't gone to the Statementing Panel. The Manager phoned me up and said, 'Oh, we didn't have time for it'.*
> (SENCO, Secondary School)

Some mainstream schools with a Special Unit on site are able to use their own specialist staff as a resource for children in the rest of the school. This support is greatly valued by colleagues in the other classes. One primary school we visited (which has its own special unit for children with severe physical and mental disabilities) talked of how the specialists who attend that unit are often able to offer advice, support or even direct intervention in the main part of the school. They have even done informal assessments of children in other classes who are causing concern.

Teachers in our sample schools displayed a widespread reluctance to use exclusion for children with identifiable Learning Difficulties - particularly those who are at Level 3 or above on the Code of Practice. With these children the belief is that the Individual Education Plan is the right tool for intervening and that exclusion will only usually compound the problem. In a previous study, however, half of all permanently excluded children were found to be at this stage (Osler and Hill, 1999).

The development of appropriate curricula for children with SEN is thought to be particularly important. Recent changes in national requirements of schools have not always been helpful in this regard:

We need more flexibility to choose and select courses which we feel meet the needs of our pupils.
(SENCO, Secondary School)

I feel very strongly about the National Curriculum and this obsession with testing children – absolute obsession with it. And you're setting them up to fail... I think there should be far more courses where children can just do the work and get a certificate. Why the hell do you have to keep testing them according to these stupid levels all the time?... They're individuals, not commodities.
(SENCO, Secondary School)

Class size remains a concern for many teachers who have children with SEN in their class. In such cases teachers believe that the resulting pressures may lead the school more quickly along the route to exclusion. They point out that, particularly in primary school where children's needs may still be unidentified, challenging behaviour from small numbers of children means that the average size of a class needs to be smaller to ensure the same quality of education for all children. The current calculations of class size in mainstream schools pay no attention to the number of children with SEN within the class.

Special considerations for primary schools

With the exception of separate nursery facilities, primary schools remain the earliest point where a child's special educational needs are likely to be recognised and diagnosed. Delays in the availability of specialist outside support are felt particularly keenly in this phase and may be resulting in higher numbers of exclusions in schools who run out of other interventions.

Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCOs') time is very pressured in primary schools, particularly those with high numbers of children with SEN. There was a widespread call during our fieldwork for non-contact time to enable SENCOs to liaise effectively with other staff about the support of such children and the management of behaviour which might other wise result in an exclusion. This would also enable SENCOs to do more preventive work with families and with other agencies.

Contact with parents and carers can be easier to manage in primary schools, especially in the early years, where children are more often brought to school and where meetings at the school gate are important for generating a sense of partnership between home and school.

SENCOs felt they and their counterparts are able to work more effectively in the school when they are members of the Senior Management Team.

Special considerations for secondary schools

SENCOs also pointed out how, by the time children transfer to secondary school, most special educational needs (particularly specific Learning Difficulties) should have been identified. The process of transition for all children with SEN is therefore of

prime importance in ensuring that the provision at the new school is appropriate. This is also a crucial moment in supporting such pupils in the management of their behaviour. Good links with SENCOs and pastoral staff in the primary school can be particularly helpful here, and we did meet some staff in primary schools who are attempting to improve these links:

> *I think they get lost (when they get to) secondary school, and that's why children fail... I've worked a lot with Key Stage 2/3 link projects this year and I think that's actually crucial for children because the transition is not good at the moment... It should be much more rigorous assessment, not just of the children's academic achievement, but a monitoring of their behaviour in liaison with the schools they've just left.*
> (Deputy Head, Primary School)

A secondary school in another Authority is inviting Year 6 pupils from its feeder schools who are having difficulties with their reading, to come to the secondary school in their final year and to work with Year 10 and 11 pupils on improving their literacy.

Special schools

Staff in the special schools in our sample said they were very reluctant to exclude children (except in extreme circumstances) and even argued that they had the least justification for doing so. This feeling was particularly strong in EBD schools which recognise that they exist specifically to help children with challenging behaviour.

While we found no special schools whose formal policy was never to exclude a pupil, there was a general view that exclusions from such schools should be at the lowest possible level:

> *We are anti-exclusion. That doesn't mean we haven't excluded anybody because we have but we would regard it as a very extreme measure and one that we would avoid. We would aim towards zero, that's what we want in the school.*
> (Headteacher, EBD School)

Such schools are proud of the specialist work that they do with very challenging young people, but feel that all schools would be able to achieve even more if they were told about the causes of children's behaviour:

> *I find it devastating that in a special school, an EBD special school, we get children coming to us because of behaviours they have demonstrated in mainstream school and nobody has tried to identify the causes of that behaviour. They have been excluded because of the behaviour (and) Educational Psychologists have been involved in the production of the statement. People go in and observe the behaviour yet I don't think that I've read a statement in the last fifteen years (which says) 'This is what we think is causing this behaviour.' What it will say is, 'This child needs one-to one.' 'This child needs this'. ' This child needs that.' It's the identification*

of the cause of behaviour that is lacking, even in statemented children.
(Headteacher, EBD School)

EXCLUSION AND PUPILS FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES

General issues

It is clear from our fieldwork that the full and accurate monitoring by ethnicity is essential if schools are going to be able to recognise the links between ethnicity and exclusion. Some of the schools we visited had already set up such monitoring procedures and were using the information in their attempts to minimise exclusions.

Some claimed to have difficulty in getting information from children and their parents about ethnicity. Others suggested that it should be relatively easy, especially once a child has reached the stage of exclusion. But this can only supply data for retrospective analysis, not a full monitoring process:

> *If the child reaches the stage of exclusion there will have been a great deal of work undertaken with that youngster, with heads of year, with form tutor, with family, with Special Educational Needs as appropriate, before they ever get to the stage of a permanent exclusion certainly. There may well have been meetings with governors and so on, so you're looking at something that will be well documented and it shouldn't be difficult therefore to pull out that information and analyse it across the board.*
> (Deputy Head, Special School)

The quality of the LEA's monitoring processes are also important here since Authorities are uniquely positioned to be able to feedback specific and comparative data on schools' policies and practices.

Links between individual school policies and ethnicity can be hard for schools to establish on their own. Several of the schools we spoke to had run special projects with national, local and voluntary organisations including Community Relations Councils, the NSPCC, Barnados and others.

Some schools with low numbers of ethnic minority children were aware that their school still faced issues of racism and that these needed to be addressed in all areas of policy including behaviour and exclusion.   On the other hand, schools with higher proportions of ethnic minority pupils were often aware that race was only one aspect (albeit a crucial one) of their experience:

> *We look at the proportion of black kids, say, who have been excluded. We are not blind to the issue of ethnicity and we look to try and see whether or not there is a pattern to the reasons for exclusion and then we deal with it. We look to see whether or not black children are excluded for different reasons to white kids, and then we try to deal with it... There was a real issue with white*

> *middle-class ineffectual teachers dealing with black children and in some cases it was (for whatever reason) fear. I put that down to... straightforward racism.*
> (Headteacher, Secondary School)

Several teachers pointed out to us how valuable it is for schools to have adequate numbers of ethnic minority staff for parents to talk to. It is particularly helpful if those teachers are in senior positions within the school .[71]

> *When I first arrived (some of the black) parents didn't know who I was and they'd just heard (my name). So of course they came in with this hidden agenda. - 'I'm going to sort (her) out...' And one of the first things they do, they come through the door and they say, 'Oh, I didn't realise you were black. Are you Afro-Caribbean?' 'Yes.' 'Well you must understand... Could you help us on this score?'*
> (Deputy Head, Secondary School)

Whilst the presence of ethnic minority teachers may support ethnic minority parents it remains the responsibility of the school to ensure that all teachers are ready to establish effective working relationships with minority families. The staff we spoke to pointed out that translation and interpretation services can make a huge difference when working with parents whose English is not fluent. They explained that it is vital (at each key stage of the exclusion process) to make sure that the school and the home are communicating as well as possible. Delays in making sure that things are properly understood can lengthen a case and increase the amount of time a child is out of school.

Language support for some ethnic minority children (particularly new migrants or refugees in certain LEAs who may speak little or no English) was thought by many staff to be particularly important. If children are not able to understand what is going on in the classroom or what is expected of them, there is more opportunity for the types of boredom and disaffection which teachers identify as an early cause of poor behaviour.

Much of this support can come not just from classroom teachers, but also from outreach workers employed centrally by the LEA, from classroom assistants, and from parents and the wider community.

There is a continuing need to help schools develop more imaginative and flexible approaches to the curriculum in order to include local cultures and the perspectives of all children. Such approaches can improve motivation, promote engagement, and reduce those behavioural problems linked to disaffection.

Mixed heritage children

Children of mixed (dual) heritage appear to be over-represented in the exclusion statistics but little is known about this very heterogeneous grouping.[72] It is particularly important that schools (and LEAs) adopt procedures which allow these children to

identify their own ethnic grouping, if these monitoring procedures are to inform our understanding of the experiences and needs of such children.

Traveller children

Very few of the schools we visited had significant numbers of Travellers in their area, though one or two were close to sites which are used regularly at different times of year. In these cases it was often the LEA who provided education, either through the provision of a school on the site, or through other arrangements with the Travellers' Education Service. Teachers from schools which did sometimes have Travellers on the roll did not report any specific policies towards these children apart from a general attitude of being open to all, and of not treating them differently:

> *We have varying numbers of Gypsy and Traveller children... We are recognised within the Gypsy community as they come through (the area), and their children do have a place here... We have to respond according to their stages. There are occasions when we will have forty of these children turn up in a morning and its about responding to them.*
> (Headteacher, Primary School)

None of the schools we visited believed that Travellers' children were over-represented in their own exclusion figures.

EXCLUSION AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

General issues

The monitoring and support of some other vulnerable groups of children were particularly variable in the schools we visited. These groups include children who are being looked after by the Local Authority, transient children, and the children of refugees and asylum seekers.

Looked-after children

No school we visited had any special monitoring processes related to the exclusion of looked-after children, though heads of primary schools and pastoral heads in secondary schools were generally aware of who such children were. They were not thought, however, to figure significantly in the exclusion figures nor, necessarily to have particular behaviour problems.

More common was a feeling that when any child develops a pattern of poor behaviour it is likely to be exacerbated by, and possibly linked to other factors in that child's life which are unstable or problematic.

Children in care were known to have featured in one primary school's exclusion processes in the past but the head points out that such children are not permanently 'in care'. They tend to go in and out of children's homes, foster care and their own home

and he believes that such a disruptive time can render the child vulnerable to issues at school which they might ordinarily be able to handle.

Success in such cases is not entirely in the school's control:

> *I've got a boy at the moment who would otherwise have been excluded if his social worker had not been good. He lives in another Borough. He is in care. He's just changed his foster carer and all of that could have gone pear-shaped in the very early stages had his social worker not been a very good one... Another boy, with another social worker in a different Borough is much less of a problem. But he's not going to last because his social worker is not as good.*
> (Headteacher, Primary School)

Or as one SENCO put it:

> *The hardest part (of working with looked-after children) is having a liaison with whoever is responsible for that child and finding out what things we need to know about that child... One of our recent (looked after children)... was with five different carers in her first term here, and keeping track of that is incredibly hard... She had no attached social worker so somebody different was picking up the case every time you phoned and no one seemed to be responsible for her... It is very much the school that has to take the initiative.*
> (SENCO, Secondary School)

Other schools that we visited are not necessarily aware of such details. One head told us that they didn't know which of their children were being looked after by the Authority, and doubted whether the LEA knew either.

Other Vulnerable groups

Most of the teachers we spoke to recognised that there were other aspects of children's lives which might make them vulnerable to exclusion. Some schools are well aware of the background of such children, and are sometimes able to provide suitable education and support. In one primary school 26 per cent of the children are from families seeking asylum and the staff are highly skilled at responding to their needs.[73] With one or two exceptions (who have had particularly violent experiences in war zones) these children were thought by teachers not necessarily to be at risk of exclusion. But their presence in the school places major demands on teachers' time. This may mean that staff have less time to devote to the other vulnerable children in the school. Schools do, however, need to give particular support to children who have experienced war or other traumas, and need additional resources for this.

Our analysis of the fieldwork schools suggests that there are particular problems for those schools where children come from a number of different Boroughs and who are housed and supported (but not necessarily looked after) by the Authorities there. These problems are particularly difficult for some large secondary schools that are close to

the borders of their LEA. These are partly to do with the sheer difficulty of working (in one case) with a dozen Social Services Departments, and partly to do with a perception that some Housing Departments 'dump' problem families in other LEAs' catchment areas:

> *And it does feel like 'dumping' because they dump them down in bed and breakfast or wherever, then give them a day or two's notice and pull them out again... A little Kosovan boy said to me the other day, 'I'm in at my second school already, Miss, I just hope they don't move me from here. I Like it.'... It's not helping their stability and the more stable your school the less disruption there is (in other areas of your life).*
> (Headteacher, Primary School)

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT ISSUES

General issues

It is clear from our interviews that schools are willing and able to play their part in reducing the levels of exclusion and that the staged targets recently introduced by the DfEE are welcome, as well as challenging. It is also clear that achieving such reductions needs to be seen as a school developmental issue. This means that the policies designed to impact on the level of exclusions must focus on relationships between individual teachers and pupils; the teaching and learning strategies used in particular classrooms; shared values and policies employed across the school community; and the overall development and management of the school:

> *We're trying to concentrate very much on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, because the feeling is that if the quality of teaching and learning is right, and relationships with children is right, then children are far more successful. And so in terms of our development plan, in terms of staff training, we're very much looking at people improving and developing their craft of the classroom technique, which includes as part of that, managing behaviour, in a proactive way. Now we also have in school a mentoring system, where class teachers are mentored in terms of their classroom practice, and that mentoring system goes from our headteacher, right the way down to NQTs so we each have an individual mentor, who looks at our classroom practice, who might help us in our discussions with managing groups of individual children, and I think that goes a great way, to keeping those difficult situations in a sense under control.*
> (Deputy Head, Special School)

Schools' progress in reducing exclusions is firmly linked to the development of teaching, learning and behaviour policies which have the capacity to limit as well as to administer exclusions. The teaching staff we spoke to were unanimous in their belief that all such policies need to be clear, consistent, and comprehensive if they are going to support the reduction of exclusions:

> *(Improvements in) the permanent exclusion rate are linked to the progress of the school and I would expect that the permanent exclusion rate will reduce as the school becomes a more effective organisation... What I would expect is that exclusions resulting from poor behaviour management and from inappropriate and ineffectual teaching will almost disappear and exclusions will almost be exclusively the result of a single horrendous act beyond our control.*
> (Headteacher, Secondary School)

They described how behaviour policies need to be understood by everyone within the school, and thus benefit from being as clear and unambiguous as possible. Pupils and staff need to know what constitutes good and unacceptable behaviour, why behaviour is considered important, and what will happen to those who transgress the rules. The best and most-inclusive policies were described as those which are understood and managed by everyone (including the pupils), and which are handled at the lowest possible level of the school's hierarchy.

The basic principles of honesty, respect, diligence, etc., need to apply to all staff and pupils, and need to be seen to be administered in an even-handed way. Behaviour issues need to be tackled simply, quickly, and efficiently. One secondary school we visited had a problem with children breaking the uniform code, and found that some children were being repeatedly told off for the same relatively trivial offence. This was breeding a sense of victimisation among some children (particularly those who had a legitimate excuse) and was increasing the chances that they would have arguments with staff.

One child in this school, for example, has been wearing trainers since his school shoes had fallen apart and his family could not yet afford replacements. Having to explain this over and over again was demeaning, unnecessary and inflammatory. The school now has a 'uniform pass' system which is administered at the start of the school day by the form tutor whose job it is to assess and manage the situation. Once a pass has been issued, the incident is closed (whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation) and the pupil will not need to re-explain the circumstances to other staff.

One Senior Manager we spoke to was keenly aware that pupils have a strong sense of justice. They are easily aggrieved, she said, and respond badly to discipline which they consider to be unfair. Schools which try to be even-handed in implementing their behaviour policies, and which include the pupil as much as possible in the process, reported that such pupils are more likely to accept the judgement of the school.

It is clear from our visits to schools, however, and particularly our analysis of Behaviour Policies, that more attention is frequently paid to managing the 'lower' end of the behaviour spectrum than the more serious end. They may have detailed plans for handling small-scale misdemeanours, but much less precise plans for how to handle successive or severe problems. This is particularly true in schools which have less experience of exclusion. This can result in schools 'running out' of suitable interventions and strategies with challenging or vulnerable children and resorting too quickly to the use of fixed-period and permanent exclusions. This is, in part, a

question of ensuring that individual teachers are employing suitable forms of classroom management, using relevant styles of delivery and learning, and developing good relationships with their students.

At a more strategic level some LEAs have helped some schools to identify the full range of measures which they expect a school to have taken before they exclude a pupil, and pointing out that they will expect a school to have worked through all the stages in their behaviour policy when considering whether or not to support the school's decision.

Heads in our fieldwork schools argued that the best behaviour policies are linked at strategic and practical levels to other policies in the school, including those on Equal Opportunities, Special Educational Needs, Staff Development and to policies on Teaching and Learning. They believe that the links between these different strategies should be seen most clearly in the School Development Plan.

While Governors will, by statute, be involved in any exclusion, it is not uncommon to find that they are only called in after the event and sometimes only when there has been an appeal against a permanent exclusion. Some of the schools in our sample have developed ways of involving them much earlier on, either formally through reporting processes, or informally in the support of vulnerable children.

Formal involvement of Governors in these schools does not just consist of the development and monitoring of behaviour policies, but can also involve them in discipline panels which are convened to handle cases of behaviour which appear to be getting out of control. In these cases schools report that bringing pupils (and sometimes their parents) before a panel of governors can help to underline the seriousness of the issue and the likely repercussions of future behaviour. They can serve as an early warning of a possible exclusion (for the child, the family and the school) and help to identify suitable interventions. They are particularly useful if they give a child an opportunity to state their own case and to serve as a formal way of raising and resolving difficulties they are having within the school.

Lunchtimes are particularly significant in terms of behaviour management, and those schools we visited with good monitoring systems were able to confirm that many of the incidents which led to or triggered exclusion happened in this period. While some schools have reduced the amount of time from 60 minutes to 40, 30 or less, others were aware of the value of proper breaks for staff and pupils alike.

Mid-day supervisors are widely recognised as crucial in any attempt to reduce behaviour problems at lunchtime. It is particularly important that their approach is consistent with that of other adults in the school. Several schools have instigated special training programmes for them, ensuring that there is a consistency of approach and styles throughout the school day. Where appropriate some mid day supervisors have been paid to attend courses outside the school or during INSET days.

Different sorts of 'Time-out' and 'Withdrawal' areas for pupils were found in the schools we visited, but these are seen by teachers in this study as having weaknesses as well as strengths. Staff pointed out that they can offer students a safe place to go when they feel as if things are getting out of control, they can be a source of support

and even of counselling, and they can help students to take more responsibility for their own behaviour. Other staff have concerns about such facilities, pointing out that they can offer less-coherent teaching for the children and can persuade the school that the responsibility is all that of the child. There are also some problems about the ways in which children leave the area and go back into the classroom. Some teachers say this can be disruptive.

Primary schools

The classroom teachers in our sample reported that the requirements of the National Curriculum and (more recently) the Literacy and Numeracy strategies, have removed some of the flexibility that they once had in designing schemes of work which could differentiate for children who might be at risk of exclusion.

The transfer of children from Year 6 to year 7 is recognised as a particularly important time. Primary schools fear that vulnerable children (with whom they may have worked extensively to avoid exclusion) will be lost in the larger environment of the secondary school.

Secondary schools

Several of the secondary schools we visited had recently been 'turned around' following poor OFSTED reports. Permanent exclusions had often been a major tool in this process and had been used to remove particular groups and individuals who had been unsettled in the school for some time. They had also been used, along with fixed-period exclusions, as a way of clamping down on behaviour in a more general way, by reinforcing a new, stricter regime.

OTHER FEATURES OF CURRENT PRACTICE

In addition to the points we have discussed above, our research has highlighted other aspects of current practice which we consider relevant to the handling of exclusions in English schools. We consider these under four main headings: partnerships, competition, demographics, and unofficial exclusions.

Partnerships

Wherever we found good practice in the schools that we visited for this research, and wherever we were introduced to policies which were limiting the number of exclusions, we also found clear examples of partnership. These partnerships are frequently cited as one of the key factors of success. They are taking place at a number of levels.

Internal partnerships

Firstly good partnerships are taking place *within* schools. Inclusion, like charity, begins at home. Some of the most inclusive schools we visited were clearly working well not just as organisations but as communities, and they were able to tell a story of a whole school which had worked together in tackling issues like exclusion:

I am now keeping close records on youngsters who we would perceive to be at risk of exclusion or behaviour deterioration and there has been a significant decline in the number of youngsters that actually make the long walk up to my door. I think also we have changed the way we manage youngsters' behaviour anyway. That door, other than on occasions like this, is open and youngsters come in frequently and the aura has gone - this is no longer a place to be afraid of, they come to collect footballs and things and we will be interrupted at break time. And my genuine feeling is now one of a team. The staff and youngsters and Governors are a team and the parents are now beginning to play their part as well.
(Headteacher, Primary School)

Home/school partnerships

Although Home-School Contracts had not been formally introduced at the time of this study, we found a number of good examples of effective partnerships between parents and schools. While it is crucial that parents and carers play an active role once a child is caught up in the exclusion process, schools also report how important it can be to build good home-school relationships across the school. This is partly a question of encouraging a general interest in the child's education, but can also be a specific tool in cases where a child is thought to be at risk of exclusion. It is another example of early intervention but it is important that the school should be working with the parents on positive as well as negative aspects of behaviour:

Parents do come into school but they often think, 'Oh my goodness I've got a meeting with the Head or the Deputy. It must be to say Tommy's been a right pain. But I think they need to be coming into school to look at achievements as well as difficulties. That is a major piece of work to be done.
(Deputy Head, Secondary School)

School/LEA partnerships

Thirdly some schools are able to report strong, effective partnerships with LEAs, and recognise that they have been able to play a key part in preventing exclusions. This has been partly through the regular support provided by the Authorities' Advisory and Inspection Services, partly through specialist staff such as Educational Psychologists, and partly through particular exclusion-centred initiatives.

External partnerships

Partnerships with other local agencies (from the statutory and voluntary sectors) have also been successful in some schools. Typically these range from individual support from staff at a children's home, through to formal training for teachers by the local CRC. Many such partnerships are new and are still being developed centrally by LEAs who are forming inter-agency steering groups as part of their Behaviour Support

Plans. In several cases these groups are only just beginning to impact at the level of individual schools.

Inter-school partnerships

Finally, while we have come across good examples of partnerships between schools, we have to say that these are relatively uncommon.

> *I know that in (one LEA) they've got groups of heads working together and if a kid is causing trouble in one school he isn't excluded. They decide – the heads decide between them that they've got something they can offer in their schools. No one is pressurising them. Nobody is twisting their arm. (The Government) are not encouraging that kind of approach where groups of heads can come together and make decisions about appropriate moves.*
> (Headteacher, EBD School)

The most formal arrangements are frequently between schools and FE colleges, whereby some pupils in Years 10 and 11 (including some of those who might otherwise be thought at risk of exclusion) are offered flexible, more vocationally based programmes. These are still quite new, and it is too early to judge their success.

Informal arrangements about excluded pupils rely on the networks that exist in any locality between professionals. Head teachers will discuss cases with each other particularly, for example, when the LEA is seeking to find a new school for a pupil who has been permanently excluded. Head teachers and SENCOs will sometimes meet to discuss approaches to behaviour and to new legislation. Links between primary and secondary schools can provide clear support for a child who is known to be at risk of exclusion, but the primary school often feels as if they are a junior partner in such arrangements, and that they could offer more advice about a pupil if only they were asked.

Two neighbouring Comprehensives in one of the Authorities we visited operate on innovative system of 'dual registration' for pupils who are thought to be on the verge of permanent exclusion. Selected pupils are offered the chance of a 'trial' period at the other school. This arrangement must have the support of the pupil, the family, and both schools, and is closely monitored. After a few weeks a case conference will consider the wishes of the pupil – whether to return to the original school or to continue at the new one. It has proved valuable in both cases – either as a way of showing that things are worth persevering with, or as a way of giving people a clean break without the trauma of a permanent exclusion. Importantly there is no break in the child's education nor in the supervision of their work. The process appears to be less stigmatising than the formal exclusion process.

Competition

There was some disagreement amongst the teachers we spoke to about the links between school improvement and lower levels of exclusion. On the one hand we found teachers who believe that retaining disruptive children in their school is

hampering their attempts to teach the majority of children, while on the other hand is an equally clear view that high quality classroom practice will help to identify and solve the issues which lead to problems. Handling such tensions is a key school management issue:

> *We went through a period about three years ago now, say, with a hard core of the hang'em and flog'em brigade who said if I permanently excluded 60 students then I'd have a wonderful school. And I said if I permanently excluded 60 students then the outside Authority would create merry hell for us and of course they would have to deal with that wouldn't they? But you'd also have the next 60 slotting neatly into place and you'd be telling me in a few weeks, months, whatever, that if I exclude these 60 students I'd have a wonderful school and that was a spiral of decline I wasn't prepared to get into. I wanted to maintain students in the school and encourage them to behave better. To try and deal with these issues of behaviour was the only thing I was prepared to do. I know it's a little harsh but I do have a view that some of the more horrific excesses we've heard of in terms of incidents in schools have not been entirely unrelated to the way those schools dealt with the students. As I say to staff, 'Like it not, my role in exclusion is to act as the honest broker. I am not here to be an extension of you. I'm not here to tell you what to do. If you present me with a case of exclusion which I don't agree with the child will not be excluded.' I think that one of the reasons we are as formal in terms of exclusion is because I feared the whole thing could actually spiral out of control. In trying to respond to teachers I felt I could constantly be placed in a position where youngsters were not getting a fair deal because there was not an opportunity to judge it before making a decision.*
> (Headteacher, Secondary School)

A more widespread opinion was that the current climate of league tables, and competition for pupils and resources, is working against schools' desire to collaborate more closely. It is also thought to be a contributive factor in the levels of exclusion.

> *I am concerned about this bidding culture in which we find ourselves. The most vulnerable kids are at the behest of this culture. (Levels of) resourcing might depend on the persistence and vigour of the head. This should be properly resourced at LEA level.*
> *A bidding culture leads to a fragmentary approach.*
> (Headteacher, Secondary School)

Demographics

Different types of schools, working in highly diverse social contexts, described how these conditions make a significant difference to their ability to reduce exclusions. Issues raised by the staff we spoke to included:
- Attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff (particularly into inner cities and to schools with a reputation for challenging behaviour and high exclusion).
- Schools do not always have enough Black and Asian teachers (particularly in senior positions) to offer suitable role models or appropriate interventions.

- Small LEAs (and some newer Unitary Authorities) do not have the same capacity to act in support of schools or to be proactive in new developments.
- High levels of pupil mobility are very disruptive to schools and, while the mobile children may not be more vulnerable to exclusion themselves, their movements can unsettle patterns of behaviour amongst other vulnerable children.
- The socio-economic nature of local communities does not cause exclusions, but it can present schools with serious additional challenges. Areas of high social disadvantage can make the successful management of behaviour more difficult, can limit the scope of partnerships, and reduce the energy and flexibility of staff. Nevertheless, some of the highest excluding schools are in well-favoured catchment areas. Some schools with children from disadvantaged circumstances are able to minimise exclusion, while neighbouring schools recruiting in the same area do not achieve this.[74]

Unofficial exclusions

At many of the schools we visited head teachers are operating policies of 'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions which can last anything from a few hours to five days. Most heads who admitted to this practice justified it on the grounds that it provided a 'cooling off' period for everyone involved, and argued that it was done in the best interests of the child. They believe that it avoids the stigma of a fixed-term exclusion, brings the matter to the attention of parents and underlines the serious nature of the offence. The time away from school is normally recorded as authorised absence by the schools we visited.

> *If, at the end of a long hard term, one of those lads who I've already mentioned, who's still in the school, is being a right pain, then we'll agree with the parents that he has his holidays a bit early. And I'm quite prepared to argue with anyone on that score, to give staff a break as well as children a break.*
> (Headteacher, Secondary School)

Critics of this practice argued that (while there may be advantages in flexible arrangements in certain circumstances) they are not being recorded or monitored, can circumvent the official exclusion processes and can reduce the rights of parents, children and the LEA to adequate involvement in the case. It is more likely to be tolerated if it is an immediate response to a single incident (in which case a child might be sent home for the rest of the day) but much harder to justify if it lasts for anything longer. One school who was sending children away for up to a week was under the misguided assumption that exclusions of less than five days 'do not have to be reported to the LEA'.

It would appear from our interview data that targets for reducing exclusions might be one cause of the growth in unofficial ways of excluding children. Schools are able to meet their specific targets while still disciplining pupils. This practice, we believe, constitutes a significant problem in a number of schools, and is one which urgently needs to be addressed at a strategic level by LEAs and the DfEE.

SCHOOLS' PERCEPTIONS OF FUTURE NEEDS AND DEVELOPMENT

At the end of each of our interviews with school staff and governors, we asked them what sorts of additional support they needed from LEAs and Government if they were going to be able to reduce exclusions still further and move towards being more inclusive organisations. It was clear from these parts of the interviews that schools have clear ideas about the gaps in current provision. Their responses fell into the following categories.

Support in monitoring exclusion

The schools we spoke to are willing to co-operate with LEAs and the DfEE in the monitoring of students by such criteria as age, gender, and SEN. Some schools identified particular problems about monitoring by ethnicity, claiming that parents and children do not recognise the categories on official forms. Schools with low numbers of ethnic minority children do not always 'see the need' for such monitoring. It is clear, however, from the schools that do successfully use data in analysing and informing their exclusion policies, that such monitoring is both possible and useful. But some schools recognised that they need clear guidance on the development of appropriate monitoring procedures.

It is also clear that schools are generally unlikely to be able to do all of that monitoring themselves and that they need central support and feedback in order to collect, analyse and respond to the data. In most cases it is only the LEA which is in a position to provide high quality, accurate, and relevant data.

While some schools are now quite skilled at collecting and analysing quantitative data on exclusions, far fewer seem equipped to use reliable qualitative data to inform their policies on exclusion. We know from other areas of educational research that interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and structures such as School or Pupil Councils are able to offer schools important perspectives on children's experiences of school, and that these perspectives can usefully be incorporated into development plans.[75]

> *The Pupil Council is very much school-based and the governors participate at the outcome stage. Their representatives are always very well briefed, they do represent groups - they don't just come along with their own pet concerns. We have a member of staff who actually manages the forum and chairs it and (the Chair of Governors), myself and other governors and one of our learning assistants also attend. The power to take decisions has been very good in as much as the youngsters have actually seen a lot of outcomes. The most recent discussion crucially is about the home-school agreement and we have asked that forum to discuss from a pupils' point of view what should go into it.*
> (Deputy Head, Primary School)

Indicators of need

The teachers we spoke to believe that there are several factors behind the high levels of exclusion which are not taken into account in the funding formulae for schools. These factors include:

- The levels of pupil-mobility within individual schools. (In one primary school we visited 33% of the pupils had arrived or left during the previous school year.)
- Practical difficulties for schools dealing with several Local Authorities. (In some parts of London it is not uncommon for a school to have children from 10 or more LEAs, which hampers inter-agency responses to exclusion.)
- The need for resources for schools who accept pupils excluded from elsewhere.
- The levels of resources in schools with low rolls (who may be required to take more pupils who have been excluded from neighbouring schools).
- A recognition that changes in Government policy have a 'knock on' effect for schools who are already coping with their own changes and who are still trying to reduce exclusion.
- The urgent need for SENCOs to have adequate non-contact time (particularly in Primary schools with high numbers of SEN children).

More-supportive frameworks

Schools believe that they can go further towards reducing exclusions if they can be supported in the development of more-supportive frameworks. As part of that development they would welcome:

- Flexible examples of behaviour management policies and whole-school approaches to avoiding exclusion.
- A handbook of locally available services to shorten the time it takes to get appropriate support in difficult cases.
- More ethnic minority staff to enable provision of an appropriate and professional service for all children.
- Longer-term funding regimes for special initiatives (such as the Standards Fund) so that more time is given to innovatory approaches and so that successful projects can be continued.
- A less-judgmental approach to the monitoring of schools by some LEA Inspectors and particularly by OFSTED.
- A climate which listens to and trusts the professional judgement of teachers.
- Flexible and continuous programmes of training and staff development.

4   LEA PERSPECTIVES

This chapter reports on the perspectives of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and LEA officers and is based on the data from LEAs collected by members of the research team. It focuses on how LEAs can most effectively support schools in reducing the level of exclusions. This is discussed under a number of themes:

- Reasons and triggers for exclusion
- How LEAs support schools in reducing exclusions
- Supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Exclusions and pupils from ethnic minorities
- Supporting parents and carers
- Supporting excluded pupils and those at risk
- Re-integration
- Gaps in the data

Our research set out to investigate how LEAs were responding to the needs of pupils at risk of exclusion and we asked specific questions in relation to such pupils. Nevertheless, LEA officers usually talked in terms of general strategies to reduce exclusions. Where data was provided for vulnerable groups or where specific projects were targeting their needs, we make reference to these.

Background

The six LEAs were chosen to represent a range of shire counties, urban areas, unitary authorities and metropolitan authorities. They also represent a geographical spread of Authorities throughout England.

In each Authority we interviewed at least four officers, a total of 32 in all, who were involved in the management of school exclusions. In each Authority, too, we collected documentary evidence, including the LEA's Behaviour Support Plan.

The Authorities with more-systematic data were clear that pupils of different ages and backgrounds had experienced varying levels of exclusions in recent years. Some of the local Authorities in our study have been collecting data on permanent exclusions for as long as ten years, but are aware that some schools have not returned accurate data. Only three Authorities collect data systematically onto a computerised database.

Data on fixed-term exclusions is more problematic. In several Authorities it has only recently begun to be collected systematically. Fixed-term exclusions appear to be rising as levels of permanent exclusions decline. Some officers thought that schools are beginning to use fixed-term exclusions as part of their behaviour management strategy. In some cases, officers thought, this was as a means of headteachers triggering access to additional Authority resources to provide support for particular pupils. In other cases it was intended to alert parents to the seriousness of the problems a school was having with a pupil.

From our interviews with LEA officers and from LEA documents, it became clear that there is only a limited amount of reliable evidence on the exclusion rates of ethnic

minority pupils and Traveller children, and even less evidence on the exclusions of pupils looked after by the local Authority. While it was clear that boys were far more likely to be excluded than girls, LEAs seem not to have addressed the problem of whether the prevention of girls' exclusions needed to be tackled in different ways from those of boys.

Despite these inconsistencies some general patterns of school exclusion were identified by officers in our case study LEAs:

- Boys are 6 – 10 times more likely to be excluded than girls, with girls' exclusions forming about 15% of the total;

- African-Caribbean boys were over-represented in the proportions of exclusions to community population, as were certain other ethnic minority groups.

- One of the urban Authorities had data which demonstrated that looked after children were over-represented in the exclusion figures. They constituted 2.4 per cent of the excluded pupils but only 1.2 per cent of the school population. An officer explained why Looked-after children were judged to be particularly vulnerable to exclusion:

  The child gets looked after by social services. They get moved. They get put with one foster family. They're moved again. Their schooling can be disrupted an endless number of times. Nobody seems to be giving the model that education is something valuable, interesting, part of life…. And yet they're the children we need to be modelling how useful education is to most [people]. Otherwise they become the parents of the next set of children who get looked after.

REASONS AND TRIGGERS FOR EXCLUSIONS

School exclusions often relate to underlying social, educational, and school-related factors, as many LEA officers explained. There were a number of underlying social factors which were identified as contributing to exclusions:

- The inability of some secondary schools to cope with pupils with a wide variety of social backgrounds. Some schools had experienced changes in their social composition when their traditional catchment areas no longer applied. In one local Authority there was a 38 per cent rise in exclusions in 1997/98 amongst pupils who transferred from inner city primary schools to outer ring suburban secondary schools, affecting the social composition of the secondary schools.

- School transfer caused some pupils problems. Officers suggested that pupils found it difficult to adapt to their new schools and needed greater support both in Year 6, at the end of primary school, and in Year 7.

- Pupils suffering from family crises or living in disturbed social circumstances were thought to be more likely to be involved in exclusions.

- Truancy was perceived as a cause of exclusion for pupils - because they had lost touch with the school curriculum so that when they were in school they tended to be disaffected. It also formed a type of exclusion, especially among some older pupils, whether applied by the pupils or encouraged by senior school staff.

- Traveller children were usually catered for either by provision of temporary places in an LEA's schools or by providing temporary schools at special sites during their stay in an area. Traveller children were not thought by LEA officers to figure significantly in their exclusion figures, but they had no data to support or refute their claim.

The actual critical incident triggering exclusion which is recorded, usually occurs only after a school has experienced continuing difficulties with a pupil's behaviour. However LEAs tend to classify exclusions only by the trigger incidents.

One Authority asked its schools to notify it of exclusions under the following categories: Bullying, damage to property, defiance, disruption, illicit substances, other (severe), physical abuse to pupils, physical abuse to staff, theft, verbal abuse to staff, verbal abuse to pupils. Officers admitted that the category 'other (severe)' was too vague to be useful.

In another Authority, the key areas were said to be assaults on other pupils, physical abuse to staff, verbal abuse to teachers, disruption and defiance. In a third Authority the notification forms included a category of 'arson' and this appeared to be a common cause of exclusion. Officers soon realised that it was being used to describe very minor incidents (as well as serious fires) and suspected that schools were using the category to ensure the LEA's support for their decision to exclude the child.

Unofficial exclusions

Unofficial and unrecorded fixed-term exclusions, sometimes with parental agreement, took the form of pupils being sent home to diffuse a confrontation, often for as short a time as one afternoon (see Chapter 3: School Perspectives). The extent of the practice was unclear, but said to be widespread in some schools. One LEA suggested we visit a particular church-controlled school as it was an example of good practice in handling exclusions. Our fieldwork in that school, however, found a head teacher who not only used unofficial exclusions extensively, but openly described it as a caring and supportive strategy for his children.

Officers were also aware of some unofficial permanent exclusions when parents were advised by a headteacher to find alternative schooling for their children. Such transfers were arranged with the help of officers and both schools. Some headteachers believed this practice saved children from the stigma of having exclusion on their school record.

Officers argued that these unofficial exclusions procedures made it difficult for an Authority to know what help schools needed. It also made it difficult for secondary schools to know which former primary school pupils needed careful monitoring and support after transfer.

HOW LEAs SUPPORT SCHOOLS IN REDUCING EXCLUSIONS

LEAs in our study placed considerable emphasis on preventative policies; on multi-agency working; on school leadership and management; on partnership with teachers, parents, and the local community; and on supporting pupils' learning and behavioural needs.

Policies and practices of prevention

LEA officers, through conferences and written guidance, encouraged schools to be consistent and positive in their approaches to discipline, making pupils aware what penalties were usually given for what misdemeanours. They cited examples of bad practice:

> *We know of pupils ... being sent out of class [for] not wearing a tie,*
> *and then being so enraged that they've done something further that*
> *would cause an exclusion.*
> (LEA Officer)

Schools were also encouraged by LEAs to reward good behaviour by pupils. This encouraged pupils to work positively with the school.

One Authority has a specific Council sub-committee for all matters concerning children and young people. It had sponsored or supported a number of Authority-wide initiatives to reduce exclusions from schools, especially in primary schools. It had worked with small groups of pupils in schools which had at one time had high rates of exclusion. This was a three pronged approach of helping the pupils at risk of exclusion develop better literacy, numeracy and IT skills - allowing them easier to access the curriculum; of offering them counselling/mentoring support to develop their interpersonal relationships; and working with local parents in areas both of the curriculum and of child behaviour management.

LEAs used a variety of lead personnel based in schools to trigger support for pupils with behaviour difficulties. In each school in one Authority SENCOs co-ordinated responses to pupils' behaviour difficulties as well as their learning difficulties. In another Authority, each school had a teaching assistant from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) attached to it (see section on Multi-agency working below).

Several Authorities worked with lower secondary pupils and primary school pupils, especially in Year 6, to give them the necessary range of social skills to avoid exclusion. Officers reported that such initiatives had had considerable success.

LEA officers thought that one strategy for prevention was setting qualitative targets, as well as quantitative ones. An example of a qualitative target, given by one LEA officer, was that of creating a learning culture in school. An indicator of this might be the degree of involvement which pupils had, formally, in shaping the cultural norms and rules of the school. Officers also argued the need for quantitative targets to take account of the particular circumstances of a school at any one point in time, such as the number of Traveller or refugee children attending a school (see Chapter 3).

Creating a data-rich environment: monitoring exclusions and misbehaviour

Improving the quality of data on pupil misbehaviour allows local authorities to help schools improve their management of pupils' behaviour and to compare the outcomes of their practice with those of other schools in the local Authority area. Only three of our case study LEAs had in place an Authority-wide computer database for recording and monitoring exclusions and incidences of pupil misbehaviour in schools. This data was fed back to schools to guide their management policies and practices. The system is supported by many schools running their own SIMS computer-based records of pupil misbehaviour, absence and good behaviour.

One Authority wants to develop more careful monitoring in order to identify when pupils are approaching the 45 day fixed-term exclusion limit. Officers expect to have a unique identity number for pupils in place within two years. A different Authority is working to map out which children with SEN are involved in exclusions. However, one Authority admitted that it had yet to develop such recording and monitoring systems.

Effective monitoring allows local authorities to trigger help and support to schools. In one Authority five-day exclusions triggered the involvement of support staff in a school. On the other hand, because of the resources available, the authority's Pupil Referral Unit ignores secondary school pupils with less than 15 days of exclusions in one year. Another Authority considers a five-day exclusion threshold much too high for primary school pupils.

Integrated services / multi-agency work

Education officers recognised that creating closer links with health and social services was important for tackling the problem of exclusions, especially working with Social Services within the framework of the Children's Act (1989) This included their responsibility for 'looked-after' children. In 1998/99 a member of staff from one Authority's PRU was:

> *Working primarily with children that go through [two] children's homes … She is following and monitoring them back into their own home [or] their foster carer's. … We've done some work and training with the staff at the two children's home in terms of raising their expectations of what children should be doing educationally.*
> (Head of Pupil Referral Services)

One Education Authority had launched a special project to support looked-after children, building on long-standing collaborative relationships with the Social Services. For children who were permanently excluded from special schools in another Authority, officers were creating a care package of home tuition, link education, work placements and other tailored provisions, requiring health, legal and social services input for the family as well as the child.

Some of the Authorities had multi-agency steering groups consisting of representatives from Education, Health, Social Services, Schools and the Voluntary sector. One Authority had a combined directorate for Education and Children's Social Services.

Sometimes, in the larger shire counties, these steering groups were only district-based. Authority A had a policy group focusing on the educational needs of a specific ethnic group, the Standing Group on the Education of African-Caribbean Pupils. It co-ordinated and promoted work to support disaffected young people in particular social and ethnic groups. LEA officers perceived it as an important element in a strategy for preventing exclusions.

Yet officers in two Authorities suggested that it was sometimes easier to work effectively at officer level than in the field. Tight budgetary and policy constraints, as well as different professional cultures in different services were forcing other local Authority services to engage primarily with their priorities, not those of Education.

While officers in Authority B claimed that the SEN service and the Educational Psychologists were key players in creating a multi-agency response to pupils' learning and behavioural needs, officers in other authorities claimed that the PRU was a key player.

In Authority A the PRU worked with schools, parents, pupils and whatever other local Authority agencies it needed to achieve very short turn-round times for re-integrating excluded pupils back into schools. It was claimed that this approach made parents much less antagonistic to the schools:

> *Because our people [PRU support staff] have the respect of the school ... they have become very skilled at liasing between the school and the family ... they are able to convince parents that its not a good idea to actually approve of what their child [has been] doing ... A key part of their role is that they home visit.*
> (Head of Pupil Referral Service)

Each school in this Authority had attached to it a Special Needs Assistant from the PRU who acted as support workers to teachers, outreach workers to parents and liaison officers to the PRU on school needs. The PRU also ran courses to train teachers in managing a wide variety of pupils' behaviours. It supervised an Authority-wide computer data base that recorded which pupils were excluded, for how long and for what reasons. This information was fed back to schools to help them identify the main patterns of misbehaviour in order to allow them to manage this better.

In some cases, this collaboration also involved FE Colleges and local business as well as other LEAs. The last relationships were difficult to manage because of the different expectations of different LEA about when pupils should be retained in school and when pupils should be excluded. Officers in one Authority complained that because they had a policy of minimising exclusions, especially from Special schools, difficult children from surrounding Authorities tended to be 'dumped' on their schools, increasing the strain on their and its resources.

It should be noted that our research focused on the issues facing education officers developing multi-agency approaches with other professional groups. This research project did not collect data on the perspectives of other groups, such as social workers.

Managing pupils' learning and behavioural difficulties

Exclusion and the management of pupil behaviour were seen as quintessentially a school management issue for which LEAs could provide support through helping schools to develop an inclusive ethos; providing guidance and advice on practice; and helping schools to work together and with a variety of local Authority agencies. They thought LEAs had a central role to play in reducing exclusions:

> *I think part of the Local Authority's role is to make everybody aware of the fact that this is actually a shared responsibility and we have to find solutions together. We can't expect schools to manage it all on their own, but equally they can't expect us to pick up all the pieces and solve them without some help.*
> (LEA officer).

None the less officers expressed concern that the 45 day rule for fixed-period exclusions had seriously undermined LEAs' abilities to influence school governors' decisions about exclusions. They thought it was allowing some governors to be much more severe in their use of exclusion to create order in their schools with insufficient real accountability to the parents and carers, particularly of disadvantaged or disaffected children.

Officers in all Authorities suggested that key aspects of supporting pupils at risk of exclusion were:

- supporting school leadership and management;
- helping teachers to cope with a wide variety of pupil behaviour;
- helping schools to develop an appropriate curriculum for all pupils, including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- convincing parents and carers that they were part of the solution to their children's problems;

School leadership and management

Officers from the LEAs recognised the importance of effective leadership from headteachers in reducing the levels of school exclusions and welcomed the actions of those headteachers who actively tried to avoid exclusions altogether.

Headteachers who were successful in reducing exclusions in their schools were called upon by officers in several LEAs to discuss the work being done in their schools with colleagues from other schools in the Authority. Some LEAs hosted conferences on reducing school exclusions for all their headteachers. They were used as a vehicle for schools which had adopted a variety of measures to support pupils and monitor exclusions to make presentations to fellow headteachers on their work.

In some Authorities, headteachers who both articulated and implemented a policy of non-exclusion for their pupils were eagerly supported by the LEA through the provision of training courses for parents and pupil support assistants and by providing additional support for pupils.

Headteachers in one Authority who wished to set up inclusion units in their schools as a means of tackling pupil misbehaviour, were encouraged by the LEA to develop what facilities they could within the existing buildings and within the limits of LEA budgets, while the local authority bid for DfEE Standards funding (see section on Supporting pupils at risk of exclusion, below).

Helping teachers and schools to cope with pupils' behaviour

LEAs offered advice, support and training to help teachers cope more effectively with a wide diversity of pupils' needs in many different situations. Training opportunities in our case study Authorities included learning how to cope with pupils' behavioural problems; related topics such as school organisation and management; and curriculum issues such as how to meet a wide variety of pupils' learning needs, especially in multi-cultural contexts. One Authority pointed out that its training courses included part-time support staff such as lunch-time supervisors, as well as teachers.

LEAs arranged for Educational Psychologists and Behaviour Support Teams to go into schools to offer advice to teachers on how to manage pupils, especially those statemented under the SEN Code. This support was usually mediated through school-based personnel, such as a SENCO in Authority B, or a Special Needs Assistant in Authority A. However schools often found these services slow to mobilise (see Chapter 3).

Local Authorities also encouraged groups, clusters or families of schools to work together to consider the grounds on which pupils might be excluded; on how they might co-ordinate support to families and pupils; and on how they might help pupils remain within school. In Authorities A and C officers claimed that in areas where these consortia operated there has been a noticeable decline in exclusions. For example, in Authority C the proportion of exclusions for an Authority coming from one area where a consortium began to operate fell from 59 per cent (1996/97) of the LEA's total to 29.5 per cent (1997/98).

None the less, some Authorities have difficulty in retaining sufficiently qualified staff, either throughout their area or in particular districts, because of challenging working conditions with high incidences of social problems and deprivation. One Authority had particular problems in recruiting sufficient staff from ethnic minority groups who might offer role models of success to pupils from the ethnic minority communities.

Developing an appropriate curriculum (teaching and learning) for pupils

One officer argued that much pupil misbehaviour arises from inappropriate teaching and learning processes for pupils:

> *Ensuring that how the curriculum is delivered is modern, is kept up to date, is vibrant and is also targeted so that there is an opportunity for pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties, experiencing literacy and numeracy problems, [to] have [the same] opportunity to access the curriculum [as] the high flyers.*
> (LEA officer)

In several authorities, pupils who were difficult to keep in schools, especially at Key Stage 4, were provided with special curriculum programmes. These allowed the pupils to access key aspects of the National Curriculum at the same time as engaging with a more vocationally-oriented curriculum:

> *A lot of these kids in Year 10 and 11 have got no real interest in returning to mainstream academic study. They want to be out doing things which they perceive to have value to them ... Not as an alternative to receiving any formal education, but to support what the LEA [is] already providing.*
> (LEA Officer)

As several officers explained, where possible they arranged for pupils to follow accredited courses. They perceived this as tackling problems of poor attendance as well as of exclusion. The Officers made no distinction between courses offered to boys and those offered to girls, nor were these monitored by gender or ethnicity.

Typically these programmes involved pupils in part-time attendance at an FE College as well as continued attendance at school, often to access courses which schools could not provide. In one Authority, such a scheme was made available to pupils under the age of 16 years who would not otherwise have access to Further Education.

Authority C encouraged both schools and FE colleges to retain the pupils on roll, in order to try to persuade pupils that they were engaged in multi-site education, rather than being on a half timetable. This same authority in some districts had also introduced work related programmes for some pupils at Key Stage 4 who were difficult to keep in school. This approach was used for pupils with extensive fixed-period exclusions or with particularly poor attendance.

SUPPORTING PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

One particular aspect of LEAs support for pupils' learning needs is their support of pupils with Special Educational Needs. Several officers suggested that learning difficulties were often at the root of many pupils' behaviour difficulties in school:

> *Those young people who have difficulty in reading and writing must feel at times very negative, very defensive, very weak.*
> (LEA officer)

This led officers in some local Authorities to consider it unacceptable for schools to exclude pupils with SEN statements, arguing that the statement was, itself, the instrument for tackling the pupils' problems (see also some teachers' views in Chapter 3). For example, officers in one Authority considered the exclusion of any child at level 3 or above on the SEN Code as of particular concern. They had already begun to develop Individual Education Plans for pupils causing disruption in schools, and to bring in support staff to help teachers in schools (see Chapter 3).

Several officers pointed out that the problem of supporting pupils with learning difficulties was much wider than merely supporting those with an SEN statement. This

has considerable implications for the scale of resources needed to tackle problems of exclusion or pupils at risk of exclusion who also have learning difficulties but have not yet been statemented. Limited resources, led officers in Authority B to ration levels of statementing. This was to keep the amount of additional support to schools they need to provide within their allocated budgets (see Chapter 3).

LEAs normally only allocate resources for SEN pupils to schools when pupils reach level 3 of the SEN Code of Practice. One Authority provided support to pupils with behavioural problems if they were at stages 1 and 2 of the Code because the officers thought that early intervention might help some pupils to be more successfully integrated into school. They were concerned that the stage approach of the SEN Code for learning difficulties got confused with the direct approach needed for supporting behavioural difficulties. They argued that behaviour problems needed rapid intervention to help teachers to manage a situation and avoid exclusions. They thought that quick action in some circumstances, without going through a lengthy referral process, could ease confrontational situations. This would then allow longer term learning and behaviour support strategies to be put in place.

EXCLUSIONS AND PUPILS FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES

From those Authorities which kept data on school exclusions by ethnic minority group there was clear evidence that certain groups were over-represented in proportion to their numbers in the total school population. However, those patterns were seen to vary over time. Not all Authorities kept records of school exclusions by ethnic group. Indeed, one Authority thought it unnecessary to do so because it claimed it had so few ethnic minority pupils in its schools. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant, which requires LEAs to keep accurate statistics of ethnic minority groups in order to trigger funding, may cause some LEAs to review their practices for monitoring pupils by ethnicity.

Only one Authority had a specific policy group focusing on the educational needs of ethnic minority pupil which had strategic links to the voluntary sector. However, officers indicated there was a considerable problem in knowing which voluntary organisations to engage as partners. This same Authority also provided direct support to voluntary groups run by ethnic minority communities where these offered learning and tutorial opportunities to disaffected young people in their areas.

In some LEAs, officers pointed out that the LEA had intervened directly to support the needs of ethnic minority pupils. One Authority, for example, had developed mentoring schemes for high achieving black boys at risk of exclusion. The same Authority had commissioned a local black research organisation to speak with young black people to find out their perceptions of school in order to explore why they were disaffected. Another Authority had set up a project to support Traveller children's education at the sites at which they rested.

However officers in two Authorities lamented the difficulty in recruiting sufficient staff from ethnic minority groups at school and LEA level. They suggested that this raised problems for pupils from such groups. One of these was to raise doubts about how effectively certain services, such as the PRU, might relate to pupils from ethnic

minority groups. Another was a concern that some pupils from socially deprived backgrounds need successful role models from their own ethnic groups to encourage their own social aspirations.

Those policies and procedures which were developed seemed, generally, to have been confined to addressing immediate issues for those pupils who were disaffected in those districts where there were notable populations of particular ethnic minority groups. Local Authorities seemed to eschew general policies and practices of encouraging all schools to develop multi-cultural and anti-racist education.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS

LEA officers emphasised the need to recognise that disturbed family circumstances are often a major cause of pupils' difficult behaviour. Some excluded children, they argued, had parents who also found it difficult to control their children. Sometimes parents who themselves may have been disaffected from school:

> *need support to help them to stop playing the child and the school off one against the other. We find sometimes that the kids [being excluded] are in a stage of crisis … because the family has lost confidence in the schools. There's been a breakdown in communication.*
> (Head of Pupil Referral Service)

One Authority ran courses in parenting especially for primary school parents. It also offered advice and support to parents on how to manage their children's difficult behaviour. Another helped parents to develop skills to support their children's curriculum development. It included projects such as a parent learning project in IT for primary school parents.

Officers recognised that exclusion was often a devastating experience for families. Parents often seemed to need as much help as the pupils:

> *Sometimes we find that the youngster has caused so much disruption in that family during the period of exclusion that it's the parents that are very distressed and need support from our workers to explain to them what is going to happen'.*
> (Head of Pupil Referral Service)

In two Authorities, education support staff also worked with staff in children's homes to make care staff more aware of what support children needed and what they might be expected to achieve academically.

Working with ethnic minority voluntary and community organisations was seen as an important means of providing support for disaffected pupils from minority communities, particularly when there might already be distrust of local Authority agencies. One Authority had set up a mentoring scheme for young disaffected black pupils who were of high ability. Another had worked with ethnic minority community groups in some of its districts to support curriculum development in particular topics, such as Information and Communication Technology.

In other Authorities the emphasis seems to have been more on working with local charities to create programmes for pupils with learning difficulties. One Authority had created a joint programme with a charitable foundation to support Key Stage 4 pupils with learning difficulties whether or not they had been statemented. This scheme provided a combination of basic literacy and numeracy alongside a social and personal development programme, and work experience opportunities. However it only catered for very few pupils (15 –20) each year.

In a few instances local business was also involved as a partner in trying to prevent pupils being excluded from school. In one district of Authority C, local business joined with a consortia of schools to create projects and approaches to deal with pupils who were difficult to keep in school, especially at Key Stage 4. Some school governors who were business people involved themselves in talking with pupils who were at risk of exclusion about life opportunities.

SUPPORTING EXCLUDED PUPILS AND THOSE AT RISK

Several officers in this study said that causes of exclusion need to be seen in the context of each pupil's particular circumstances. For example, one boy who, according to an officer, 'had and has enormous difficulties associated with extensive failure, poor self-esteem, relationship problems at home, single parent family, violent father' was perceived as a case needing support not the further stigma of exclusion.

To encourage disaffected pupils from ethnic minority groups one Authority developed mentoring schemes for high achieving black boys at risk of exclusion. In another Authority, local black community voluntary study groups were used to support pupils from those communities who were struggling with the formal school curriculum.

To avoid exclusion, one Authority gave difficult pupils in one school a trial placement in another school. If this improved their behaviour, and with the parents' consent, the pupil was then transferred – see Chapter 3.

Severely disruptive pupils in all Authorities were removed from schools and sent to a Pupil Referral Unit for counselling support, in some cases for only part of each school week. These Units were used to give students a different and more positive kind of relationship with adults from those that they might have experienced in schools. Pupils were usually transferred to these from their schools for a limited period of time. Some Authorities tried to avoid pupils being taken completely away from their schools and the curriculum by arranging procedures such as dual-registration with both school and a unit, or for pupils to attend both unit and school part-time but synchronously.

However there were problems with some of these Units. Some were a long way from pupils' homes or schools (particularly in rural areas) leading to greater absenteeism by pupils. Others lacked ethnic minority staff, enhancing doubts amongst ethnic minority groups about the efficacy of their youth attending such Units.

All this has led some Authorities, in partnership with schools, to establish 'inclusion' units on school sites, instead of Referral Units. These are to give pupils support in managing their behaviour, while keeping them in touch with the school curriculum. In

two Authorities such units were staffed by retired teachers who had known good relationships with pupils and their families.

RE-INTEGRATION

Although our research focused largely on the underlying reasons for exclusions and on strategies for prevention of exclusions and early intervention with pupils at risk of exclusions, officers also provided us with interesting insights into processes for re-integrating excluded pupils back into schools.

Re-integration after exclusion faces a school and pupils with a delicate process:

> *If we work very hard to return the child to school in a fit state to receive education, and the first thing this child receives when he walks into the classroom … is some sarcastic comment, he quickly picks up that the teachers don't actually want him there. It sabotages all the hard work that's gone on previously.*
> (LEA officer)

To be successful, re-integration needs to help and support parents of the pupils. It also needs to get parents involved in supporting the pupils and the school.

To encourage schools to take permanently excluded pupils with various behaviour difficulties, two Authorities were using a dowry system as advocated by the Social Exclusion Unit's report (1998) 'Truancy and School Exclusion'. This was to help schools cope with the costs of accepting such pupils. One of these gave up to £1000 to a school that accepted a difficult youngster on to its roll. Used creatively, officers suggested, it could give a school vital flexibility in the sort of provision it offers such children and enable their successful re-integration.

GAPS IN THE DATA

Most of the LEAs in our study do not seem to have collected data on the numbers of Traveller children or Looked-after children in their schools, nor on the extent to which these children suffered school exclusions. Nor did they have clear policies or procedures on how to provide these children with sufficient support with their schooling to limit the incidence of exclusion to one not greater than each group's proportion of the total school population. Where initiatives have taken place with these children, they seem to have been local in scope rather than Authority-wide ones.

We found a similar dearth of information, policy and procedure in these LEAs for children who are refugees and who may have little or no English as a first language when they begin school careers in England. These children are particularly vulnerable to becoming disaffected from school – with all the implications that has for their future life opportunities - and impose a considerable strain on school and LEA resources. Consequently, if there are many such pupils in a school, it can have an immediate impact on a school's attempts to raise the standards of learning of all its pupils, as well as of those of these children.

There was also a lack of information on the numbers and extent of fixed-period exclusions in several of the local Authorities. In those Authorities which had been keeping records, some were incomplete because former Grant Maintained schools had not been providing data returns to the LEA. It led officers in one LEA to express some concern about what fixed-term exclusion figures would look like now that Foundation Schools are required to send their data on exclusions to their LEA.

Inadequate data makes it difficult to identify how fixed-period exclusions were related to permanent exclusions. LEA officers speculated that fixed-period exclusions were beginning to be used by some schools as a means of avoiding permanent exclusions, and pointed to the decline in permanent exclusions and the rise in fixed-period exclusions as evidence of this. But there seemed little evidence of a qualitative difference between those pupil behaviours for which permanent and fixed-period exclusions were used in different schools.

5. WAYS FORWARD

In this chapter we highlight the key findings of our research into reasons for exclusion from school, bringing together the perspectives of schools and LEA personnel, together with the documentary evidence we have collected, and setting them in the light of previous research into school exclusions. One of the key aims in conducting this research was to identify practices that will enable schools to minimise the use of exclusion as a disciplinary measure.

As we highlighted in chapter 2, a review of previous research revealed two sets of literature on school exclusions, one which identifies exclusion as a special educational needs issue and another which examines it from the perspective of racial equality. One objective of this study was to bring these two issues together within one project and to examine exclusion as a school management issue. We have sought to treat it as such throughout the report. We found that headteachers, teachers and LEA officers tended to agree that exclusion from school is largely a school management issue with implications for the support and training of headteachers. Nevertheless, in the day-to-day management of exclusion we found that few links were made between exclusion special educational needs and race equality. So, for example, an LEA would set up a project to address the disproportionate use of exclusion for a particular ethnic group, but would not invite advisers responsible for special educational needs to be involved the development of the project. At the same time it would be advising schools on ways of reducing the numbers of pupils with statements of SEN among those excluded from school, but would not build in a race equality perspective into this work. Since in practice, there appear to be few attempts to make links between these two aspects of the exclusions issue, we were unable to pursue these to any significant degree within the confines and constraints of this research project. Nevertheless, we believe there is a need to pursue them both within future research and in the planning of initiatives to reduce exclusion from school.

REASONS FOR EXCLUSION

Quality of record keeping

First, we consider whether the reasons for exclusion differ between LEAs and schools. The quality of data available to the six case study LEAs, which might enable them to identify key reasons for exclusion from school, varies considerably. Although schools provide a reason for the permanent exclusion of an individual child, this immediate 'trigger' leading to exclusion is usually matched by a long case history. The cause for concern might be a child's behaviour, his or her academic achievements, social circumstances or a combination of these factors. Headteachers were generally agreed that the reason they provided at the time of the exclusion was simply one event in a long build-up of events. Sometimes the way in which the reason was categorised and recorded by the school or LEA was too broad to have any meaning. So, for example, in one LEA a preliminary analysis by the DfEE into the recorded reasons for exclusion identified verbal attack, physical attack and 'other' as the most common reasons for both permanent and fixed term exclusion. Our inquiries in schools showed that such 'attacks' were likely to be between pupils, but evidence from LEA officers showed

that there was wide variation in what constituted an excludable offence. This was the case across the range of LEAs.

The comprehensiveness of records varied between the six LEAs. One LEA was able to identify exclusion patterns over time and across the LEA, revealing variations between schools in the frequency of exclusion. Yet this database does not yet allow the Authority to assess how many of the 77 recorded permanent exclusions that took place in 1997-98 were of children who had previously been excluded from other schools.

Of the six Authorities we visited only three had a relatively developed database of this nature. The remaining case study LEAs had not yet been able to establish fully computerised systems. Those Authorities without comprehensive systems included two with relatively high rates of exclusion for their type, and one with a low rate. However, it became apparent to us during the course of our research that a low rate of recorded permanent exclusion may well mask the reality. In one of the LEAs with a low rate of exclusion three of the four headteachers interviewed openly admitted to using unofficial permanent and fixed term exclusions. It appeared that the LEA officer responsible for exclusions was unaware of the extent of this practice, as at least one of the schools was regarded as exemplary in following LEA and DfEE guidelines, which expressly forbid this.

The relationship between fixed period and permanent exclusion

The quality of data collected by LEAs makes it difficult to identify patterns in the relationship between fixed period exclusion across or between Authorities. Many headteachers of schools with relatively low levels of permanent exclusion report that they use fixed period exclusion as one method, alongside a range of other practices, of avoiding permanent exclusion. Other headteachers and teachers, often but not always working in high excluding schools, see a child who experiences a fixed period exclusion early on in his or her school career as one likely to end up with a permanent exclusion. Fixed period exclusion is clearly sometimes used to attract attention to a child's needs. So, for example, headteachers reported that it was one way of making parents aware of the seriousness of a problem.

A number of headteachers reported using both fixed period and permanent exclusion as a way of accessing support for Special Educational Needs. The level of provision within an Authority of places in special schools, in particular schools designated for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, appears to affect exclusion levels. The SEN statementing process was more likely to be used to access resources where appropriate SEN provision existed in the Authority. Where SEN provision generally, and EBD school places in particular, were not available within an Authority, some headteachers reported using exclusion as a means of accessing appropriate support. However, LEA officers pointed out that this strategy was not always effective. Some excluded children who were subsequently placed in special schools outside the Authority (at considerable cost) ended up being excluded from those schools. In such cases the Authority had no right of appeal and the child often had little chance of obtaining another school place.

Gender

Since the vast majority of excluded pupils are boys, LEAs seemed to have given little thought to the needs of girls who are excluded from school or who may exclude themselves through truancy or otherwise. Female pupils are also under-represented in many special schools, and their needs may be overlooked. For example, one headteacher reported that sexual harassment and inappropriate sexual behaviour were problems in his school. Where schemes are developed in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable groups, girls' needs may be overlooked. For example, schemes developed in partnership with voluntary agencies may address 'traditional' boys' interests, such as car maintenance. Where agencies related to the youth justice system organise schemes to target vulnerable young people, they may well target males as potential offenders. Further research is required to explore these preliminary findings.

Ethnicity

Schools and LEAs varied considerably in the extent they were able to provide us with data on other groups of vulnerable pupils. LEA officers and headteachers were aware that children from certain ethnic minorities, notably African Caribbean children, are, at a national level, statistically more likely to be excluded from school than others. Of the three Authorities which have computerised data bases, two had extensive data on the ethnicity of excluded pupils, and each of these Authorities had developed a number of initiatives, often in partnership with local community groups, to address the needs of such children. A fourth LEA was in the process of developing a database, but despite the fact that significant numbers of children from ethnic minority backgrounds are attending school within the LEA, LEA officers placed little emphasis on ensuring racial equality in the management of school exclusions. The remaining two Authorities, one with a very small minority population and the other with an ethnic minority profile which is similar to that of the country as a whole, tended to see themselves as white areas. In this latter LEA, most officers saw the issue of racial equality as a specialist concern, and therefore not part of their professional responsibilities. The officer responsible for managing school exclusions reported that there was no over-representation of ethnic minorities. There was no available statistical evidence to confirm or challenge this impressionistic judgement.

None of the case study Authorities or schools had developed specific strategies for working with Traveller communities to minimise school exclusion. Indeed only one of the officers we interviewed appeared to have given particular thought to these children. Where a specialist Traveller Education Service existed officers tended to assume that Travellers were the responsibility of this service, and not part of their general professional responsibility. This was the case even in areas where Traveller communities regularly stopped. At school level there were examples of schools which had sought to make Travellers welcome by addressing their particular needs, but we found no examples of policies and practices which specifically addressed the issue of exclusion in relation to Travellers.

Due to difficulties in interpreting the records on reasons for exclusion, it was difficult to assess from our research whether reasons for exclusion differ significantly according to ethnicity. For example, it was not possible for us to confirm the

OFSTED[76] finding that the case histories of African Caribbean children who are excluded from school tend to be different from those of white children. In their study of secondary school exclusions, drawn from inspection data, OFSTED found that white children were more likely to have a long history of family trauma, learning and behavioural problems and black children more likely to be more successful in their learning but excluded for one serious offence.

EXCLUSIONS AND SCHOOL LIFE

Our study examined the perspectives of headteachers, teachers and governors in 26 schools across 6 LEAs, through interviews and a review of school policy documents and other papers relating to exclusion. Although relatively broad in scope, it did not include an in-depth study of any individual school. In reporting on how the sanction of exclusion fits into the life of a school we must, of necessity, be cautious.

Developing an inclusive ethos

Where schools identified pupils vulnerable to exclusion, this was generally achieved through the pastoral system. However, since problems with behaviour are often linked to difficulties with academic work, this was sometimes the route by which particular individuals were identified. Low excluding schools often have what we have termed an inclusive ethos. Permanent exclusion is generally seen as a failure on the part of an inclusive school. Staff are offered support, often through specific school-based training on managing difficult behaviour, but equally importantly, through systems such as peer mentoring. Such schools have a team approach to teaching and learning; difficulties in managing the behaviour of a child are seen as a team responsibility rather than the weakness of an individual teacher in his or her classroom. Pupils are given opportunities to be involved in developing codes of behaviour and are encouraged to participate in decision-making. They are provided with induction training on entering the school and may also developed specific skills, such as those of non-violent conflict resolution. Some schools have targeted resources to meet the identified needs of specific groups. However, schools which devised activities for a specific group, for example, African Caribbean boys, without first consulting with pupils and their parents, have sometimes found such initiatives were not necessarily welcomed.

Curriculum issues

A number of schools have sought to minimise exclusion through curriculum policies which look at issues of accessibility, for example, ensuring that learning materials match the reading levels of their pupils. Many schools feel constrained by the National Curriculum and some teachers argue that it prevents them from developing a more comprehensive multicultural approach. Other teachers, particularly in areas which have average or below average numbers of minority pupils in relation to the population as a whole, reported that they thought the curriculum framework has the necessary flexibility for a multicultural approach but that they lack the training to develop such a broader based curriculum. Very few schools make links between their behaviour policies and those relating to equality of opportunity. Low excluding

schools tend to have well developed systems of pastoral care, and have a complex system of rewards and a wide range of disciplinary measures.

Exclusion and standards

A number of headteachers saw a potential conflict between the drive to raise standards and that to minimise exclusion. Some feel under pressure from teachers and/or parents to remove difficult children from the classroom and school in order to create a more effective learning environment for others. One primary headteacher admitted excluding a child because of parental pressure, although this went against his better judgement. The demands of accommodating such children in the classroom and ensuring the learning of others are seen to add to teacher stress. Headteachers are acutely conscious of their school's position in league tables. They recognise that energy and resources spent on a small number of children with learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems are sometimes seen as wasted when there is pressure to raise the attainment of all. However, headteachers are aware that exclusion does not resolve the problem, as an excluded child is likely to remain in the community, and simply becomes someone else's problem.

EFFECTIVE LEA SUPPORT

DfEE guidance

Our fieldwork took place at a time when LEAs were considering draft guidance from the DfEE in relation to school exclusions. That guidance has now been published as *Social Inclusion: pupil support*[77] and forms the Secretary of State's guidance on pupil attendance, behaviour, exclusion and re-integration. LEAs generally commented favourably on the draft guidance and welcomed their enhanced role in relation to exclusions. Some officers expressed concern about the minority of 'maverick' schools that may fail to implement Government guidance and question what will happen if headteachers in such schools do not follow the proper procedures before excluding a child. LEA officers felt the current maximum 45 day period of a fixed term exclusion was a recipe for disaster, making it very difficult to reintegrate an excluded pupil back into the school. Some felt that, in effect, it was a return to the old practice of indefinite exclusion, since some schools could use it as a way of discarding a difficult pupil (who might not return to school) without having to follow the more rigorous procedures of permanent exclusion. Headteachers and many teachers working in environments where exclusion had been minimised shared such perspectives. In research carried out on behalf of the CRE[78]in schools which had low exclusion rates or which had been able to significantly reduce the numbers of pupils excluded, headteachers were opposed to this 45 day maximum fixed term exclusion. They argued that it was an inappropriate sanction and that schools that had good record keeping should be able to sort out the problem and involve the necessary outside agencies in a much shorter time span.

Looked after children

LEAs are as yet unable to offer particular support to certain groups of vulnerable children, such as those looked after by the Local Authority. Officers told us they were

not even aware of the numbers of such children, or of their identity, and believed that a number might disappear without anyone being made aware of them. So, for example, where such children are fostered in another part of the country they are often forgotten and may disappear from the records. They believe this to be the case even in those Authorities that have taken steps to co-ordinate the work of education officers with Social Services.

Working with parents

One area in which LEA officers felt they did not do enough was in supporting schools in working with parents. While they believe that most primary schools have appropriate experience and expertise, they are not confident that secondary schools are working most effectively in this area.

Monitoring and record keeping

Where LEAs are able to provide statistical evidence and feedback to schools on their position in relation to exclusions, schools generally appreciate this. Schools may find it difficult to identify patterns in their use of exclusion, and monitoring by ethnicity may reveal very little in small schools where the rate of exclusion is low. LEAs are in a position to provide feedback on patterns of exclusion in the LEA and in particular types of school over a period of time. If they monitor by ethnicity, gender, special education needs and by indicators of social disadvantage such as entitlement to free school meals, this can enable schools not only to understand patterns but also to target resources to address inequalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude with a set of recommendations for future practice.   These recommendations are based on what the research team found was working well in our case study schools and LEAs. Many of these recommendations address school and LEA practices, suggesting how these might be further developed to reduce the number of exclusions by one third by 2002 in line with Government targets. As we have explained, our research focused on the underlying reasons for exclusion from school, which we often found to be more significant than the recorded reasons presented in individual cases. In other words, we examined the social, political and legal contexts in which schools and LEAs are working. Our recommendations also address these contexts.   Headteachers, teachers, and LEA officers highlighted a number of constraints that they face in reducing the level of school exclusions. Some therefore address the DfEE and other central government agencies, and identify ways in which central government can support local efforts to minimise exclusion as a disciplinary measure.

What the DfEE / central government need to do:

- review the maximum length of fixed term exclusion, ending the current 45-day period

- ask all LEAs with racial or other disparities in the use of exclusions to demonstrate how this will be addressed in their Education Development Plans

- review procedures to check the growing number of unofficial exclusions

- support LEAs in developing integrated databases on exclusions

- ensure that mainstream funding mechanisms (for example Standards Fund) for projects that tackle exclusion require monitoring by ethnicity and gender; encourage LEAs to require similar monitoring when they work in partnership with other organisations

- give priority, through funding mechanisms, to projects that enable co-operation between LEA services or between LEAs and other agencies, for example, co-operation with voluntary organisations and community groups

- provide additional advice to LEAs on monitoring by ethnicity, drawing on best practice in this field developed by schools and LEAs

- advocate non-contact time for SENCOs, particularly in primary schools

What LEAs and schools need to do:

- set targets for employment of ethnic minority staff so as to enable the provision of an appropriate and professional service for all

- provide training for officers, teachers and school governors to enable them to examine how racial stereotyping affects school life and the education service

- supplement statistical data on exclusions with qualitative data from surveys and focus groups involving pupils, parents, and governors as well as teachers and inspectors

- ensure that flexible curriculum arrangements at key stage 4 are monitored by ethnicity and gender; encourage schools to do likewise

- monitor pupils' achievements and identify learning needs – note patterns by ethnicity and gender, and direct resources to address disparities between groups

- discourage the exclusion of pupils with Special Educational Needs, recognising that exclusion will very seldom be appropriate for such children

- monitor exclusions by SEN at various stages of the code of practice, not just for pupils who have statements

- advocate non-contact time for SENCOs

- offer support to schools who accept excluded pupils

- consider how they may develop and strengthen inter-LEA co-operation

- set targets to work towards a no exclusions policy in EBD and other special schools.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The research has highlighted the need for further research into exclusion from school. In particular, an in-depth analysis is required of the ways in which schools manage the question of exclusion, exploring how exclusion fits into the policy and practice of the school. We need to understand how effective school leadership can help minimise exclusion and approaches to discipline, equal opportunities, pastoral care and achievement may effect exclusion levels. In other words, there is a need to study how particular school cultures may influence levels of exclusion.

A study that sets out to evaluate the effectiveness of the new structures and the work of LEAs in helping schools to manage the process of exclusion would be helpful. Such a study might include an in-depth investigation into successful inter-agency initiatives to minimise school exclusions.

It is clear that some LEAs and schools have relatively little expertise in guaranteeing racial equality in the education service. An examination of how schools and LEAs might most effectively implement policies and practices in line with the spirit and recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the subsequent Plan of Action put forward by the Home Secretary would enable best practice in this area to be disseminated.

FOOTNOTES

Executive Summary

[1] Social Exclusion Unit (1998) *Truancy and School Exclusion*. London: Cabinet Office

[2] Commission for Racial Equality (1997) *Exclusion from School and Racial Equality*: g*ood practice guide*. London: CRE. This guide was based on the findings of research commissioned by the CRE. The full report is published as Osler, A. (1997b) *Exclusion from School and Racial Equality: research report.* London: CRE.

[3] Office for Standards in Education (1996) *Exclusions from Secondary Schools 1995/6*. London: OFSTED

[4] Osler, A. & Hill, J. (1999) Exclusion from School and Racial Equality: an examination of government proposals in the light of recent research evidence, *Cambridge Journal of Education,* 29, 1, pp 25-37.

[5] Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Social Inclusion: pupil support*. London: DfEE

[6] Machperson, W. (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*. London: The Stationery Office Recommendation 69.

[7] OFSTED (1999a) *Inspecting Schools: the framework.* London, The Stationery Office.

[8] Dobson and Henthorne (1999) define pupil mobility as 'children joining or leaving a school at a point other than the normal age at which children start or finish their education at that school'. Whilst a high exclusion rate may not lead to 'high mobility', it is clear that high levels of pupil mobility are often found in schools where children experience social deprivation, family break up and temporary accommodation. Teachers in our study also associated some of these factors with children at risk of exclusion.

[9] OFSTED (1996), op. cit.

[10] www.dfee.gov.uk/statistics/DB/SFR/s0157/tab002.html
Analysis of the exclusion statistics for Birmingham LEA suggested that 'there is reason to suspect that neglected learning difficulties may lie behind at least some of the disciplinary problems' and that 40 per cent of excluded pupils were either statemented or had begun the process of the Special Educational Needs assessment procedure (Osler, 1997b, op. cit. p 33)

[11] See Osler, A. (2000) Children's rights, responsibilities and understandings of school discipline, *Research Papers in Education*, 15 (1), 49-69

Chapter 1

[12] Social Exclusion Unit (1998) op. cit.

[13] Osler (1997) op. cit.

[14] CRE (1997) op. cit.

Chapter 2

[15] DfEE News (1999) 272/99, 16 June

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[17] Social Exclusion Unit (1998), op. cit.

[18] DfEE (1997) *Excellence in Schools*. London: HMSO

[19] See, for example, ACE, 1992 and 1993; NUT, 1993; Stirling, 1992; Garner, 1993; Bourne et al., 1994; Richardson and Wood, 1999.

[20] Social Exclusion Unit, (1998) op. cit,; European Commission (1997) *Accomplishing Europe through Education and Training: report of the study group on Education and Training*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

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[24] Macpherson, (1999) op. cit.

[25] Home Office (1999) *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Home Secretary's Action Plan* Dd 604554 CCN077828. London: The Stationery Office.

[26] Times Educational Supplement, 11 December, 1998.

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[30] Osler (1997b) op. cit.; Olser & Hill, (1999) op. cit.

[31] DfEE (1999b) op. cit.

[32] For recent research addressing minority pupil achievement and issues of inclusion and exclusion on which the DfEE guidance draws see Blair and Bourne, 1998; OFSTED, 1999; Osler, 1997b; Weeks and Wright, 1998.

[33] Times Educational Supplement, 8 January 1999.

[34] Commission for Racial Equality (1997) op. cit.

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[58] OFSTED (2000) *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 1998/99.* London: The Stationery Office, p. 28.

[59] Gillborn, D. (1998) Exclusion from school: an overview of the issues, in: N. Donovan (Ed.) op. cit.

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