

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services

Children's Services Committee: 15 March 2006

Subject: Exclusion Statistics for School Session 2004/2005

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide information to Members of the Children's Services Committee on the exclusion statistics for West Dunbartonshire schools for the session 2004/2005.

2. Background

- 2.1** Since 1993 local authorities have been required to collect statistics from schools on exclusions of pupils on an annual basis. Since 1998 the Scottish Executive has collected and collated a range of information on exclusions provided by local authorities and has published this survey information under the title "Exclusions from School".
- 2.2** The information on a range of measures including reasons for exclusion, duration of exclusion and total number of exclusions is published by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) in February of each year and refers to the statistics for the previous full school session. While SEED acknowledges that the quality of information from local authorities is not consistent, and the criteria applied in terms of what constitutes a formal exclusion from school varies from authority to authority, the information is made public as a series of comparative measures of how local authorities are performing in terms of pupil exclusions. Members wishing to access the full statistical report can obtain this from the Scottish Executive Website, www.scotland.gov.uk.
- 2.3** In line with national policy, this authority has been working actively with head teachers and colleagues in a range of other support agencies, principally Social Work Services, to develop positive discipline policies and resources to support alternatives to exclusion within all of our schools. The aim has been to reduce the level of exclusions from school while ensuring that pupils with behavioural difficulties are dealt with and supported in ways which are conducive to the good order and discipline of the school. The operation of school discipline policies and their impact on levels of exclusion are monitored regularly by the authority through the quality assurance procedures.
- 2.4** Members of the Children's Services Committee will be aware that there is now a wide range of multi-agency support strategies available to support pupils in school. These initiatives are aimed at supporting vulnerable pupils and families and at reducing exclusions from the high levels which existed in school sessions 2000/2001 and 2001/2002.

3. Main Issues

Information on Exclusion Figures for the Session 2004/2005

- 3.1** In primary schools there were 19 temporary exclusions per 1,000 pupils, compared with a national average of 13 per 1,000 pupils, placing West Dunbartonshire at 7th out of 32 local authorities, in terms of the number of exclusions per 1,000 pupils. Exclusions totalled 368 days, significantly lower than the national average of 542 days, placing West Dunbartonshire at 19th out of 32 local authorities in terms of days lost through exclusion.
- 3.2** In secondary schools there were 189 temporary exclusions per 1,000 pupils, compared with a national average of 112 per 1,000 pupils, placing West Dunbartonshire at 3rd out of 32 local authorities. Exclusions totalled 2,861 days, again significantly lower than the national average of 3,932 days, placing West Dunbartonshire at 19th out of 32 local authorities.
- 3.3** In special schools there were 169 temporary exclusions per 1,000 pupils, compared with a national average of 163 per 1,000 pupils, placing West Dunbartonshire at 8th out of 18 local authorities who reported figures in this category. Exclusions totalled 62 days, substantially lower than the national average of 251 days, placing West Dunbartonshire at 12th of 19 local authorities who reported figures in this category. Please see tables below:

Table 1 – Number of Exclusions per 1,000 Pupils

School Sector	West Dunbartonshire (Exclusions per 1,000 pupils)	National Average (Exclusions per 1,000 pupils)	West Dunbartonshire Ranking
Primary	19	13	7 th /32
Secondary	189	112	3 rd /32
Special	169	163	8 th /18

Table 2 – Number of Days Lost Due to Exclusion

School Sector	West Dunbartonshire	National Average	West Dunbartonshire Ranking
Primary	368	542	19 th /32
Secondary	2861	3932	17 th /32
Special	62	251	12 th /19

- 3.4** West Dunbartonshire has reviewed its exclusion statistics over a 6 year period from 1999/2000. The numbers of exclusions naturally vary upwards and downwards from year to year, and the figures for the session 2004/2005 are higher than those for the previous year, in line with the trend across Scotland. While this is of worthy of note and will require to be considered in discussion with head teachers, the figures for last session have remained lower than the very high figures seen in sessions 1999/2000, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002.
- 3.5** Over the past 2 years the strategy which we have taken forward in partnership with head teachers has been to focus on the duration of temporary exclusions and to reduce the length of individual exclusions where appropriate. It is accepted that lengthy exclusions can have a very negative effect on education for individuals and lead to difficulties at the point of reintegration following the exclusion. As the figures above indicate, in terms of total days lost due to exclusion, West Dunbartonshire has performed better than the national average for primary, secondary and special schools. Given the acknowledged correlation between high levels of socio-economic deprivation and a range of school performance measures, including exclusions figures, particularly at the secondary school stage, the comparative reduction in days lost due to exclusion is a significant achievement for schools in West Dunbartonshire. This indicates that schools in West Dunbartonshire are managing exclusions well compared with many schools in more affluent areas across Scotland.

Alternative to Exclusion Strategies

- 3.6** The Scottish Executive no longer requires local authorities to set specific targets for schools in terms of exclusion. Within this authority however the monitoring of exclusions from school continues to have a high priority. There are regular discussions between the Head of Service and Inclusion Officer and head teachers, particularly in the secondary sector, regarding pupil discipline and pupil management issues, including exclusion. As a result of these discussions during the last two sessions, information on good practice within each school has been collated and circulated and a series of Inclusion Seminars have taken place to further celebrate and share good practice. All school clusters, through their enhanced Pupil and Family Support teams, are moving forward to develop more intensive pupil support facilities and make effective use of the range of provision available to support vulnerable children and families.

- 3.7** A working group, chaired by the Inclusion Officer, has updated the policy and procedure document on exclusion and this will be issued to schools for wider consultation in due course. The aim of the review was to ensure that the policy and procedures comply with the most recent legislation and that the authority, through schools, can meet its legislative duties. There is a specific change in relation to pupils who are looked after and accommodated. The emphasis is on ensuring that any exclusions of looked after and accommodated children are notified to the authority, discussed in a multi-agency forum where appropriate and that continuity of education is ensured. This is an area which the authority will continue to monitor very closely.
- 3.8** In recognition of the increasing number of challenging pupils within the primary sector, work is ongoing to develop an effective model of behavioural support for primary schools. Alongside this, the authority is piloting various models of nurture groups to support children within mainstream schools at the early primary stages. These developments are at an early stage of implementation but the Scottish Executive Education Department are interested in our approaches and have agreed to work in partnership with us, providing some additional funding to develop and evaluate this type of intervention.
- 3.9** Under the Better Behaviour – Better Learning implementation strategies there are a range of approaches being planned and implemented, again with the support of SEED. These include the Restorative School approach, which will be a multi-agency strategy and Solution Oriented Schools which provides innovative professional development for teachers at both the primary and secondary stages. The work of staff within West Dunbartonshire on Solution Oriented Schools has attracted the attention of the Scottish Executive and this development is seen as an example of good practice which will be highlighted to other local authorities.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial issues.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1** While it is recognised that for some young people exclusions will continue to be an appropriate sanction, all head teachers recognise that with the development of appropriate support mechanisms within schools, the number of pupils requiring this ultimate sanction can be reduced.

6.2 While the figures for the number of exclusions in the session 2004/2005 show an unwelcome increase, it is important to note that the length of time lost through exclusion is below the national average for all sectors within West Dunbartonshire. This is the result of much good practice across the authority and considerable commitment among staff to continue to work with pupils who can be extremely challenging. This good practice will be built upon and the authority will continue to play a key role in both monitoring and supporting practice within schools.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

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Wards Affected: All Wards are affected