

***Doctorate in Professional Educational,
Child and Adolescent Psychology***



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**Doctorate in Professional Educational Child and Adolescent
Psychology**

**What Are the Current Processes for the Reintegration of
Students That Have Been Suspended from Secondary Schools
Across Two London Boroughs?**

Minoushe Grant

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Student declaration and word count

I, Minoushe Grant, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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“You can achieve everything you want. You are the soul of my heart”.

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Ian: “It’s raining, take my umbrella”. Me: “Err, I don’t use umbrellas, that’s well sad”

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Abstract

The number of school suspensions has been increasing, and Department for Education (DfE) figures show that it disproportionately affects students with special educational needs (SEN) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds compared to their peers without these characteristics. Recently, the DfE updated its guidance on exclusions to include further instructions on the reintegration process for suspended pupils. However, this guidance is still limited and not mandatory. This study is significant as it examines the reintegration process of suspended students at secondary schools. It also explores the strengths required to successfully reintegrate suspended students into school and the challenges faced by secondary schools. This study was conducted in two London boroughs using a multi-method approach. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected from a school staff questionnaire (N = 15) and an Educational Psychologist (EP) questionnaire (N = 21). Exclusion data from both boroughs provided context for interpreting the findings. The study found inconsistencies in reintegration processes across and within schools. Significant findings included reintegration meetings not being consistently held if parents/carers could not attend, a large variability in the length of times reintegration meetings lasted and information sharing following the reintegration were inconsistent. Schools with some of the highest suspension figures were found to rate themselves lower in fostering a sense of belonging with their students during their reintegration meetings. The schools that had a marked decrease in suspensions were found to have weekly meetings to discuss support for students who were at risk of exclusion. A significant barrier to successfully reintegrating suspended students was reported by school staff as being a student and home disengagement. EPs reported that schools with relational approaches and an inclusive school ethos were key to supporting the reintegration of suspended students. School staff and EPs supported the suggestion of introducing a DfE reintegration policy to ensure consistency and support schools, provided it was flexible and based on evidence. Recommendations are summarised with the aim of improving reintegration practice in secondary schools.

Impact Statement

The research contributes to the field of school exclusions by exploring the reintegration practices utilised by secondary schools for suspended students. It seeks the views of school staff and Educational Psychologists to understand current reintegration practices, barriers to successful reintegration, and the strengths needed for successful reintegration. The study adopts a multi-method approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data through questionnaires aimed at school staff and EPs and secondary data in the form of LA exclusion figures.

The study sheds light on the reintegration of suspended students from the perspectives of school staff and educational psychologists. It emphasises the need for evidence-based approaches to support this process. Schools should prioritise inclusive practices, and the reintegration process should focus on inclusion rather than simply bringing students back. Meaningful processes can help reduce exclusions, and Educational Psychologists can support secondary schools in this regard.

The findings of this study have several significant implications for policy and practice, which are as follows:

Government policy

Providing guidance developed with input from educators, psychologists, parents, and students will mean that schools can have a reintegration policy that:

- is informed by evidence-based research that increases and raises awareness for supporting students who have been suspended.
- is flexible enough to suit individual schools without adding additional financial and resource pressures on schools and responsive to diverse student needs.
- recommends the involvement of other professionals, such as EPs, not just to identify the student's needs but also to provide a holistic understanding in which the student is central to the process.

EP Practice

EPs can support their secondary schools by:

- Dedicating time during regular planning meetings to discuss exclusion trends and identify support needs for reintegrating students.
- Ensuring their training, where relevant, addresses real-life examples of how psychological theory can be utilised to prevent exclusions and support excluded students.
- Encourage collaborative working across the school by working with teachers as a team to provide support for suspended students (e.g., Circle of Adults).

School Practice

Based on these findings, the senior leadership team should ensure that the reintegration process for suspended students should:

- Ensure that it is tailored to its school population to address barriers faced, placing the student at the centre of the reintegration process.
- Have a clear shared purpose and understanding of the reintegration policy.
- Ensure that strategies employed within the process, such as reintegration meetings, are conducted after all suspensions, even if parents/carers cannot attend.
- Ensure the process is consistent and has clear systems in place that are followed by all staff involved.
- Ensure all school staff are aware of it and how it fits in with the school values so that it is a shared collaborative process with all staff.
- Address whether the reintegration process for suspended students is effective and whether it considers all stakeholders involved.

School Staff:

School staff working directly with suspended students would benefit from:

- Being trained on relational approaches and why behaviourist approaches do not always work.
- Creating safe spaces for school staff to reflect on their practices and address potential unconscious biases.
- Having their well-being supported by established support groups within their school.

- Ensuring that the student feels heard, supported, valued, and not judged or blamed.

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List of Abbreviations

AP	Alternative Provision
BTHD	Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development
CYP	Children and Young People
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FSM	Free School Meals
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HoY	Head of Year
IE	Internal Exclusion
IER	Internal Exclusion Rooms
ICR	Intercoder Reliability
LA	Local Authority
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NEU	National Education Union
MM	Managed Move
PDB	Persistent Disruptive Behaviour
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
PEX	Permanent Exclusion
PP	Pupil Premium
PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit

PSO Pupil Support Officer
QCA Qualitative Content Analysis
SEN Special Educational Needs
SENCo Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND Special Educational Needs and Disability
SES Socio Economic Status
SEMH Social Emotion Mental Health
SLT Senior Leader Team
TEP Trainee Educational Psychologist
TA Thematic Analysis

1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides key information that explains terms and legislation on exclusions in England. Upon building this picture, the rationale for the present study will be discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary and the aims for the next chapter.

1.2 Aim of Research

This research explores the reintegration strategies and processes adopted by state-maintained secondary schools across two London boroughs to transition suspended students back into school. This study focuses on the perspectives of the school senior leaders, pastoral leads, SENCos and heads of year who are involved in reintegrating suspended students. It also explores Educational Psychologists' perspectives and examines both boroughs' exclusion figures. It aims to gain a better understanding of the current practices that are utilised to support suspended students. Much of the current literature focuses on the reintegration of permanently excluded students rather than those who have been suspended, and the suspension research that does exist, mainly examines the experiences of students, not the reintegration process itself. This research will, therefore, be a valuable addition to the existing literature, providing insight into secondary schools' reintegration practices following suspensions.

1.3 Defining 'Reintegration'

For the purpose of this study, it is important to define what is meant by the reintegration of a suspended student into secondary school. Abdelnoor (1999, p. 5) describes reintegration as the process of 'moving a pupil from the margins to the heart of the school'. The updated exclusion guidance dated September 2023 does not give a formal definition of reintegration but states the following:

'Schools should support pupils to reintegrate successfully into school life and full-time education following a suspension (this may also be after a cancelled exclusion) or period of off-site direction... They should design a reintegration strategy that offers the pupil a fresh start; helps them understand the effect of their behaviour on themselves and others; teaches them how to meet the high expectations of behaviour in line with

the school culture; fosters a renewed sense of belonging within the school community; and builds engagement with learning.’ DfE (2024b, p. 17)

1.4 Defining ‘School Exclusions’

Currently, the government defines formal school exclusions as either a suspension, which was formerly known as a ‘fixed term exclusion’, or a ‘permanent exclusion’(PEX). A suspension is where the child or young person is temporarily not allowed on the school premises, and a PEX means they are no longer allowed to attend the school and their name is removed from the school register (DfE, 2022c). As within the guidance when referring to both formal types of school exclusions, the term exclusion will be used (DfE, 2022c).

Reintegration will be defined as the processes and strategies involved in supporting a student back to their school following a suspension (temporary exclusion from school). A ‘student’ will be defined as a young person aged 11 to 16 years old who attends a secondary school.

These definitions narrowed the research to selecting secondary school staff who were involved in the reintegration process of their ‘suspended’ students. It is worth noting that there are other methods of exclusions (informal) that the Department for Education (DfE) does not use in its definition. These will be discussed next to provide the reader with a better understanding of the importance of this research.

The term pupil will be used when drawing on literature and legislation that refers to all school-aged children and young people aged four to 16, which is in line with the DfE.

1.5 Defining ‘Formal and Informal School Exclusions’

While students have been excluded from school long before the 1980s, it was only with the 1986 Education Act that the term ‘exclusion’ was first used and regulated (Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous, & Tarling, 2001; Osler, Street, Lall, & Vincent, 2002). It is mandatory for all state-maintained schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) in England to report both suspension and PEX figures to the DfE. The schools must report the reason for exclusion, the length of exclusion and the characteristics of the excluded child or young person. This data is published on the government website and is used to track and monitor exclusions (DfE, 2017b).

Removing a pupil from school is not only limited to how the DfE formally define school exclusions but there are other forms that are utilised and accepted within a school setting (Parsons, 2018). These are as follows:

1. Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and alternative provision (AP): These are an alternative educational provision to mainstream and special schools that provides pupils with an education (Ogg & Kaill, 2010). Schools use these settings flexibly, and a student may be directed there for a fixed amount of time, part of the school week, or, in some cases, indefinitely.
2. Internal Exclusion (IE): This is where a pupil is internally excluded within their school, usually isolated in an IE room away from their peers rather than being formally suspended (Barker, Alldred, Watts, & Dodman, 2010; Gillies, 2016; Ogg & Kaill, 2010).
3. Managed moves (MMs): This is a voluntary process where a pupil transfers schools for a period of time with the consent of parents and carers (DfE, 2017a).
4. Off-site Direction: When a pupil is required to go off-site to another setting to be educated to improve their behaviour (DfE, 2023).
5. Elective home education (EHE): Where parents/carers can choose to home-school their child.
6. Reduced timetables: A pupil can have their timetable reduced by the school. Usually used for medical reasons, but schools also use them for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion (Parsons, 2018).
7. Extended study leave: This is usually utilised for year 11 students (Parsons, 2018).
8. Attendance Code B: This is an approved off-site educational activity such as attending a college course.
9. Children missing education (CME): This can be because of long-term school absences of pupils who are not accounted for or who have run away. CME usually occurs when a pupil is taken out of school by their parent or carer, and no other school is identified (Parsons, 2018).

Notably, the aforementioned methods are not regulated by the DfE, and there are no accountability measures in place to ensure that they are used to support pupils rather

than exclude them (Parsons, 2018). It has been suggested that some of these methods are beneficial for pupils if utilised properly. For example, Abdelnoor (2006) posits that managed moves could be used as an alternative to PEx as they enable a pupil to have a fresh start in a new school. However, Bagley (2013) who conducted a mixed-methods study on MMs found that they were not always implemented in the best interests of the pupil. Notably, the study was only conducted in one local authority (LA), raising questions about the generalizability of its findings. In contrast, formal exclusions regulated by the DfE are done in relation to legislation, which will be discussed next.

1.6 Legislation on School Exclusions in England

In September 2022, the DfE published guidance on exclusions replacing the 2017 advice and updated further in September 2023. 'Suspension and Permanent Exclusions from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England including pupil movement' (DfE, 2023). It provides the legislation that governs the formal exclusions of students and states that exclusions should only be used as a 'last resort' (DfE, 2023, p. 4). At the start of the publication, it explicitly defines the terms 'must' and 'should'.

'The term 'must' refers to what headteachers/governing boards/academy trusts/local authorities/parents and others are required to do by law and must have regard to when carrying out their duties. The term 'should' refers to recommendations for good practice ... and should be followed unless there is good reason not to' (DfE, 2023, p. 4).

The guidance states what schools 'must' do in accordance with the following legislation:

The 2002 Education Act (section 51A), as amended by the 2011 Education Act (DfE, 2022),

The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012,

The Education and Inspections Act 2006,

The Education Act 1996,

The Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by the Education (Provision of Full-Time Education for Excluded Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.

It refers to the Equality Act (2010) and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) code of practice, which was established in accordance with the 2014 Children and Families Act.

Under Section 51A:

- The headteacher is the only person who can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil. They must ensure that a pupil who is suspended for more than five days is provided with suitable education from the sixth day of their suspension.
- A pupil can face suspension for one or more fixed periods of time, up to a maximum of 45 days in one academic year. A suspension can be for part of the day. For example, a pupil can be suspended for half a day in the afternoon. Regardless of the length of exclusion, it is a legal requirement for the headteacher to notify the parents/carers of the pupil.
- Behaviour outside school can result in exclusion.
- When determining whether to exclude or not, the headteacher must apply ‘the civil standard of proof’, meaning that it should be accepted that it has happened if it is more likely to have happened rather than not. Exclusions must be fair, proportionate, and reasonable.
- It is illegal for suspension to be extended or to be ‘converted’ into a permanent exclusion. In cases where new evidence arises, a future suspension or permanent may be issued immediately to begin after the initial suspension.
- It is illegal to exclude for a ‘non-disciplinary’ reason. For example, a pupil cannot be excluded for their academic grades. ‘Informal’ exclusions such as ‘X is tired and not coping, s/he needs to go home’ are not permitted. All exclusions must be formally recorded.

Under the Equality Act 2010:

- Schools must not discriminate against pupils because of any of the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil

partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sex) in the 2010 Equality Act. This includes making reasonable adjustments for pupils with disabilities. The governing body must also adhere to this when managing the exclusion process and be in line with the SEND code of practice in accordance with the 2014 Children and Families Act.

1.7 Government Policy and Reintegration

Drawing on the latest Exclusion government guidance, the DfE (2023b) recommends that there should be a strategy for reintegrating students who have been suspended or have been directed off-site. The DfE recommends that the reintegration strategy should:

- Offer a student a fresh start.
- Help the student understand the impact of their behaviour.
- Teach a student how to meet high behaviour expectations.
- Foster a renewed sense of school belonging.
- Build learning engagement.

The DfE suggests that the strategy should be ‘clearly communicated during a reintegration meeting’. During the reintegration meeting, the student should be told that ‘they are valued’ and that their previous behaviour should not be detrimental to their future success.

They also advise:

- The student should not be stopped from returning to their lessons if parents cannot attend the meeting.
- The reintegration strategy should be ‘regularly reviewed’ and ‘adapted’ throughout the process and should involve the student, parents and ‘other relevant parties’ (DfE, 2023b, p. 18).
- Teachers, pastoral staff, mentors, social workers, educational psychologists, or the safer schools’ team should be involved in identifying whether the student has any special educational needs (SEN) or health needs.
- The guidance discourages the use of reduced timetables but states that if used, they must be used for the shortest time necessary.

The DfE also provides suggestions that could be used to support the reintegration of a student:

- Have regular contact with the students while they are suspended or off-site and welcome them back.
- Having daily contact with a designated key pastoral school professional.
- Using a report card with personalised targets and rewards.
- Providing the student with a similar curriculum while off-site or during their suspension.
- Pastoral interventions.
- Mentoring.
- Regular progress reviews with the parents/carers.
- Signposting the student, parents/carers, and staff to potential external support.

The DfE does not mention student voice during the reintegration meeting, which disregards research emphasising its importance in understanding exclusionary behaviour and empowering students as active participants in their educational support (Beaton, 2021; Gardner, McCann, & Crockwell, 2009; Tarabini, Jacovkis, & Montes, 2018).

The DfE does not provide guidance to address the reintegration process when a student has been repeatedly suspended. Furthermore, while the DfE recommends involving relevant professionals to identify whether a student has SEN and/or health needs, they do not address how to support the reintegration of students who have identified as having SEN. This guidance fails to address or acknowledge that it is the students with SEN who are being disproportionately suspended (DfE, 2023a). It, therefore, does not provide advice on how schools can support their most vulnerable students.

Another observation is that the guidance does not provide examples of good practice or define certain phrases. For instance, it lacks clarity on 'fostering school belonging', offering neither a definition nor practical strategies, despite its association with successful school outcomes (Korpershoek, Canrinus, Fokkens-Bruinsma, & de Boer, 2020).

The DfE uses subjective terms such as ‘regularly reviewed’, which can be interpreted differently by schools and lead to inconsistencies in implementation (DfE, 2023b, p. 18).

There are no legal requirements for schools to have a reintegration process for suspended students.

A possible explanation for the DfE not creating a mandatory reintegration policy may be attributed to the diversity in financial resources and capabilities that exists among the 20,000-plus maintained mainstream schools (Committee of Public Accounts, 2022). Therefore, creating such a policy may put some schools under greater financial pressure.

The implications are that a reintegration process (should it be followed) will not be consistent across schools and can be open to different interpretations depending on the school and their culture. It is, therefore, important to examine the research to find out how the reintegration process is understood by the stakeholders involved in the process and what makes it successful.

1.7.1 Summary

In summary, the DfE emphasises that exclusions ‘should’ only be used as a last resort. It clearly sets out a clear guidance that headteachers ‘must’ follow when suspending or permanently excluding a pupil. When a pupil is formally excluded from school, the law is clear on the actions that must be taken to ensure that it is a legal process; it not only holds the headteacher accountable but the governing body as well. A pupil can only be excluded from school for disciplinary reasons and must not be discriminated against due to a protected characteristic such as having SEN or due to their ethnicity and so on. While the (DfE, 2023) provides some guidance on reintegrating suspended students, there are no legal requirements for schools to have policy or process for it. The implications are that a reintegration process (should it be followed) will not be consistent across schools. Furthermore, there is no legislation surrounding other forms of exclusion, such as how long a pupil can be internally excluded for or how many managed moves they can experience. To better understand the current context behind exclusions, the next section will explore the history of school exclusions in England.

1.8 School Exclusions in England

In England, overall formal exclusions were declining until 2013/2014 and started to increase prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019). The pressure on schools not to exclude led to the creation of 'internal exclusion rooms' IER (Barker et al., 2010; Gillies, 2016; Ogg & Kaill, 2010). The use of IER became an accepted behaviour management tool, and in 2009, the DfE, formerly known as the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), published an 'Internal Exclusion Guidance' that aimed to provide advice and good practice on how to internally exclude a pupil from class (DCSF, 2009). The guidance suggested creating areas to use to place a pupil who had displayed disruptive behaviour in the classroom, which they referred to as 'removal rooms' (DCSF, 2009). Furthermore, a decrease in formal exclusions was associated with a rise in Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) referrals, indicating that schools may have avoided utilising formal exclusions by transferring students to PRUs (Ogg & Kaill, 2010).

The COVID-19 pandemic saw exclusion figures decrease due to the restrictions on school attendance. The pandemic impacted on school attendance at the end of the spring term in 2020 and the whole of the summer term in 2020, meaning that these two terms are outliers and do not give a fair representation of exclusion rates. Additionally, the latest available exclusion figures, which are for spring 2022/2023, show that both permanent exclusions and suspensions have increased compared to the spring term 2021/2022. The rate of suspensions and multiple suspensions in the spring term has been steadily increasing since 2012/2013. There were over 263 thousand suspensions in the spring term of 2022/2023, an increase from the autumn term of 2022/2023. This is also the highest figure recorded for one term. In secondary schools, suspensions in Spring 2022/2023 increased by 9% compared to the autumn 2022/2023 term (DfE, 2024b).

In summary, formal school exclusions are on the increase in England again. It is only possible to report on suspension and permanent exclusion figures as schools are not expected to report their informal exclusions such as IE, MMs and so on. This makes it rather problematic to fully determine the true picture of exclusion trends; for example, are the suspension rates in one school decreasing because they have found effective

preventative measures that support children and young people (CYP), or are they now utilising IEs more? Additionally, while examining formal exclusion trends, it is important to examine why students are being excluded from school, which will be discussed next.

1.9 Reasons Provided for Exclusions

When a pupil is excluded, their educational provision must provide the reason in the school census by selecting from a list of 12 provided reasons. The most common reason for all exclusions has been ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’(PDB) (IntegratED, 2021). The latest published government figures (spring term 2021/2022) show that PDB is still the main reason given and accounted for 43% of all suspensions and 35% of all permanent exclusions (DfE, 2024b). Prior to 2020, the second most common reason for exclusions was ‘Other’ (IntegratED, 2021). A review on school exclusions commissioned by the government reported that ‘other’ was not fit for purpose and recommended that the exclusion categories be reviewed so the reason behind the pupil’s exclusion was captured to provide a better understanding of the challenges the school faced (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019). Following the review, the DfE removed ‘other’ and introduced other categories, e.g., ‘inappropriate use of social media or online technology’. Notably, there is no exact definition given for PDB; however, the ‘Behaviour for school guidance’ refers to the minimum behaviour expectations (in line with the Ofsted ‘good’ descriptor) as:

‘Pupil behaviour does not normally disrupt teaching, learning or school routines. Disruption is not tolerated, and proportionate action is taken to restore acceptable standards of behaviour’(DfE, 2022a, p. 6).

Understandably, defining PDB is inherently complex due to the varying contexts and approaches of different schools (encompassing factors such as school phase, size, location, and ethos) (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019).

To summarise, exclusions are increasing, and the most provided reason for them occurring is PDB. To further understand the current complexities of exclusion, the data trends of the students who tend to experience exclusions will be discussed.

1.10 Who Gets Excluded?

There is a long-standing history that shows that CYP with certain characteristics tend to be disproportionately excluded compared to their peers without those characteristics (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019). Students with the following characteristics tend to have the highest exclusion rates:

- Gypsy/Roma, Traveller Irish Heritage and Black Caribbean
- Males
- Low socioeconomic status indicated in the DfE data as students being in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM)
- Special educational needs (SEN), especially those with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs (Caslin, 2021)
- Attend Secondary school

Students with these characteristics are more likely to be excluded than their peers who do not share these characteristics. According to the latest available exclusion figures for spring 2022/2023 published by the DfE in April 2024, these disproportionate exclusion trends continue. For example, the suspension rate for a pupil in receipt of FSM was four times higher than for a non-FSM pupil. When comparing children and young people with SEN and those without, a pupil with SEN or an EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan) is more likely to be excluded than their peers without SEN. The three ethnic groups that had the highest exclusion rates were Gypsy/Roma, Travellers of Irish Heritage, and those of Caribbean heritage.

Literature indicates that the patterns that are seen with exclusions in school are representative of the discrimination and stereotyping that permeates society and have done so for many decades (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, & Street, 2019). For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of children of West Indian heritage were labelled as 'educationally subnormal' and wrongly sent to special schools in Britain (Coard, 1971). Wallace and Joseph-Salisbury (2022) state in a critical analysis that Black Caribbean children continue to face persistent educational disadvantages. For example, in the UK, Black Caribbean students are awarded lower grades, are less likely to attend Russell Group universities and tend to be placed in lower ability groups and

experience high levels of school exclusions (Bolton & Lewis, 2023; Demie, 2022; Gillborn, Rollock, Warmington, & Demack, 2016).

Parsons (2019) argues that these disproportionate exclusion rates in the English education system require further investigation. An understanding of the existence of why educational inequalities exist for certain children and young people and these issues are perceived as 'normal', 'acceptable' and 'inevitable' (Parsons, 2019, p. 323). The use of exclusions is a social issue as it openly marginalises certain groups of students who need to be protected. Therefore, it is important to examine why exclusions are still used.

1.11 Why Schools Utilise Exclusions

1.11.1 Exam Performance: The Unintended Consequence of Increased Exclusions

It has been suggested that the increasing demands on schools to perform academically well has contributed to the exclusions rising (Partridge, Landreth Strong, Lobley, & Mason, 2020; Perryman, Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2011; Thompson, Tawell, & Daniels, 2021). Research undertaken by The RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) that wanted to explore ways to reduce exclusions, examine trends and who was impacted by them, found several systemic influences that had caused the exclusions to rise. These included school funding, real-term budget cuts, funding cuts to local authorities, challenging accountability measures, behaviour management policy shifts and curriculum changes (Partridge et al., 2020). The RSA found that the introduction of additional scrutiny measures such as Progress 8¹ scores at GCSEs has meant that there has been greater emphasis placed on examination results, and schools were, therefore, more likely to exclude and pay less attention to students who were not going to do well. The funding constraints meant that schools

¹ The Progress 8 score is a value-added measure used to assess the effectiveness of secondary schools in England. At key stage 2 (end of year 6), results are used to provide each student with an expected score on how they should perform at GCSE. This score is then used to calculate how much progress a student has made based on their highest eight GCSE qualifications. The school is ranked based on how their students' GCSE results compare with the expected score. English and Mathematics grades carry double the weighting of other subjects. The Progress 8 score places the school in one of four categories ranging from 'well above average' to 'well below average' (T. Gill, 2018).

were unable to meet the needs of their vulnerable students (Partridge et al., 2020). While the RSA research collected its data using a variety of tools, such as literature reviews, local authority (LA) data, surveys, interviews, research visits, and workshops, there were limitations. The methodology of the study did not provide a clear indication of how these findings were reached or how the data was integrated, i.e., were these findings based on just the interviews or observations as well? Another limitation is that the study did not highlight any differences between primary and secondary schools. This is important because schools operate differently, and it would have been helpful to understand how their differences impacted them. Nevertheless, the RSA results were mirrored in research conducted by Thompson et al. (2021), which consisted of 27 LA interviews with those involved in working on exclusions across the UK. Respondents in the interviews also reported a ‘trade-off’ that teachers faced between meeting the needs of their students and meeting examination targets. Funding constraints were also reported as making it difficult to meet the needs of students with SEN. The findings of Thompson et al. (2021) and Partridge et al. (2020) suggest that the focus on examination performance and the restraints on their funding have made it challenging to support their most vulnerable students. To understand these pressures faced by schools, it is worth considering the consequences if schools do not meet these challenging targets.

1.11.2 The Impact of School Accountability Measures on Exclusionary Practices

Headteachers face major consequences if their schools do not perform well on national school league tables and against Ofsted’s framework criteria, this can include job loss, forced academy conversion and media shaming due to a poor Ofsted rating, which puts them and their staff under considerable pressure (M. Atkinson, 2013). For example, Ofsted report headlines are frequently reported in the media, used by estate agents and, according to Ofsted focus groups, around 20% of parents read Ofsted reports before submitting a school application (Bokhove, Jerrim, & Sims, 2023). Notably, state-funded schools receive their funding based on the number of pupils they have, a reduction in student numbers will mean a loss of funding for them (Roberts, Danechi, & Lewis, 2023). In a recent newspaper article, the head of Ofsted agreed that

there was a ‘culture of fear’ in schools in England around inspections, and the National Education Union (NEU) for teachers reported that Ofsted inspections were neither fair nor consistent (Adams, 2023).

Partridge et al. (2020, p. 29) discuss the ‘unintended consequences’ of policies and decisions where they were meant to be put in place for the best interests of the students but have resulted in negatively impacting those most vulnerable. For example, setting aspirational educational outcomes for students has led to school leaders introducing stricter behaviour management tools in an attempt to ensure high-quality teaching. These rigid and inflexible behaviour expectations have made it harder for pupils with additional needs to cope, which have resulted in them being excluded (Partridge et al., 2020). While schools intend to put the interests of a student first, they can find themselves responding to those aforementioned pressures by using exclusions (M. Atkinson, 2013; Thompson et al., 2021). Furthermore, there has been little historical evidence to support that exclusions work (Skiba, 2000), yet it is a process that is supported by the DfE (see *DfE (2023, p. 3)*).

1.11.3 Conflicting Perspectives on Exclusions: The Headteacher's Dilemma

Thompson et al. (2021) suggest that the various professionals working with a particular student do not necessarily share the same background and values. Therefore, their perspective on acting in the best interests of the students may be different and will be influenced by ‘*perverse incentives in the system*’ (Thompson et al., 2021, p. 2). This could be highlighted by Martin-Denham (2021) in a qualitative study that examined the benefits of exclusions by interviewing 46 headteachers across all school phases. The findings reported that 50% of Headteachers thought that exclusions had benefits. Headteachers believed exclusions gave the opportunity for students and home to reflect on their actions and to let the other students know that the behaviour exhibited was not acceptable (Martin-Denham, 2021). Some secondary headteachers felt the exclusion was given for the best interests of the student e.g., to gather evidence for an EHCP application or gain support for them (Martin-Denham, 2021). This reflects the DfE’s argument for keeping exclusions. The DfE (2023) states that having a no-exclusion policy may prevent a pupil from accessing Alternative Provisions, which support them

to remain engaged in their education, and that not excluding may also put staff and pupils at risk and create a safeguarding problem.

While this study explains why headteachers use exclusions and that some believe they are acting in the best interests of the pupils or for the 'greater good' of the children and staff, some limitations to the study need to be considered.

The study was conducted in one area of England where the response rate was 46%; there was no justification as to why the data collection was conducted in one city when the title reported 'England', making the study misleading. Furthermore, there are approximately 21 thousand headteachers in England (GOV.UK, 2022), which makes the sample too small to make generalisations. Other limitations to consider were that the question topics were not discussed in the methodology, making it difficult to replicate the study, and there was no justification given for the use of interviews rather than questionnaires where more participants could have been reached in other parts of England.

1.12 Outcomes Associated with School Exclusions

Concerns over the use of disciplinary exclusions and the detrimental impact on students is by no means a recent issue in England; it has been highlighted and discussed for many years (Parsons, Godfrey, Howlett, Hayden, & Martin, 2001; Parsons & Howlett, 1996), and it continues to be a significant concern (Caslin, 2021). Despite this, evidence on school exclusions is mainly limited to correlational and descriptive analyses and the research is mostly based in the United States of America (USA) (Madia, Obsuth, Thompson, Daniels, & Murray, 2022). Nevertheless, negative outcomes associated with school exclusions have been well documented in research. Madia et al. (2022) examined the medium to long-term impact of all school exclusions (suspensions and permanent exclusions) using longitudinal data (n = 6632) in England. They found that all types of formal school exclusion increased the chances of a young person not being in education, employment or training (NEET) at the ages of 19-20 and remaining so at the age of 25-26 as well as experiencing lower earnings and greater unemployment risk (Madia et al., 2022).

This use of longitudinal data meant that the researchers were able to examine the long-term impact on young people who had experienced exclusions. It used counterfactual methods as analytical techniques to reduce potential bias and demonstrate the impact that formal school exclusions had on the employment and earnings of those who experienced it. Notably, while the results establish a strong statistical relationship between exclusions, future employment and learning, this cannot be reported as a causation. Another limitation to consider was that the study compared those who had never experienced exclusions to those who had been suspended and permanently excluded without distinguishing when the exclusions had occurred, e.g., primary or secondary school. Experiencing school exclusions at different points can impact CYP differently; for example, exclusions in year 10 can mean that vital GCSE learning can be missed out on, impacting GCSE results. The data also lacked information such as the number and length of exclusions and reasons behind the permanent exclusions. Having additional exclusion information may have meant that the researchers could have been able to draw further conclusions, such as the impact of longer exclusions. The information on the exclusions was self-reported by the parents/carers, which meant the data could have been inaccurate due to measurement errors. Furthermore, the study did not examine the impact of gender and ethnicity, as the sample size was not large enough (Madia et al., 2022). Notably, this is one of the few studies that examined the long-term impact of school exclusion.

To further highlight the negative relationship between school exclusions and life outcomes in England, there is evidence to suggest that exclusions impact a student's GCSE results. A report commissioned by the government in 2018 known as 'The Timpson Review' reported that GCSE analysis for the academic year 2015/2016 showed that only 7% and 18% of permanently excluded and suspended students achieved good passes in Mathematics and English GCSEs (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019). Notably, the percentage GCSE 'good' pass rate in English and Mathematics in 2015/16 for English state-funded schools was 63% (DfE, 2016). Furthermore, most recent research has found that suspended students, on average, are not gaining standard passes in Mathematics and English GCSE and were found to be approximately

12 months behind their peers who had not experienced school suspensions (Joseph & Crenna-Jennings, 2024).

In summary, most research examining the impact of formal school exclusions is limited to correlational rather than causational findings. Consequently, it has been posited that the complexities of exclusion along with the young people and children experiencing school exclusion may have other characteristics that could be attributed to challenging behaviour or poor educational outcomes. Therefore, the use of exclusions cannot be held responsible for the life outcomes of these young people (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, Street, et al., 2019). This draws attention to the fact that it is the most vulnerable group of CYP that are facing the harshest punishments, and the English education system should look at ways to address these inequalities.

1.13 Rationale for Current Research

Suspensions in England are widely accepted and used across schools as a form of punishing pupils who break the rules and are used to ensure good behaviour in schools (Melkman, 2024). They are considered 'necessary' and an 'important part of a healthy school system' by the DfE UK behaviour advisor (Bennett, 2017, p. 45). Notably, formal school exclusions are on the rise and there are groups of young people that they disproportionately impact. Research has shown that if a pupil is suspended, they are more likely to be suspended again. (Strand & Fletcher, 2014). In addition, pupils who were suspended ten times were found to be 15 times more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers who were only suspended once (Joseph & Crenna-Jennings, 2024).

Permanent exclusions and suspensions are meant to occur only in serious instances, and when executed, they should be done in a consistent, uniform manner where there are set procedures they have to follow when issuing an exclusion (DfE, 2022b).

However, they are continuing to increase, and currently, there is no mandatory reintegration policy in England's education system (DfE, 2022d). Furthermore, multiple suspensions have been found to be a precursor to a permanent exclusion (K. Gill, Quilter-Pinner, & Swift, 2017; Joseph & Crenna-Jennings, 2024). While permanent exclusions are undoubtedly a significant concern, this study focuses on suspensions,

allowing the research to inform preventative approaches that can be used to support students. Permanent exclusions could be dramatically reduced by interrupting the cycle of negative behaviour that leads to them. To do this, it is vital to understand the factors that contribute to the preceding suspensions and identify effective reintegration strategies. While schools have common procedures, the way they reintegrate suspended students back will depend on their resources and individual culture. It is not known what reintegration practices secondary schools employ following suspensions, what strengths are needed to ensure reintegration is successful and what the current barriers are to reintegration following suspension. Therefore, this study will explore what secondary schools are doing to support their suspended students, the similarities shared between schools, and current practices used to prevent further suspensions, which can ultimately lead to a student being permanently excluded.

1.14 A Theoretical Framework

The literature on school exclusions highlights several factors that can influence whether a young person can experience success at their school. Armstrong (2018) states that human behaviour is complex, and a child's behavioural development is a result of an ongoing process of frequent and changeable interactions with key people such as parents and teachers.

Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, and Karnik (2009) stress that theory in research should provide a framework to guide, organise, and make sense of findings. Therefore, it is important to provide an overarching theoretical framework for clarity and integrity in this research.

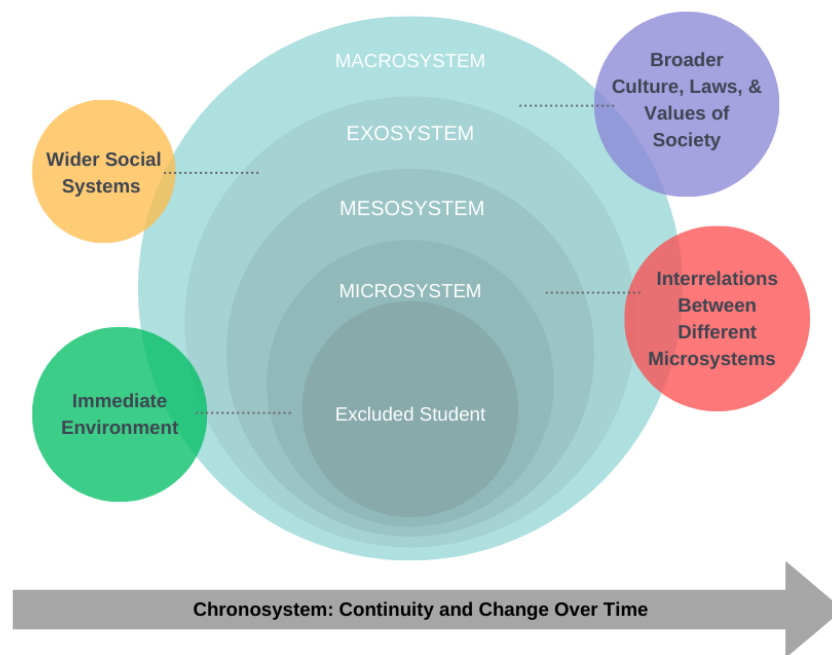


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) Bioecological Systems Diagram adapted from El Zaatari and Maalouf (2022)

The present study utilises Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD), which offers a lens to examine different factors that can affect the reintegration of a suspended student. It is helpful in understanding the different factors that affect the reintegration of a suspended student within their immediate and broader environment. BTHD also considers the importance of time and that those environments can change (see Figure 1). Bronfenbrenner (2005) categorised these systems as:

- The Micro-system: This is the most immediate system that directly impacts the student's development, i.e., parents/carers, peers, and teachers. The impact is bidirectional.
- The Meso-system: These are the relationships between those in the micro-systems.
- The Exo-system: These are the wider social systems with which the student does not have active interactions but may still impact them.
- The Macro-system: This encompasses the broader culture, laws, and values of a society, For example, Government policy.

- The Chrono-system: The role time plays in the student's life, for example, the transition from primary school to secondary school.

Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) BTHD supports the view that those around the child should not view them as 'the problem' or 'to blame', and as a result, a successful reintegration should not be seen as solely the child's responsibility. Caslin (2023) suggests the need to move away from attempting to understand a child's behaviour from a medicalised point of view where the answer is to fix but rather to examine the social structures that surround the child. When examining the reintegration process of secondary schools, it is therefore important to explore how systems put in place support the young person.

Using the BTHD framework, the present study aims to understand how the reintegration process can impact the student. This includes examining what supports a successful reintegration and the challenges faced that hinder it. The study also aims to draw on the BTHD framework to offer possible implications and recommendations for achieving a reintegration process that supports suspended secondary school students.

1.15 Summary and Aims

This chapter provided an overview of school exclusions in England, defining key terms, outlining relevant legislation, and exploring historical trends. It examined different types of exclusions, formal and informal, and highlighted the disproportionate impact on certain student groups and the negative long-term outcomes associated with exclusion. The chapter also explored the pressures schools face that may contribute to exclusionary practices, including a focus on academic performance and funding constraints. While there is research exploring exclusions, there is limited research examining the reintegration of suspended students. Furthermore, there is also limited research exploring the reintegration processes utilised following a suspension.

The next chapter will, therefore, examine the literature on the reintegration process of excluded pupils back into mainstream school, examine the current practices utilised and identify existing gaps in research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter details how the search strategy for the literature review was conducted to explore the research available on the reintegration processes undertaken to support excluded pupils' return to school. It will provide a critical review of research related to the reintegration processes of excluded pupils from different perspectives. It will explore key components needed for a successful reintegration of excluded pupils and systemic factors impacting the reintegration. Finally, findings from the literature review will be summarised, and the rationale for the research and its aims will be discussed.

2.2 Literature Search

The literature search was examined from 2010 onwards, the year the Equality Act (2010) was introduced. 2010 also marked the year when the UK general election resulted in the Labour Party losing after 13 years in power and resulting in the Conservative Party politician Micheal Gove serving as Secretary of State for Education. Micheal Gove passed legislation to enable all schools to become academies (Hilton, 2018). To conduct the search, the following databases were accessed: Psych info, Ovid, Eric, EBSCO, University College London online library resources and Google Scholar. As the literature on suspensions itself is limited, the term exclusion was used to broaden the search focusing on the reintegration process. The following terms were used to conduct the search:

'Reintegration' AND 'School' AND 'Exclusion'
'Reintegration' AND 'School' AND 'Suspension'
'Reintegration' AND 'School' AND 'Fixed-Term'
'Reducing Exclusions' AND 'School'
'Reintegration' AND 'Exclusion' AND 'School' OR 'Alternative Provision'
'Reintegration' AND 'Exclusion' AND 'School' OR 'Pupil Referral Unit'

As the research is solely focused on the reintegration processes, only studies that addressed the reintegration of excluded pupils were included in this search.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria that determined the suitability of the studies.

Factors examined	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The research focused on the reintegration of pupils following a formal exclusion or directed time spent off-site due to behaviour. ▪ Research exploring views of pupils. ▪ Research exploring views of school staff. ▪ Research exploring views of those working with pupils to support their reintegration. ▪ Mainstream Primary or secondary schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research that solely focuses on exclusions. ▪ Research not related to the reintegration of pupils following an exclusion or directed time off school site due to behaviour. ▪ Reintegration to special schools.
Location and Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature published since 2010. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature published before 2010.
Research Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative ▪ Quantitative ▪ Mixed methods 	
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ English only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-English

The abstracts of the studies were read to determine their suitability. Table 1 shows the criteria that informed the suitability of the literature. The objective of this literature review was to develop the reader’s understanding of the reintegration process of excluded pupils. The aim was to also examine the importance of the reintegration process following exclusions. The search was not limited to the UK as it was set out to capture best practices. However, the six studies that were included in this review ended up being based in England and Wales, possibly because the terms used for reintegration may be different to those used in the UK.

2.3 Literature Exploring Key Components Needed for a Successful Reintegration

This literature will focus on the important factors needed to reintegrate students back into school following exclusion. It will examine literature from the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and school leaders.

Qualitative research by Lally (2013) focused on three secondary school students who had experienced multiple suspensions and had successfully reintegrated back into their school without having experienced further suspensions for a minimum of three terms. Lally (2013) conducted nine interviews, which included a triad of participants: the student, their parent/carer, and their teacher. Notably, this is a low number of student participants making it difficult to generalise to a wider population.

Lally (2013) found that sustained reintegration was attributed to school support through the development of positive teacher relationships. Parent support, positive peer relationships and within child factors (such as motivation and self-awareness) were also key in supporting reintegration. Findings by Lally (2013) also suggest that the initial suspensions were influenced by risk factors such as negative life events and learning experiences, which was also reported in research by Munn and Lloyd (2005). Other risk factors reported by Lally (2013) included lack of belonging, which was echoed in research by Fisher, Dawson-Edwards, Higgins, and Swartz (2020). This suggests that a successful reintegration involves the school being aware of student struggles so that they can provide them with the support they need.

Lally (2013) struggled to recruit participants, and therefore, all participants were from one school. While the study provided the reader with some insight into the reintegration phenomena, generalisations are not possible. It is therefore important to consider more research examining student voices to determine the reliability of these findings.

G. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) explored the views of seven secondary and two primary school students who had successfully reintegrated back into mainstream school from an AP following a PEx. The research adopted a positive psychology approach using a process known as Q methodology. This method involved the participants sorting statements that were created from questionnaires they had previously answered. Q

methodology is described as an ethical, respectful, and person-centred way where participants are actively involved in the research (Hughes, 2012). The participants included eight males and one female, seven with SEMH needs and experienced exclusion lasting from 3 to 36 months. Successful reintegration was defined as the pupil having been in their mainstream setting for a minimum of 12 weeks.

Unlike Lally (2013), G. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) did not explore the potential barriers that had influenced the exclusion or the potential barriers to a successful reintegration. This allowed a more open exploration of the students' views to focus on what helped them reintegrate rather than restricting them to discussing the influences of their exclusions.

The findings suggest that secondary school students valued the support of key staff and parents/carers over peer relationships, whereas findings by Lally (2013) highlighted that both were perceived as important to successful reintegration. The findings by G. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) suggested that the context surrounding the pupil must be considered and understood in the reintegration process, and the responsibility for a successful reintegration should not be solely placed on the young person. Schools need to actively involve the pupil by enabling them to express their views, make decisions and tailor the process to meet their needs. Lastly, schools needed to have an inclusive ethos. G. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) also highlighted individual differences that were expressed in the students' views, which impacted what they believed supported reintegration. This emphasises the importance of accounting for the child's needs and experiences (Lally, 2013; Munn & Lloyd, 2005). Most participants in this study had SEMH needs, a group of students known to be disproportionately excluded from school (Caslin, 2021). Giving these students a voice is a strength of the study as it provides insight into how to support a group of vulnerable students.

A notable limitation is the great variation between how long the students were excluded (3 – 36 months) and the participant age range of six years, which was not considered in the research. This is important to raise as research has found that as the period of time spent outside mainstream schooling increases and the older the student is, the more challenging it becomes for them to successfully reintegrate back into mainstream (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, & Street, 2019; Lawrence, 2011; Lown, 2005). Whilst

it would hold ecological validity that relationships are fundamental to successful reintegration for all students, the findings may not be generalisable to students who have been excluded for a few days.

Exploring the reintegration process from a senior leadership perspective, an English study evaluating a project by Rose, Stanforth, Gilmore, and Bevan-Brown (2018) was examined. The project spanned from 2008 until 2012 and was concerned with reducing suspensions in primary schools. The project consisted of 18 primary schools that worked in partnership to reduce suspensions by sending pupils to each other's schools rather than formally suspending them (managed moves: MM). The project had three data collection points where the first involved interviews with the headteachers from four of the six schools initially involved. The second collection point involved six questionnaires and six interviews with 12 Headteachers out of a possible 18, which focused on behaviour strategies, policies, evaluation of the project and vignettes. The third collection point was the analysis of case studies and exclusion data (Rose et al., 2018).

The findings indicated that there were several factors that supported the successful reintegration of pupils. Rose et al. (2018) reported that reintegration meetings were seen as a vital component of the reintegration process, which involved a restorative approach. A restorative approach in school focuses on repairing the relationship rather than punishing the pupil (McCluskey, 2018). In addition, the meeting was where the pupil was welcomed back by a senior member of staff. During the meeting, 'explicit statements' were made to show the pupils how valued they were, and future behaviour targets were collaboratively agreed on with the pupils and their parents/carers. The Headteachers interviewed reflected on the significance of understanding the pupil's home life and family context and utilising a range of external services to support their pupils and families. They also emphasised the importance of supporting pupils with their learning and behavioural needs.

A strength of Rose et al. (2018) study was its use of both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the impact of the project, providing depth to the findings and further understanding of the strategies used in the project. Another strength was that the primary schools involved were geographically located in the lowest 10-30% of the most

deprived areas in England, and therefore, the research was conducted in schools that had pupils from low socioeconomic backgrounds (a group known to be disproportionately excluded from school).

There are some methodological limitations to consider with the study conducted by Rose et al. (2018). The headteacher was the only perspective considered, and having the participation of other stakeholders, such as other assistant headteachers, parents and teaching staff, would have provided a better understanding of the project and the systemic changes that occurred across the school rather than just considering one perspective. Additionally, it would have provided a form of triangulation to evaluate the consistency of findings between Headteachers, parents, and teachers. Nevertheless, the findings of this study raised the importance of making the pupils feel valued, working collaboratively with them and their parents/carers, understanding family context and the use of multiagency working to support them.

2.3.1 Summary

This section explored the key components needed to facilitate the successful reintegration of pupils who had been excluded. It examined research from multiple perspectives, including young people, teachers, parents, and senior leaders.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development, the themes highlighted as facilitating a successful reintegration were located within the pupil's microsystem (closest environment) and their mesosystem (interrelations between the different microsystem). The themes highlighted were as follows:

Within the pupil's microsystem:

1. Relationships, e.g., teacher-student relationships, supportive parents, and peer relationships (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013).
2. Considering a child's needs (Rose et al., 2018).
3. Fostering a sense of belonging (Lally, 2013; Rose et al., 2018).
4. Context, e.g., knowing family background and negative life experiences (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013; Rose et al., 2018).
5. Restorative approaches (Rose et al., 2018).

Within the pupil's mesosystem:

6. Involving the young person and their family in the reintegration process (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Rose et al., 2018).

When comparing these themes with the guidance on reintegration from the DfE, it recommends reintegration meetings and setting of targets, as echoed in findings by Rose et al. (2018). Notably, except for reintegration meetings, the literature provides no other key processes integral to a successful reintegration. The guidance recommends fostering a sense of belonging, which is highlighted by Rose et al. (2018) and Lally (2013). The DfE guidance does not discuss the importance of working collaboratively with the pupil and family or considering the individual differences of each child. Questions remain as to the length of the reintegration as the features of successful reintegration have not yet been addressed in the literature. The DfE suggests reviews should be 'regular', which is subjective. Additionally, as examined in the previous chapter, exclusion figures suggest that systems surrounding exclusions are unfair due to the disproportionate exclusions of vulnerable groups of children and young people. So, while the studies highlighted important themes to successfully reintegrating a pupil, systemic factors that are barriers need exploring. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Literature Exploring Systemic Factors Impacting on Reintegration

As previously discussed, literature suggests that the increase in exclusions is due to systemic factors such as education and government policy that place too much pressure on schools (Partridge et al., 2020). This section will draw on literature to explore barriers that hinder the successful school reintegration of excluded pupils.

Carlile (2011) conducted an ethnographic study examining the systems involved in school exclusions, their preventions and reintegration. Carlile (2011) worked within children's services as a pupil support officer (PSO) with secondary school aged students in a large multicultural urban area in England. She justifies an ethnographic observation as a way of examining the complexities of permanent exclusions. Carlile (2011) describes the conflicting pressures faced by professionals working with young people with behavioural difficulties in an education system that is 'dedicated to full inclusion' but is judged and funded on academic performance. She argues that

systems and processes are not used despite being designed to support students who have faced permanent exclusion (PEX) or those at risk of PEX.

Carlile (2011) describes the use of in-school interventions to prevent a PEX of a student as a list of strategies that are worked through before they resort to one. She describes how resources in schools are not appropriately used to support students at risk of exclusion. For example, seclusion rooms are meant to offer a space for a student who may have been disruptive in a lesson (to provide them and the teacher a break), or it is meant to offer a space for students to work without distraction with some adult support. Instead, these spaces are used as an alternative to suspensions where the student is internally excluded. This is a cheaper alternative to schools and a way to reduce their formal exclusion figures as they do not have to provide specialist staff for one student. Carlile (2011) posits that a 'pathologised description' of the student's behaviour allows the problem to be placed 'within the child' rather than within their environment. This then justifies practices like IE and allows the reintegration responsibility to be fully placed on the child whilst expecting them to be grateful that they have been given another chance. It has been argued that pathologising a pupil's behaviour can make matters worse and that schools need to adopt a systemic model where behaviour is seen as a response to interactions between the school system and the pupil (Gillies & Robinson, 2012; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Rose et al., 2018)

Carlile (2011) also argues that while pastoral support plans (PSPs), as with reintegration meetings, are meant to be a preventative intervention to support students at risk of a PEX they are not always set up with this intention. PSPs were set up because it is an indicator that the student is going to be permanently excluded and schools need to be seen as having 'crossed all the T's and dotted all the I's' in case parents decided to challenge the exclusion (Carlile, 2011, p. 305). Carlile (2011) also reported that MMs were found to be set up as a response to failed PSPs, utilised to reduce their formal exclusion figures rather than supporting the child to have a fresh start. MMs have been found to be an effective and supportive intervention and give students the opportunity to have a fresh start (Abdelnoor, 2006; Mahdi, 2023). However, in line with Carlile's (2011) findings, research has indicated problems around the use of MMs arising from

systemic issues such as education policies and the impact of examination results (Bagley, 2013).

A strength of this study is that it addresses the difficulties faced by professionals who support children and young people who are at risk or have been excluded. It provides an in-depth account of the researcher's experience in working around exclusions and reintegration. This study presents a unique perspective on how the processes in place to support a student's reintegration or prevent an exclusion are not always used for these purposes. However, there are some limitations to consider. Firstly, as the researcher is the instrument in the collection of data, it is important that they be aware of their own biases (Lipson, 1991). While Carlile (2011) justifies her use of an ethnographic methodology, she does not indicate how she addressed her potential biases. As her study is based on her account and therefore subject to influences from personal experiences, background, and views. The study is limited to only her experience in one LA, and therefore, the findings cannot be generalised. Finally, the research is in a named LA, and while Carlile (2011) places responsibility on systemic factors, her account is negative and could lead to those in the study feeling targeted or misrepresented. To gain a more balanced understanding of systemic barriers to reintegration, another study was examined with the perspectives of professionals working to support the reintegration of excluded students.

With focus groups, Lawrence (2011) explored the views of six school staff from a secondary school, 11 staff from a PRU, and one member of the behaviour support unit regarding the reintegration process of excluded students back into mainstream schools. Her findings were analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings by Lawrence (2011) suggest a barrier to reintegration is a school's ethos, these were evident by a school having unrealistic or negative expectations of the student and the refusal to reintegrate based on their SEN. This undermines the Equality Act (2010), which states that a pupil should not be discriminated against, and reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure they are not at a disadvantage. Furthermore, schools are more likely to exclude students with additional needs due to a lack of resources and the impact of examination results (Partridge et al., 2020). The House of Commons (2018) also indicates that schools are hesitant to reintegrate students from

APs. One reason for this may be that secondary school teachers do not have adequate training to pastorally support the most vulnerable students because teacher training courses focus mainly on teacher instruction (Joseph & Crenna-Jennings, 2024; Rice O'Toole & Soan, 2022). Understanding the needs of the students was also echoed as a key theme to a successful reintegration in studies (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Rose et al., 2018).

Findings by Lawrence (2011) indicate that reintegration meetings were found to be very formal and intimidating by the parents and students. The DfE (2023b) guidance encourages a reintegration meeting to be used to offer the student a 'fresh start' and foster a sense of belonging. An intimidating meeting may cause a student to disengage from the process, lack a sense of belonging and lower self-esteem, all of which will impact on their motivation to succeed (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

Lawrence (2011) highlights the importance of having a child-centred approach where the student is actively engaged in the process. Providing a student with a voice is a way to support their inclusion within school (Abdelnoor, 1999; Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). Lawrence (2011) notes that good, honest, working relationships along with effective communication between the school, parents, student, and PRU was found to support reintegration. Findings highlighted that a 'them' and 'us' approach between the school and PRU proved to be a barrier to the reintegration process. Schools need to communicate their expectations clearly, and ongoing support for the student needs to be provided with graduated withdrawal from the PRU and external agencies.

Multiagency and collaborative working to reduce exclusions and support a successful reintegration was also highlighted by G. Atkinson and Rowley (2019) and Rose et al. (2018)

A strength of the study by Lawrence (2011) was that it incorporated perspectives and insights of different staff. Notably, the researcher did not provide her participant recruitment method, nor did she discuss her decision on the focus group split. The first focus group had all staff from the PRU, while the second focus group had six members of secondary school staff with one admissions officer and one support officer. Due to the different roles in the second group, there could have been a power imbalance, which may have hindered the group dynamic, affecting member participation.

Similar findings were reported by Thomas (2015), who also examined factors affecting successful reintegration in rural Wales for both primary and secondary school students through a mixed-method approach. Thomas (2015) analysed historical student data, which tracked the pupil's transitions into, out of and within the PRU over time. This was to identify patterns and relationships that affected reintegration. He then sent postal questionnaires to an 'expert sample' and then to a sample of educational practitioners from schools and PRUs, gathering quantitative and qualitative data. Lastly, he conducted semi-structured interviews with an expert sample (those with experience in school reintegration). His participants were educational practitioners, which involved Headteachers, SENCos, primary, secondary and PRU staff.

Thomas (2015) found that the school's influence significantly impacted the success of the reintegration. Participants considered the school ethos to be vital for a successful school reintegration. Successful reintegration occurred in schools where staff were committed to inclusion and sought to increase the participation of their students. Findings also suggested that the time out of mainstream school appeared to have an impact on reintegration. An inclusive school ethos that supported reintegration effectively was found to provide staff training, allocated key members of staff to students to act as an advocate for them and understood causes of behaviour (e.g., learning needs). Parental support was also identified as being an important component of a successful reintegration. Findings indicated that educators believed that a successful outcome was mainly due to the student wanting it to work. Placing most of the responsibility on the pupil does not align with understanding the cause of the child's behaviour. This is because it places the problem within the child rather than looking at the systems around them that could be causing the lack of buy-in to returning to school, which may be a systemic issue in school (Gillies & Robinson, 2012; Orsati & Causton-Theoharis, 2013; Rose et al., 2018). Interestingly, Thomas (2015) found that the age of the student did not impact on their reintegration, which was inconsistent with other findings that suggest that the older the student is, the harder it is for them to reintegrate back to school following an exclusion (Graham, White, Edwards, Potter, & Street, 2019).

Thomas (2015) used a mixed-method approach to examine what factors supported a successful reintegration. However, there were areas of the methodology that were unclear, such as how many participants were involved in his study, making it difficult to draw concrete conclusions or assess the reliability of the study. However, the findings were consistent with Lawrence (2011), and there were similarities found in other studies, such as parental support (Lally, 2013), taking account of the pupil's needs (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019), and teacher-student relationships (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013).

2.4.1 Summary

This section aimed to understand systemic factors impacting reintegration into school following exclusion. Interestingly, no differences were found or highlighted between primary and secondary reintegration processes. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development, the themes highlighted as impacting on the reintegration process were located within the pupil's microsystem (closest environment) and their mesosystem (interrelations between the different microsystem). The themes highlighted were as follows:

Within the pupil's microsystem:

1. The school adopting a deficit model where the pupil is perceived as the 'problem' (Carlile, 2011; Lawrence, 2011).

Within the pupil's mesosystem:

2. School ethos (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015).
3. Parental support (Thomas, 2015).

The school ethos was highlighted as an important systemic factor to the success of reintegration. This was seen as the school supporting inclusion (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015). Schools supporting the needs of students by ensuring children were not perceived negatively or had unrealistic expectations placed on them (Carlile, 2011; Lawrence, 2011). Adopting a child-centred approach where students were supported by schools so that they were actively included (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015).

2.5 Literature Summary

In total six studies from different perspectives were examined to gain a holistic understanding of the reintegration process in the UK, specifically England. There is a gap in the literature exploring the reintegration of suspended students, and hence, only two of the studies examined in this review were in relation to them. While there were many key components reported for a successful reintegration, how the actual reintegration was conducted was not discussed apart from reintegration meetings. Rose et al. (2018) and Lawrence (2011) discussed the importance of the reintegration meeting in the process. The meetings were important to welcome students back, let them know they were valued and was a time to set targets with them and their families (Rose et al., 2018). Meetings that were perceived to be intimidating and too formal negatively impacted the process (Lawrence, 2011). There was no explanation as to what happened after the meetings or how long the meeting should last, or how the targets and plans were going to be disseminated and communicated to staff. Notably, most of the reintegration literature explored was qualitative and, therefore, gained perspectives (G. Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Carlile, 2011; Lally, 2013; Lawrence, 2011). Two studies conducted a mixed methods approach; however, the quantitative method was not used to examine how the reintegration process was conducted (Rose et al., 2018; Thomas, 2015).

There has been no literature found examining the processes involved in reintegrating suspended secondary school students back into their schools. Furthermore, guidance from the DfE is limited to suggestions. Therefore, the present study seeks to explore the processes involved in reintegrating a suspended student back into their secondary school. It also seeks to understand what secondary schools do to reintegrate their suspended students and the reasons they use the strategies they do.

2.6 Research Aims and Questions

The literature review highlighted gaps where further research is required:

1. Most research focuses on the reintegration of students who have been permanently excluded from schools. There appears to be a lack of studies exploring how suspended students are reintegrated back into school. Many

students are suspended every day, and it is not known how they are supported to return to school.

2. Most research focuses on the experiences of the reintegration rather than what is involved in the process. Therefore, there are common themes but a lack of understanding of what the process is and how it links to the themes.
3. Working collaboratively to support students reintegrate back successfully was highlighted in research. Link school Educational Psychologists (EPs) work with schools to support their students and understand the school systems. They are evidence-based psychologists with unique expertise in child development and school systems (Atfield, Baldauf, & Owen, 2023). Understanding how they are utilised to support the reintegration of suspended students will help inform future practice.

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore what secondary schools do to reintegrate their students following a suspension and gain an understanding of their reintegration processes.

The stakeholders involved in the research will be: -

Secondary school staff involved in the reintegration process of the suspended students. Each school has its own structure, so the staff participants will vary.

The link educational psychologists attached to the schools, as they are well placed to support students at risk of exclusion.

The following research questions were used to explore the reintegration processes utilised by secondary mainstream schools across two London boroughs:

Research Question 1: In secondary schools, what steps are taken, and who is involved when reintegrating suspended students back into school?

Research Question 2: What factors contribute to an effective reintegration?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges/barriers that secondary schools face when reintegrating suspended students?

3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter will begin by discussing the epistemological view that informed how this study was conducted and the rationale behind the methodology. It will then provide an in-depth explanation of the study design, data collection methods utilised, how validity and reliability were addressed, and the ethical considerations taken.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Position

Ontology, the nature of reality, and epistemology, how knowledge is acquired, influence research design choices (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Research design tends to be guided by the researcher's beliefs around their ontological and epistemological views. Rather than committing to a constructivist approach (where knowledge is constructed by individuals) or a positivist approach (where it assumes that there is an objective reality that can be studied and understood empirically), this study adopted a pragmatic approach (Badley, 2003). The combination of two very different philosophical perspectives may appear controversial because the researcher is choosing to adopt opposing paradigms to explain reality and knowledge (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010).

Badley (2003) argues that a pragmatic approach addresses a false dichotomy that often forces a choice between positivist and constructivist paradigms. By integrating both perspectives, pragmatism allows for a more holistic understanding of research problems. This flexibility is particularly beneficial in educational psychology research, where complex real-world issues such as school suspensions and reintegration require diverse methodologies to capture the full scope of the phenomenon.

Pragmatism places a focus on research aims that can be realistically achieved by addressing specific issues in educational research, as it acknowledges the complexities of the phenomenon (Badley, 2003). In the case of reintegration practices for suspended secondary school students, a pragmatic approach can avoid overpromising and instead focus on answering the research questions and using this to develop evidence-informed strategies that increase the chances of successful reintegration.

3.3 Researcher Position

This research was conducted while considering existing research on exclusions and reintegration. It was driven by my – the researcher’s- childhood, professional experiences, and values as a former secondary school teacher and a trainee EP. My firsthand experiences with school suspension and later career as a senior leader working with students at risk of exclusion fuelled my passion for understanding exclusion and effective reintegration strategies. My responsibilities as a senior leader before I left the teaching profession were mostly pastoral responsibilities, where I worked with students who had been or were at risk of permanent exclusion. These experiences formed my belief that we needed to do better for our most vulnerable children, as I felt that, somehow, our education system was failing some of them, and there needed to be systemic changes to support them better. This influenced my decision to leave the teaching profession to train to become an educational psychologist. My teaching experience led me to believe that the right adult in a child’s life can make a significant difference to them. I recognise and understand that my experiences may have caused unintentional biases within my research. To mitigate this, I engaged in regular reflection, consulted with my supervisors and colleagues within teaching and psychology to challenge my thinking, frequently examined my own assumptions, and triangulated my findings with multiple data sources.

I believe schools are a place where positive interactions and experiences are created for young people. School is not only for those who excel academically; it is for everyone to excel in their own way. A few years ago, I came across Sir Michael Rutter’s ‘Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children.’ Rutter (1979) and his team examined how school differences in inner London influenced student factors such as educational outcomes and behaviours. Rutter’s (1979) analysis found that similar Inner-London schools greatly differed in student outcomes for behaviour and attainment. Interestingly, even though the schools differed in student intake characteristics (behaviour and ability), these factors did not fully account for the later outcome differences between schools for behaviour and attainment. Rutter’s (1979) results suggested that students were more likely to do better academically and be better behaved based on the school they attended. His findings suggest that secondary

school experiences influence a young person's outcomes. In other words, schools can make a difference in a child's life.

Training to become an EP has given me the opportunity to work systemically and support schools to help their most vulnerable students through the application of psychology. It provided me with a different lens and alternative views to reflect on and critique our education system. As a researcher, I have considered my experiences and involvement in reintegrating suspended students, the processes around it, and the rationale behind the strategies utilised. Exclusions are an emotive topic that the media frequently addresses and associates with bad behaviour and schools not coping (e.g. see Moss (2024)). My aim was to gain clarity about the processes schools utilised when reintegrating suspended students, their strengths, and their challenges in this area. This insight was to gain an understanding of how schools can more effectively reintegrate students after a suspension. In the near future I aim to utilise my research to support schools to create changes in the system where CYP at risk of exclusion are effectively supported and given the best possible chance of success. This study's focus on understanding a complex process and practical outcomes made a pragmatic approach ideal as it allowed me to acknowledge both the socially constructed nature of experiences and the need for objective data on the strengths and barriers of the reintegration process following suspension.

3.4 Research Design and Overview of Methodologies

3.4.1 Research Design

To gain in-depth insights into the processes involved in reintegrating suspended students, this study employed a multi-method approach where a combination of qualitative and quantitative data was collected and integrated at the end to comprehensively address the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To address research question one, 'In secondary schools, what steps are taken, and who is involved when reintegrating suspended students back into school?' This study utilised a questionnaire sent to all secondary school staff involved in the process across the two London boroughs.

To address research questions two and three, ‘What factors contribute to an effective reintegration?’ And ‘What are the challenges/barriers that secondary schools face when reintegrating suspended students?’ A questionnaire was sent to all EPs working across the two London boroughs. The school staff questionnaires were also used to address research two and three providing two different perspectives to answer the research questions.

Electronic questionnaires were chosen for their efficiency and ability to reach a maximum number of secondary school staff and EP participants within the limited time available for this study. The study also incorporated exclusion data (secondary data) as an additional instrument. While not directly answering the research questions, this data was analysed to better understand the current suspension situation and to examine potential patterns or correlations between specific reintegration practices and suspension rates in the participating secondary schools.

Informed by a pragmatic approach, both questionnaires utilised qualitative and quantitative components, such as closed-ended questions on the strategies used for reintegration and open-ended questions on school staff and EPs' opinions and experiences. Data collection occurred concurrently, with each data set analysed separately before integrating the findings to address each research question. This chapter will explain the questionnaire designs, the exclusion figures data, and how these data sets were combined to answer the research questions.

3.4.2 Adaptations of Research Design

The initial research design planned a mixed methods two-phase sequential design. This was going to involve two phases of data collection where phase one consisted of using two questionnaires aimed at secondary school staff and EPs. The data collected for phase one was going to be analysed and used to construct the second phase, which consisted of the qualitative stage. The second phase was intended to involve semi-structured interviews and focus groups with a smaller sample of participants from the first phase. The first phase of data collection using online questionnaires was successfully completed. However, due to unexpected challenges encountered during recruitment for the questionnaires, the interview phase was not possible. Despite

adopting various recruitment strategies (use of weekly newsletters, personal emails, telephone calls, visits, and use of EP contacts), the school staff questionnaire response rate was significantly lower than imagined. This limited the pool for potential phase two interviews. Barriers to participating in the questionnaire included:

1. Sensitivity around exclusions: Schools and supporting services expressed reluctance to participate in or share the research due to its perceived sensitive nature.
2. Time Constraints: Staff cited lack of time as a major obstacle to participation, especially when dealing with pressures such as Ofsted and staff absences.

The questionnaire recruitment period was initially four weeks but was extended to nine weeks due to the challenges faced. The extension to the recruitment period meant that there was not sufficient time to analyse data and implement the qualitative interview phase within the research timeframe. Subsequently, the research design was adapted to focus on the examination of questionnaire data and the use of the exclusion figures.

3.4.3 Rationale for Research Design

The DfE (2023) suggests that schools should have a reintegration process but does not provide enough information on what this should look like or provide an explanation as to why having a reintegration process is important. This leaves schools to decide what a suitable reintegration process should be. As highlighted in the literature review, much of the research examines permanent exclusions. Furthermore, the research that examines the views of school staff involved in the reintegration process of suspended students is limited. As the research involved exploring the current processes schools used to reintegrate their suspended students, it was important to explore the views of the school staff who are directly involved in the process but also consider the perspectives of EPs. EPs have knowledge of the school systems and work with schools to support CYP. Gaining different perspectives provides a richer understanding and holistic view of a complex phenomenon (Day, Harris, & Hadfield, 2001; Paltridge, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2017) argue that the fields of social and health science are complex, and therefore the use of qualitative or quantitative approaches alone is not

sufficient to address such fields. It was important to ensure that the questionnaires were utilised to collect quantitative and qualitative data to provide a fuller understanding of the reintegration process (Oppenheim, 2000). For example, the DfE suggests conducting reintegration meetings for students who have been suspended or have been directed off-site (DfE, 2023b). This may be a process followed by all schools, but the motives behind the meetings may be different. Research by Rose et al. (2018) suggests that reintegration meetings were an effective strategy because they made the students feel wanted and welcomed back. This, therefore, suggests that it is important to explore the rationale behind the systems adopted by the schools as this may provide context to the strategies employed by the schools.

Lastly, the exclusion figures provided by the local authorities were examined to provide context to the study and offer possible explanations for the research findings.

3.4.4 Participants and Sampling

This research examined the reintegration processes utilised in mainstream secondary schools and was conducted across two local authorities (LAs). The LAs are situated next to each other, and their areas are regarded as some of the more affluent in London. To ensure the confidentiality of the schools and services, the exact total numbers of schools and EPs in each LA were not provided, as this could compromise anonymity.

Table 2. The percentage of SEN, Free School Meals (FSM) and suspension rate in state-funded secondary schools across England, London, and the two LAs. These were the latest figures provided by the DfE (2024b)

Location	Percentage of students with SEN in state-funded secondary schools for 2022/2023	Percentage of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in state-funded secondary schools for Autumn Term 2020/2021	Suspension rate ¹ in state-funded secondary schools for Autumn 2021/2022
England	14.8%	18.2%	13.96
London	13.8%	21.2%	8.85
LA 1	11.1%	9.7%	2.82
LA 2	14.9%	11.2%	7.86

¹ The suspension rate is the number of suspensions divided by the number of students. It is worth noting that a suspension rate of 10% does not equate to 10% of students being suspended. Some students would have been suspended more than once.

The latest data available from the DfE were examined across state-funded secondary schools in England, London and the two LAs to compare the percentage of students with additional educational needs (SEN), Free School Meals (FSM) eligibility and also compare suspension rates. The data indicates that 18.2% of students in England and 21.2% of students in London attending state-funded secondary schools were eligible for FSM in the academic year 2020 - 2021. The FSM percentage was lower in both LAs. The suspension rates were also compared, and it was found that both LAs had lower suspension rates than in England and London in the academic year 2021 - 2022. The SEN percentages for the academic year of 2022 – 2023 indicate that LA 2 (14.9%) had a slightly higher percentage of students with SEN attending state-funded secondary than LA 1 (11.1%), London (13.8%), and England (14.8%) (see Table 2). For the purpose of this study, the two LAs will be referred to Bi-borough Londonia.

There are over 20 secondary schools in Londonia, and many of these schools opt in for educational psychology services (EPS). Schools that choose to buy in EPS are allocated a designated EP to work with them. Bi-borough Londonia sends termly exclusion figures to the EPs. These include the year groups of students that have been excluded, exclusion length, their SEN status, and the name of the school. At the time of the study, Educational Psychologists (EPs) and Bi-borough Londonia were interested in gaining a greater insight into the reintegration practices adopted by schools and how they could further support schools in reducing exclusions.

A two-stage sampling method was used to identify suitable staff participants who were involved in the reintegration process at their secondary schools. Firstly, the study focused on mainstream secondary schools within Londonia. This stratified approach ensured the representation of this specific school context within these London boroughs. Schools were then selected based on the latest exclusion data (autumn 2023) provided by Londonia; schools were selected based on whether they had suspended students. This convenience sampling method focused the study on schools with direct experience in student reintegration.

Twenty mainstream secondary schools were identified that had suspended students during the autumn term of 2023. School staff members involved in the reintegration process of suspended students were invited to participate in the questionnaire.

Multiple participants from a single school were possible. This was intended to examine consistencies and differences within the schools.

Additionally, local authority EPs actively working in Londonia were invited to participate in the study. This approach ensured a comprehensive perspective from EPs supporting schools within Londonia.

It is worth noting that focusing only on schools that had exclusions during the autumn term may have limited the sample size and potentially possible insights into what common practice exists. Nevertheless, Teddlie and Yu (2007) argue that sampling methods should be feasible and rational for the researcher. Here this sampling strategy, combined with the purposive selection of school staff participants, allowed data collection from individuals with the most relevant insights into reintegration practices.

3.4.5 Data Collection Methods

This section initially states the data collection methods utilised. This will then be followed by a detailed explanation of the design of the primary data collection tools and how they relate to each of the research questions. To answer the research questions data was collected using the following tools:

1. **Secondary Data:** Since the DfE provides exclusion data for the previous academic year (2022/2023), exclusion data for the autumn term 2023/2024 was directly obtained from local authorities (LAs). Furthermore, the LA exclusion data included additional details, such as the length of exclusions given and the number of students involved. The exclusion figures informed the selection of schools with recent suspensions and provided context for interpreting the questionnaire findings.
2. **EP Questionnaire:** A questionnaire was designed to gather insights from EPs and Trainee EPs (TEPs) regarding the reintegration process of suspended students at secondary schools. EPs and TEPs across various work settings were invited to participate, recognising their potential insights even if they were not currently working with secondary schools. The questionnaire included targeted questions for EPs directly working with secondary schools alongside general

questions for all EP participants. Second and third year TEPs were included as their doctoral training involved dedicated school placements.

- 3. School Staff Questionnaire:** A questionnaire was designed to gather information on the reintegration process for suspensions. Staff from mainstream secondary schools who had used suspensions in the autumn of 2023/2024 were invited to participate in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was open to teaching and non-teaching roles, provided they were involved in the reintegration process of suspended students. By allowing a range of different school staff to participate in the questionnaire, the research aimed to gain a broader understanding of the reintegration process from various perspectives within each school, such as senior leaders, pastoral staff, heads of year and so on. This also allowed for triangulation of perspectives and provided support in assessing the consistency of reintegration practices within a school (Day et al., 2001).

3.4.6 Questionnaire Design

The school staff and EP questionnaires were specifically designed to address the research questions. For this reason, the questionnaire designs will be explained in relation to each research question. This section will describe the questions used to collect the data and the considerations taken when the questions were designed. Following this, the questionnaire pilot study will be explained along with the modifications made to the questionnaires before it was sent to the target populations. The final version of the school staff and EP questionnaires can be found in Appendix 1.

3.4.7 Participant Demographics

The questionnaires collected demographic data relevant to understanding the context of participant responses. School staff members were asked to provide their current role (SENCo, senior leader, pastoral support staff, head of year) and years of employment at their current school. These details provide insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences with reintegration practices.

To identify potential response bias stemming from multiple participants within the same school, the school's name was requested. This was crucial to avoid skewing

results and ensure accurate conclusions, particularly if many respondents were from one school. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, it was important to be aware that asking the school staff participant to provide the name of the school may compromise the results as it would increase the risk of respondents providing socially desirable answers rather than providing a true reflection of the reintegration processes of suspended students (Krosnick, 2018). Marketing research suggests leaving personal questions till the end, but this has not always been found to be effective as there is research to suggest that asking sensitive questions up front may be better (Acquisti, John, & Loewenstein, 2012). A decision was made to request the school's name at the end of the questionnaire and collect the other demographics at the start. Importantly, once all the questionnaire data was collected, school names were coded, and their names were deleted to protect their identity.

EPs were asked to provide the number of secondary schools they currently work with and the duration of their involvement with these schools. This information helps gauge the breadth of their experience with diverse reintegration approaches and their familiarity with varying school contexts.

The research purposely avoided collecting broader demographic information (e.g., gender, age) that was not directly relevant to the study (UCL, 2024). This minimised the risk of creating data that could potentially identify the participants (Fernandez et al., 2016).

3.4.8 Considerations During Questionnaire Design

Practicability and accessibility were key to ensuring that the questionnaire reached all participants quickly and easily. This was particularly important due to the limited time constraints under which this research had to be conducted. To ensure that the questionnaire was accessible to all 20 schools and all EPs that operated in different areas, a decision was made to create online questionnaires that were accessible on computers and mobile phones to make it as convenient as possible for the participants. Qualtrics, a cloud-based tool used to create and distribute questionnaires and collect responses, was used to create both online questionnaires. A limitation considered was that an online questionnaire is self-administered by participants; it

does not allow for interviewer probes for further explanation, which limits in-depth exploration (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003). Arguably, allowing the participants to answer the questions in their own time alleviates the pressure created by the interviewer. Recognising the limitations of online questionnaires, the design process ensured that questions were designed to attempt to counterbalance the disadvantages of using this method (e.g., clear wording, follow-up questions, pilot study), as will be further explained in the next sections.

3.4.9 Types of Questions

A pragmatic perspective was adopted to guide the use of open- and closed-ended questions to acquire qualitative and quantitative data. This approach acknowledges the strengths and limitations of using qualitative and quantitative data and argues that the utilisation of both methods can provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the reintegration process (Sharma, Bidari, Bidari, Neupane, & Sapkota, 2023). Additionally, the question design was not restricted by how to ask it but rather by the best approach needed to answer it, which in turn provided suitable data to answer the research questions. Both questionnaires incorporated open and closed questions.

3.4.9.1 Closed Questions

Closed questions were used to gather quantitative data. School staff and EPs were asked closed questions. Importantly, at the design stage of each question, the response output of each question was considered for effective quantitative data analysis, for example, the appropriateness of measurement that was going to be used (Jamieson, 2004, p. 4). These questions focused on specific strategies and steps taken during the reintegration process, with response options informed by the literature review and refined through pilot testing. To ensure comprehensiveness, multiple-choice questions included an "Other, please specify" option. This was essential to capture any relevant strategies or actions that might not have been adequately covered by the pre-defined response choices, thereby enhancing the validity of the data (Pershing, 2006).

To capture nuanced variations in participant responses for questions measuring the frequency of specific actions, an 11-point scale (0-10) was employed. This scale was selected over traditional Likert scales due to its ability to minimise categorisation effects, improve reliability, capture finer patterns and provide more precise data for statistical analysis such as calculating means and standard deviations (Leung, 2011; Scherpenzeel, 2002). Additionally, as the data was collected through a self-report questionnaire, definite reference points (0 and 10) reduce ambiguity and measurement errors, ensuring the data accurately reflects views.

A five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree) was utilised for questions assessing participants' attitudes and perceptions on the reintegration process phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2019). This format was chosen for its clarity, ease of interpretation, and the inclusion of a neutral midpoint ("neither agree nor disagree") option added clarity and allowed for better gauging of response distributions (Hutchinson, 2021). Using ordinal data then allowed for calculations such as modes and percentages, allowing comparisons between participants while maintaining the ease of interpretation offered by the Likert format.

3.4.9.2 Open-Text Questions

Open-text questions allow the participants to answer using their own experiences and words, allowing them to express their reasoning and opinions freely (O'Cathain & Thomas, 2004; Oppenheim, 2000; Pershing, 2006). While it was attempted to leave open-text responses to a minimum, it is acknowledged that both questionnaires contained a high number of open-text responses. The inclusion of a high number of open-ended questions was driven by the limited existing research on the reintegration process and the desire to capture a wide range of insights. The use of open-ended questions also allowed the uncovering of new aspects or unforeseen topics not covered, which could potentially avoid bias that may occur from option selection in closed questions (Reja et al., 2003). To alleviate the potential drawbacks of utilising many open-text responses, the questionnaire went through a three-stage pilot process where adjustments were made to ensure that the open-ended questions were left to a minimum and were straightforward to answer. Questions were also made optional so if

the participant did not want to answer the question due to time constraints or feeling uncomfortable, did not feel the pressure to do so (Reja et al., 2003).

3.4.9.3 Alignment with Research Questions

The design of both the closed-ended and open-ended questions was explicitly aligned with the overarching research questions. This ensured that the data collected would directly address the research objectives and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the reintegration process. For example, in the school staff questionnaire, a closed question with responses 'yes', 'No, or 'Not sure' was utilised to find out whether a meeting was part of the reintegration process. An open-text question was utilised to collect the school staff participants' views on the importance of reintegration meetings. Both questions were asked to find out what the reintegration process consisted of and the rationale behind what occurred. See Appendix 2 for the design explanation for each question.

3.4.9.4 Inclusion of Additional Questions in the Questionnaire

It was important to consider the disciplinary measures schools used other than suspensions and which measures they utilised the most; hence, schools and EPs were asked to indicate the most frequent disciplinary methods utilised by their schools. Understanding these disciplinary practices is crucial as a school's reliance on alternative disciplinary measures, such as internal exclusions, could lead to low suspension figures while concealing whether their reintegration process is truly impactful. Additionally, schools with higher suspension rates that do not utilise additional disciplinary methods could have systems in place that address the barriers they are facing. Therefore, understanding factors beyond mere suspension figures is crucial for evaluating reintegration practices. Schools were also asked whether they carried out a reintegration process for students when they were directed off-site or internally excluded. These questions were asked to provide an overall view of a school's reintegration process. These will be further explored in the discussion section.

3.4.10 Questionnaire Pilot Study

A rigorous pilot testing process was undertaken to ensure the questionnaires were robust and aligned with the research questions. This process focused on assessing

content validity, face validity, reliability, question clarity, and the absence of bias (Del Greco, Walop, & McCarthy, 1987; Oppenheim, 2000). Given the inclusion of open-text responses, a particular emphasis was placed on ensuring question accessibility and ease of completion (Reja et al., 2003).

To address the aforementioned points, the questionnaire pilot involved three stages for each questionnaire. The first stage involved three reviewers to ensure the questions made sense, were understood in the same way and were easy to follow. The second stage was to ensure that the questionnaires linked back to the research questions and were concise, and this was conducted by the thesis supervisors. For the secondary staff questionnaire, the third phase was conducted by three former secondary school staff colleagues and three EP professionals (including trainees), who reviewed the respective questionnaires for clarity, relevance, and potential misunderstandings (see Appendix 3).

Following the amendments made, the review function on Qualtrics was used to ensure that the layout and formatting of the questionnaires were also suitable for mobile phones. This led to the text box response sizes being increased so that participants could see what they were typing. Following this, the questionnaire link was sent to colleagues to ensure it worked, check the information and consent pages, and check for any spelling or grammatical errors.

3.4.11 Use of Secondary Data: Exclusion (Suspension and Permanent) Figures

While the primary research collected via the school staff and EP questionnaires focuses on the reintegration process for suspended students in secondary mainstream schools, exclusion data provided by the LAs was utilised as it provided an up-to-date and more in-depth view of the current situation in Bi-borough Londonia. Notably, the data itself did not directly answer the research questions, but it was used to facilitate the study in the following ways:

- **Provided recent context:** Obtaining the latest exclusion figures from the LAs provided a timely snapshot of exclusion trends in Londonia; this supplemented

the DfE's delayed reporting (the latest data available from the DfE was Spring 2022/2023).

- **Identified potential trends:** Analysing exclusion data revealed patterns related to school variations and student demographics. These patterns allowed the data to be compared to qualitative insights gained from the questionnaires. For example, examining any differences highlighted with school staff participants when supporting suspended students with SEN during the reintegration process.
- **Supported/challenged findings:** Exclusion figures were used to confirm or question perceptions about the reintegration processes shared by school staff participants, which were used to support the research's overall conclusions.
- **Generated future research possibilities:** Unexpected trends in the exclusion data were used to identify further exploration of factors impacting the reintegration process.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis approach will be discussed in the following section. This study utilised data from three sources, including perspectives from two distinct participant groups. The data for each questionnaire was analysed separately to respect these unique perspectives and the inherent differences between qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data from the questionnaires provided measurement data for comparison (e.g., the number of schools with reintegration policies). Qualitative data was analysed to provide deeper meaning and understanding of reintegration practices (Loomis & Maxwell, 2003). The exclusion data, purely quantitative, offered valuable context by highlighting current suspension patterns in the study area. A detailed explanation of the specific analysis methods used for each data type, along with how these data sources are integrated to address the research questions, follows.

3.5.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

To analyse the quantitative data, two software programs were used:

- **IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences):** IBM SPSS (Version 29) was used to calculate descriptive statistics. In the school staff and EP questionnaire, the questions utilised different response types, and the analysis

techniques used were dependent on the type of question. For questions capturing rater scores on a continuous scale, the mean, was calculated to obtain the average score. The median was calculated as it is not skewed by extreme values and the mode was reported as it provided the most frequent score. The standard deviation was also calculated to assess the variability in scores. Additionally, the range was calculated to assess the spread of scores. For questions with Likert scale responses, percentages for each response category was calculated to understand the distribution of opinions. The mode was also identified to pinpoint the most frequent response. For the exclusion figure data, which represented counts, the percentage of exclusions, the mean number of exclusions was calculated, and the standard deviation to gauge the variability in exclusion rates. These statistics enabled the summarising and comparing of data sets like rater scores provided by participants and exclusion figures.

- **Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet Editor:** Excel (Office 365) was used in a complementary fashion to visualise the quantitative findings. This enabled the creation of graphs and tables, which provided clear visual representations to support explaining and comparing findings.

3.5.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data was produced from the open-text responses gained from the questionnaires. The aim of qualitative approaches is to gain a better understanding from those experiencing the phenomenon (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Thematic Analysis (TA) and Qualitative Content analysis (QCA) are common approaches for analysing qualitative data. They have been known to be used interchangeably in research due to the lack of distinct clarity between them (Vaismoradi et al., 2013).

Careful consideration was given to whether the participants' open-text responses should be analysed using QCA or TA. The open-text responses from participants varied considerably, with some responses being very detailed and others consisting of a few words. To answer the research questions, it was important to gain a perspective of common themes shared among participants and to highlight factors that were

addressed the most among all responses provided to examine a topic that had limited research.

3.5.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

QCA was chosen because it is a practical approach to determining the presence of themes/codes within the data while also being able to quantify the themes/codes (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). A cited drawback to content analysis is that the quantifying of themes is what is used to define the significance of the findings implying that meanings can sometimes be lost or missed (Morgan, 1993). Nevertheless, because the intention of this study was to gain insight into what secondary schools did to reintegrate suspended students, there was interest in common views and inconsistencies. Due to the flexibility of QCA it meant that content analysis could be used in a more interpretative rather than just quantifying words (Devi Prasad, 2019). Furthermore, the use of QCA enabled intercoder reliability checks to ensure that the data analysis was consistent and accurate (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002).

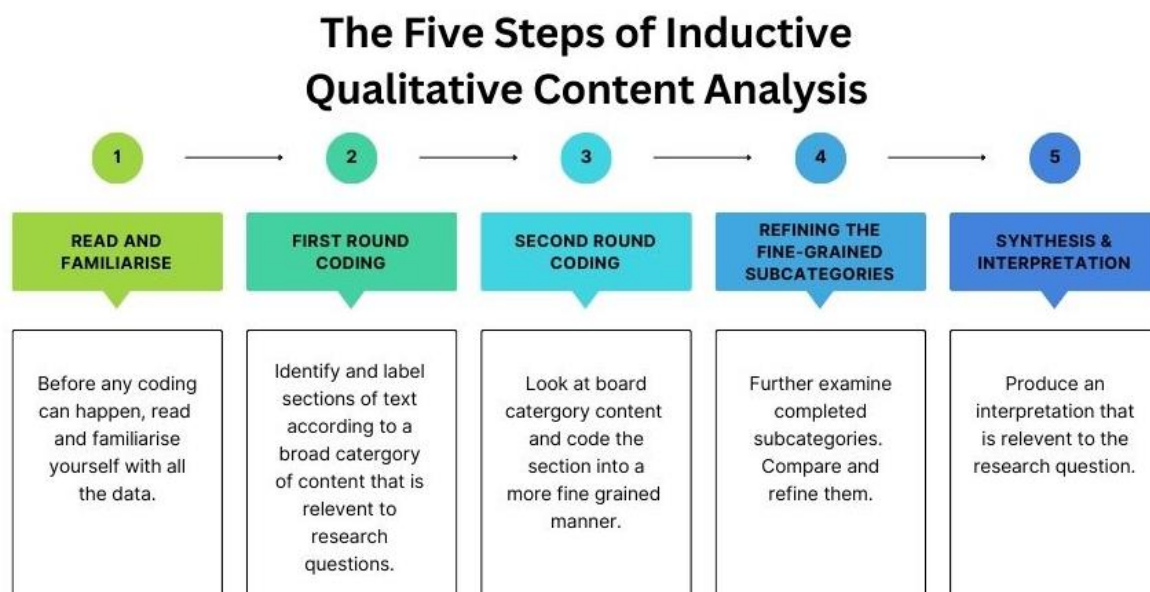


Figure 2. Five Steps of Inductive QCA, adapted from Vears and Gillam (2022)

An inductive approach was taken to analyse the data, which meant the codes/themes used to assign the data were created from the participant responses to the open-text questions (Vears & Gillam, 2022). Taking an inductive approach meant that the data was fully explored, and the codes were adapted through the process to generate

themes that truly represented the data (Sousa, 2014; Vears & Gillam, 2022). Vears and Gillam (2022) describe a five-step process for inductive QCA, which was followed to ensure that the data analysis was consistent and systematic (see Figure 2). Vears and Gillam (2022, p. 113) stress that the inductive approach to QCA is 'iterative', meaning that coding is conducted several times to ensure codes are not missed.

The five steps were conducted as follows:

1. **Read and Familiarise:** The open-text responses to each question were read several times to gain understanding and familiarity with the responses.
2. **First Round Coding:** Responses were divided into overarching categories before the data was coded. Vears and Gillam (2022, p. 117) describe this as organising the data in 'big picture terms.' For example, the text response answers from EP participants on the barriers of reintegration for suspended students were divided into three categories: School System Barriers, Student Level Barriers and Resources and Capacity Limitations (see Appendix 4).
3. **Second-Round Coding:** This step involved creating the codes. This comprised of dividing the categories into subcategories (codes). For example, the category 'Resources and Capacity Limitations' was further divided into the subcategories 'Demands and Pressure, ' Impact on Staff, and Resources (see Appendix 5).
4. **Refining the fine-grained subcategories:** Here, the subcategories were re-examined and refined. This involved collapsing together some codes if necessary. This process was repeated to ensure that codes explained the text they were assigned to accurately (see Appendix 6).
5. **Synthesis and Interpretation:** Finally, the data analysis is interpreted in relation to the research question. See the results section for the completed QCA results table.

3.5.3 Integration of Exclusion Data and Questionnaire Results

Data integration involves combining different data from diverse sources to create a unified perspective that addresses a specific research question (Lenzerini, 2002). This is a complex task and means that data integration needs to be purposely planned for, and therefore, the researcher needs to have a meaningful plan of when it should

happen (Clark, 2019). Each component used to collect data was analysed separately: the results from the EP questionnaire, the school staff questionnaire, and the exclusion data. The quantitative and qualitative questions within the questionnaires were also analysed separately and then integrated at the interpretation stage to answer the research questions. There were items that were replicated (n=8) on both questionnaires and they were initially analysed separately to preserve the distinct views of the school staff and EPs. They were later integrated at the results stage to draw on similarities and differences. Following the separate analysis of the data, the results were examined for patterns, similarities, and inconsistencies. For example, the exclusion data was used to examine the school staff responses to highlight any patterns in staff responses and their suspension rates. Opinions of school staff and EPs were also compared and used to answer the research questions to provide different perspectives.

3.6 Research Integrity

Research integrity is viewed differently in the fields of qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research assesses the overall quality by how the data collected is reflected in the findings and the consistency of the data collection (Noble & Smith, 2015). Whereas qualitative research has no universally accepted criteria and values, experiences and reflections (Noble & Smith, 2015). As this study incorporated qualitative and quantitative data, it considered both perspectives.

During the development of the questionnaires, there was a rigorous piloting stage where the questions were checked by colleagues and supervisors to ensure reliability (it produced the intended results) and validity (answering the research questions) (de Sá-Caputo, Souza, Bachur, & Bernardo-Filho, 2020).

The questionnaire data was collected using Qualtrics and downloaded to Microsoft Excel. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS and Excel. Incomplete responses were excluded from the final analysis.

3.6.1 Intercoder Reliability (ICR)

In order to preserve and improve the analysis of qualitative data, intercoder reliability (ICR) measures were introduced to ensure the robustness of the coding stage

(O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). The primary objective of introducing ICR was to decrease the chance of bias from the researcher (Burla et al., 2008).

The following process was followed:

1. The coding of the participant responses for each question was an iterative process that involved the responses being read and refined several times (Vears & Gillam, 2022) (see figure 1).
2. The initial coding scheme and process were discussed in supervision sessions between the researcher and two other colleagues not involved in the study. Amendments following discussions were then made where necessary.
3. Based on the amended coding schemes, all responses were coded independently by the researcher.
4. A 30% sample from each open-text question was then randomly selected and sent to a colleague who coded the responses independently. The coding of each open-text response from the samples was compared, and any discrepancies between the researcher and the other coder were discussed in research supervision sessions where ICR measures using Cohen's Kappa Coefficient (Cohen, 1960) and Holsti (1969) Index of percentage agreement were then undertaken to assess the robustness of the coding frame.
5. Categories and codes were discussed, and the use of ICR encouraged meaningful discussions where consistency of coding was adhered to (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Furthermore, the use of ICR encouraged reflexivity, which enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the data (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Any disagreements on the coding resulted in meaningful discussions and refinements made to the codes (see Appendix 7).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study was designed and conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's code of ethics and conduct (BPS, 2021). Ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at UCL, Institute of Education, was obtained on 04.12.2023 before the study

took place (see Appendix 8). Participants were informed of the ethical considerations with their consent forms (see Appendix 9).

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the exact details of the LAs and the number of the schools and EPs were not shared so that the anonymity of the schools and the EPS were not compromised. The number of schools that met the criteria to participate in the study was shared instead. Some schools were hesitant to participate in the study; it was important to ensure that confidentiality and their identity were not compromised.

4 Results

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents the research results, which were derived from the exclusion figures sourced from the boroughs and questionnaire data collected from school staff and educational psychologists (EPs). Qualitative and quantitative data were analysed from the questionnaire responses, and quantitative data was examined from the exclusion figures.

This chapter commences with descriptive statistics, where it examines the exclusion and suspension figures from Londonia. It then presents the demographic data from the EP and school staff questionnaire participants. Results from the reliability checks conducted on the qualitative data coding are then shared, followed by the questionnaire results presented so that they directly address the three research questions:

- In secondary schools, what steps are taken, and who is involved when reintegrating suspended students back into school?
- What factors contribute to an effective reintegration of a suspended student?
- What are the challenges that secondary schools face when reintegrating suspended students back into school?

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Schools that were Invited to Participate in the Questionnaire

Following the removal of schools that were not mainstream and did not conduct any suspensions, twenty schools were invited to participate across the two Local Authorities (LAs). It is worth noting that six of the twenty schools (30%) do not engage EP services from the LAs. Overall, nine out of twenty schools participated in the questionnaire, equating to a response rate of 45%. For anonymity, each school was randomly allocated a letter to be referred to when reporting findings.

4.2.2 The Prevalence of Exclusions in Bi-Borough Londonia

The autumn exclusion data for 2023 shows that there was a total of 479 exclusions² (Mean = 23.95, SD = 26.92) where 319 students (Mean = 15.95, SD = 15.38) were excluded; this suggests that some students received multiple suspensions over the autumn term. The total number of days of exclusions over the autumn term was 994 (Mean = 49.70, SD = 62.40), suggesting that, on average, the length of suspension was approximately two days. Notably, the exclusion figures by frequency, number of students, and days have high standard deviations, which are close to or exceed their respective means. This suggests a large spread of data points around the mean, indicating a significant variation between the schools. To maintain anonymity, exact exclusion figures were not reported.

Table 3. Exclusion figures for the sample school populations (N=20) that were invited to participate in the questionnaire³.

School Code	School Staff Participated in the Study	Number of Responses from Each School	EP Working with Schools that Participated in the Study	Number of Students Excluded in Autumn Term 2023	Number of Exclusions in Autumn Term 2023	The change in the Number of Exclusions from Autumn 2022
B	Yes	3	Yes	1-10	1-14	↑
O*	No	0	NA	1-10	1-14	–
D	Yes	1	Yes	1-10	1-14	↓
H	Yes	1	Yes	1-10	1-14	↓
S	No	0	Yes	1-10	1-14	–
A	Yes	1	Yes	1-10	1-14	↓
F*	Yes	1	NA	1-10	1-14	↓
Q	No	0	Yes	1-10	1-14	↓
W*	No	0	NA	1-10	1-14	↓
C	Yes	5	No	11-20	15-40	↓
P*	No	0	NA	11-20	15-40	↑
K*	Yes	1	NA	11-20	15-40	↑
N	No	0	Yes	11-20	15-40	↓

² This includes suspensions and permanent exclusions.

³ Exclusion figures were expressed in ranges rather than precise values to avoid compromising the identity of the schools. For example, if the exclusion figure were 7, this would be expressed by the range '1-10'.

Z*	No	0	NA	11-20	15-40	↑
L	No	0	Yes	11-20	15-40	↑
J	No	0	Yes	11-20	15-40	↓
R	No	0	Yes	11-20	15-40	↓
E	Yes	1	Yes	>20	>40	↑
I	Yes	1	Yes	>20	>40	↑
M	No	0	Yes	>20	>40	↑
		15		319	479	137

Total Schools	Number of Schools that Participated (%)	Mean (SD)	
20	9 (45%)	15.95 (15.38)	23.95 (26.92)

* LA EPs do not work with the school

School B had the lowest number of exclusions, and the school with the highest number of exclusions was School M, with a large variability between schools. Overall, there has been an increase in exclusions from the previous autumn (2022). While ten schools have lowered their exclusion figures from the previous autumn, two have remained the same, and eight have risen (see Table 3).

4.2.3 Suspensions

There were 469 suspensions during the autumn term of 2023, 310 males (66%) and 159 (34%) females. ‘Persistent disruptive behaviour’ (PDB) was attributed to 151 (32%) of the suspensions. 136 (29%) of suspensions were due to physical assault, and 23% were due to verbal abuse. The year group with the highest suspensions was year 10 (31%), and the lowest was year 7 (11%).

4.2.3.1 Students with SEN (including EHCPs)

Government exclusion figures for England indicate that students with SEN, particularly those categorised as having Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs (SEMH), are more likely to be suspended than their peers without SEN.

Table 4. Breakdown of suspensions in Bi-borough Londonia by SEN (N = 469)

Additional Need	Frequency	Percentage
Cognition & Learning (C&L)	47	10.0%
EHCP C&L	25	5.3%
Social Communication (SC)	22	4.7%
EHCP SC	5	1.1%
SEMH	78	16.6%
EHCP SEMH	31	6.6%
Sensory and Physical/Medi	1	0.2%
No Additional Needs	260	55.4%
Total	469	100%

The suspension figures suggest that secondary school students with SEN are being disproportionately suspended, as they account for nearly 45% (209) of the suspensions. The highest number of suspensions for students with SEN were categorised as SEMH (109, 23.2%) which is in keeping with the exclusion trend in England. 61(13%) of suspended students had an EHCP (see Table 4).

4.2.3.2 Students from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Government exclusion figures for England indicate that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately excluded compared to their peers from non-disadvantaged backgrounds. To provide additional support for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, the government provides schools with a grant to support schools to address the unique needs of these students; this is known as a Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) or Pupil Premium (PP). PPG eligibility is determined by: current Free School Meal (FSM) status, FSM eligibility within the past six years, or a history of being in care (DfE, 2024). Londonia's suspension figures indicate that students receiving the PPG are being disproportionately suspended compared to their peers who are not receiving the PPG. 241(51%) of the suspensions involved students identified as PP. Suspension figures from eight of the schools (40%) indicated that over 55% of suspensions were of PP students.

4.2.3.3 Multiple Suspensions

Thirty-five students across Londonia were suspended from school three or more times (Mean = 3.89, SD = 3.59). Nine out of the twenty schools (45%) had suspended students

on three or more occasions, accounting for 131 of the 469 suspensions (28%). The highest number of suspensions issued to one student was nine. The highest number of students to receive three or more suspensions from school was twelve.

4.2.3.4 Summary of Autumn 2023 Exclusion Data for Bi-borough Londonia

Thirty percent of the total exclusions resulted from students being suspended three or more times, implying that the reintegration process was not effective for all students. Notably, the data for students excluded twice was not supplied, which indicates that the prevalence of multiple suspensions may be much higher.

This section examined the exclusion data of secondary mainstream schools across Londonia in autumn 2023. The following section will provide the demographics of the school staff and EPs who participated in the questionnaire.

4.2.4 School Staff Questionnaire Participants

The questionnaire was completed by fifteen school staff members from nine schools in Londonia. Twelve (80%) participants were in schools working with an EP.

Table 5. Demographics for the sample staff population are displayed by role, school type, and whether they are working with an LA EP (N = 15).

		Total responses (%)	Individual school (%)
Role	SENCO	4 (27%)	
	HoY	4 (27%)	
	SLT	5 (33%)	
	Pastoral	2 (13%)	
School Type	Co-education	9 (60%)	7 (78%)
	Single Sex	6 (40%)	2 (22%)
Working with LA EPs	Yes	12 (80%)	7 (78%)
	No	3 (20%)	2 (22%)

A third of the participants were senior leaders (N = 5), closely followed by 27% SENCOs (N = 4) and 27% Heads of Year (N = 4)). Pastoral team participants accounted for 13% (N = 2). Seven of the schools that participated had an LA EP they worked with (see Table 5).

Seven participants (47%) had been at their schools for at least three years, six staff participants (40%) had worked at their school for over ten years and two had worked there for under a year (13%).

4.2.5 EP Questionnaire Participants

Twenty-one Educational Psychologists, including Trainee Educational psychologists (TEP, N = 3), participated in the EP questionnaire across Londonia which was over an 80% participation rate. TEPs that participated in the research were in either their second or third year of training. The exact participation rate was not given so that the anonymity of the boroughs, the schools, and the EPs would not be compromised.

Table 6. Demographics for the sample EP population who participated in the questionnaire (N = 21).

		Frequency	
EP Role	TEP	3	14%
	EP	13	62%
	Senior	5	24%
	All	21	100%
EPs Working in Secondaries	No	12	57%
	Yes	9	43%
	All	21	100%

Sixty-two percent of the participants were main-scale EPs. Nine of the EPs (43%) were directly working with at least one secondary school this year (see Table 6). The length of time EPs had worked with their secondary ranged from one year to over seven years.

4.2.6 Disciplinary Measures Utilised by Schools

School staff and EPs were asked about the disciplinary measures used at their schools. All schools used suspensions, internal exclusions, and offsite student direction. All 15 school staff reported that internal exclusion was the most used practice at their schools.

School staff were asked whether they carried out the same suspension reintegration process for students who had been directed off-site. 14 school staff reported 'No', and one reported 'Sometimes'. School staff were also asked whether they carried out the same suspension reintegration process for students who had been internally excluded. All school staff reported 'No'.

4.2.7 Reliability Checks

To ensure inter-coder reliability, a sample of 30% of the text responses were randomly selected and coded by another coder using the developed coding frame. Holsti's reliability index reference (1969) was calculated for each group of responses from each question, with a score of 0.86 and above level of agreement. Additionally, Cohen's Kappa was calculated using SPSS. All values ranged from 0.71 to 1.00 ($p < .001$), which suggests a moderate to almost perfect level of agreement between raters (McHugh, 2012) (see Appendix 10).

4.2.8 Research Question One: What Steps are Taken in Secondary Schools, and Who is Involved when Reintegrating Suspended Students Back into School?

4.2.8.1 Do Schools Have a Formal Reintegration Policy for Suspensions?

All fifteen school staff participants responded to this question. Staff participants in the same school responded with the same answer. This allowed the results to be reported by school.

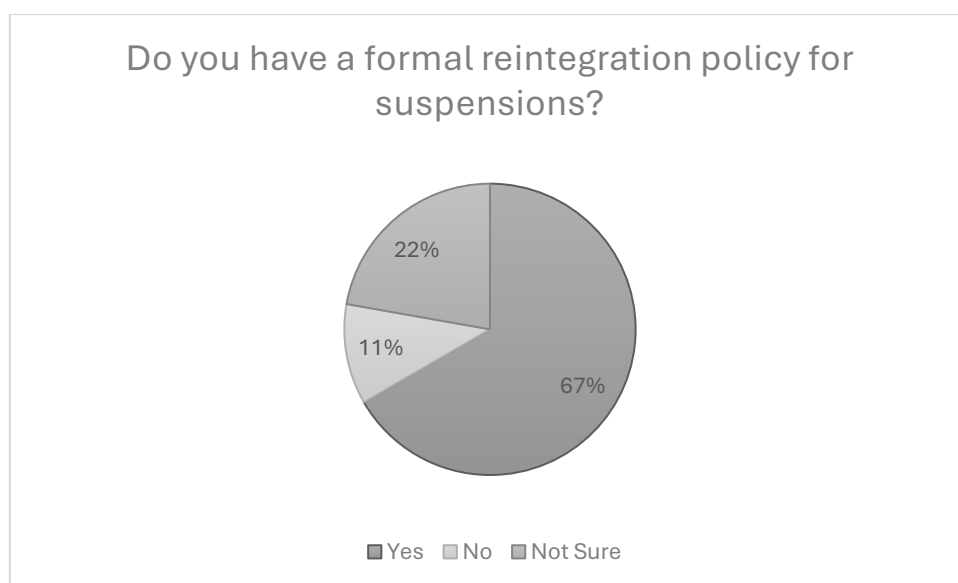


Figure 3. Responses by schools on whether they have a formal reintegration policy (N = 9).

The results by school indicated that six schools had a formal reintegration policy (67%) (see Figure 3). The one participant who was unsure of whether their school had a formal reintegration policy was a head of year (HOY).

4.2.8.2 The Conduction of Reintegration Meetings and Who Is Involved

All School participants (N = 15) reported that meetings were part of their reintegration process for suspensions. While all School participants reported that reintegration meetings were conducted face-to-face, four of the participants commented that sometimes the meetings had to be conducted by telephone or virtually when parents declined to attend. One senior leader participant shared that under the current guidance, parents/carers were not required to attend the meetings. A SENCo participant reported that they were unsure whether some of the reintegration meetings were held virtually.

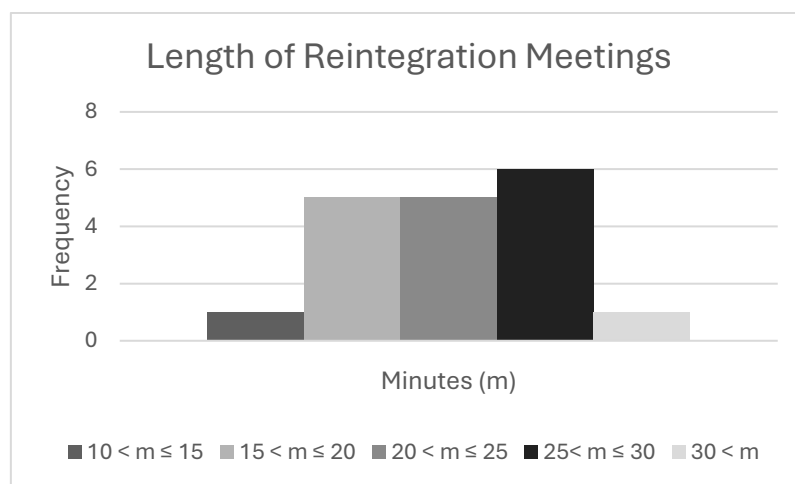


Figure 4. A histogram representing the duration of reintegration meetings in minutes reported by School participants (N = 15)

School staff participants were asked to estimate the duration of their reintegration meetings. Two schools had multiple participants. School C had five participants, two of whom reported 20 minutes, two reported 25 minutes, and one reported 30 minutes. School B had three school staff participants, who all had the same role. Their responses were much more varied: 14 minutes, 20 minutes, and 30 minutes indicating variability not only within the school but also with the same role. The other nine responses gave varying responses, which included '30 to 90 minutes, 15 to 30 minutes and 15 minutes. Two school staff participants commented that the meeting length depended on the complexity of the cases. School A reported that reintegration

meetings could take anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. The average time school staff spent in reintegration meetings was estimated to be between 25 and 30 minutes. This was calculated using the mode, as this was the time with the highest frequency (N = 6) (see Figure 4).

School participants were asked to select who typically attended a reintegration meeting and how many school staff members participated in the meeting. All 15 school staff participants reported that at least the 'Student,' 'Parent/carer,' and 'Senior Leader' attended the meeting. Three School participants (20%) reported that the HOY would also attend. No School participants reported that pastoral staff would typically attend a reintegration meeting. Ten (67%) School staff participants reported that two members of staff would attend the meeting, and four (27%) said three. One school staff participant reported that more than three school members would attend the meeting.

4.2.8.3 Reintegration Meeting Practices

School participants (N = 15) were asked 14 questions regarding their reintegration meeting practices, using a scale from 0 ("Never") to 10 ("Always") (See Table 7). To maintain anonymity, staff participant roles were not reported with results.

All participants indicated that the reason for the suspension was always clearly communicated to students during reintegration meetings (Mean = 10, SD = 0). High ratings (8 and above) were consistently given regarding staff awareness of:

- Students' special educational needs (SEN) (Mean = 9.67, SD = 0.62)
- Students' other characteristics, such as free school meal (FSM) eligibility (Mean = 9.53, SD = 0.74)
- Students' family context (Mean = 9.27, SD = 0.96)

These results indicate a high degree of agreement among participants that staff attending reintegration meetings are well-informed about the student's background, family context, and additional needs and that the reason for suspension is effectively communicated.

The lowest-rated question addressed the issue of whether reintegration meetings were held if parents/carers could not attend (Mean = 4.07, SD = 3.81). This question also had the highest standard deviation and a median of 5, suggesting variability in practice.

These findings indicate that reintegration meetings are not consistently conducted when parents/carers are unable to attend. This contrasts sharply with the high ratings (Mean = 9.33, SD = 0.98) given to the question of whether a reintegration meeting was conducted for every suspension, where 12 participants gave ratings of '9' or above. This inconsistency highlights a potential disparity in the reintegration support offered to students, depending on parental/carer availability for meetings.

The three participants with the lowest average ratings for their schools' reintegration practices were from School E (Mean = 6.86), School C (Mean = 7.36), and School I (Mean = 7.64). Participants from Schools E and I gave particularly low ratings (5s and 6s) to questions regarding whether suspended students were explicitly welcomed back and made to feel valued during reintegration meetings. Additionally, School E rated the focus on students' strengths during reintegration meetings as very low (2), while School I gave this aspect a rating of '6'.

Rater inconsistencies were evident within the same schools. For instance, responses to the question regarding reintegration meetings being conducted in the absence of parents/carers varied considerably within School B (5, 7, and 10), where all participants had the same role. Furthermore, within School C, even school staff with the same roles did not provide consistent ratings for whether targets were set during reintegration meetings (4, 6, 10, 10, and 10). These inconsistencies may highlight the potential for both subjective interpretations of reintegration meeting practices and variation in the actual implementation of these practices within schools.

Table 7. Ratings on school reintegration meetings from the sample of school participants (N = 15). The lower the shade, the lower the rating.

School Code	Is a meeting conducted for every suspended student returning to school?	Is there always a staff member present at the reintegration meeting who knows the student well?	In the reintegration meeting are targets set for the student?	Are staff conducting the reintegration meeting always aware of the student's SEN needs?	Are staff conducting the Reintegration Meeting always aware of the students' Data (e.g. FSM, ethnicity) ?	Are staff conducting the meeting aware of the student's family context?	During the meeting, is the student allocated a key member of staff they know they can go to for support?	During the meeting, is the reason behind the suspension clearly communicated to the student?	During the meeting, are students asked how they can be supported?	Are the strengths of the students always discussed in the meeting?	Is the suspended student welcomed back to school during the meeting?	Is it explicitly communicated that the student is valued?	When necessary, are other services invited to attend the meeting where it is felt the school may need additional support for the student?	Does the reintegration meeting still take place if parents/carers cannot attend?	Mean Score By Participant
A	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	1	9.36
B	8	10	5	10	10	10	8	10	8	5	7	7	9	5	8.00
B	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	7	8	7	7	7	8.64
B	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10.00
C	9	9	4	9	9	8	1	10	9	9	9	8	8	1	7.36
C	10	10	6	10	10	10	10	10	8	10	10	10	8	0	8.71
C	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	3	0	8.71
C	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	3	0	8.79
C	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	0	9.29
F	10	10	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	5	9.43
K	8	7	10	9	9	8	10	10	10	8	10	9	9	10	9.07
D	7	7	5	9	9	8	6	10	7	8	10	9	8	8	7.93
E	9	10	5	8	8	8	7	10	10	2	5	5	8	1	6.86
H	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	8	8	8	7	7	9.00
I	9	10	10	10	8	8	5	10	6	6	6	6	7	6	7.64
Descriptive Statistics Per Question	Mean	9.33	9.53	8.20	9.67	9.53	9.27	8.27	10.00	8.93	8.20	8.87	8.53	7.80	4.07
	Median	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	9.00	10.00	9.00	8.00	5.00
	Mode	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	8.00	0.00
	Std.	0.98	1.06	2.43	0.62	0.74	0.96	2.66	0.00	1.33	2.37	1.68	1.64	2.24	3.81
	Range	3.00	3.00	6.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00	0.00	4.00	8.00	5.00	5.00	7.00	10.00
	Minimum	7.00	7.00	4.00	8.00	8.00	8.00	1.00	10.00	6.00	2.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	0.00
	Maximum	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

4.2.8.4 School Staff Reflections on Reintegration Meeting Practices

Content analysis was used to explore the school staff participant responses from the open-text questions on what was thought to be the importance of reintegration meetings and what was perceived to be the strengths of their school’s reintegration meetings.

The Importance of Reintegration Meetings

Thirteen out of 15 school staff participants (87%) responded to the question regarding the importance of reintegration meetings. Their responses fell into two main categories: "Addressing the Past" and "Planning for the Future."

Table 8. Responses from the sample school staff participants on the importance of reintegration meetings (N = 13)

Category	Subcategory	Code Description	Example Response	Frequency of Code (n)
Addressing the Past (44%)	Discussing Concerns	To raise any concerns that the students /family or school may have.	"To discuss any issues."	3
	Setting Expectations	To set school expectations. To ensure the student understands the school rules.	"Reestablishing expected conduct and values that need to be demonstrated and exhibited by students."	4
	Discussing Suspension & Reasons	Discussing why the suspension happened. Ensuring that the student understands what they have done wrong.	"Making sure students understand what they have done wrong and making sure they take ownership of what happened."	8
Planning for the Future (56%)	Fostering a Sense of Belonging	Letting the student know that they are valued even though they	"Help pupil feel valued...Welcome back"	1

	have been suspended.		
Setting Targets	To set targets	"...and to set targets."	3
Avoiding Reoffending	Planning/discussing to support student from reoffending.	"Making a plan to prevent this reoccurring. "	3
Moving Forward	Making a fresh start, looking to the future and not the past.	"Making a fresh start and to move on from the incidents that resulted in the suspension."	4
Restoring Relationships	The school Ensures that the relationship with the student and home is restored or created.	" Opportunity for school, student, and family to work closely and build relationships/ act restoratively."	4
Providing Support Strategies/Adjustments	Ensuring that the student has the correct support to succeed.	"Discuss any necessary actions that may be required to help the student make any necessary adjustments to behaviour etc."	5
			Total
			34

Addressing the Past: Involved responses around discussing why the suspension occurred, setting expectations, and discussing concerns.

Planning for the Future: Involved responses around providing students with support/strategies, moving forward, setting targets, restoring relationships, and fostering a sense of belonging.

While the responses covered various aspects of reintegration advice from the DfE (2023). No single response encompassed all the recommendations. The most frequently mentioned reason for holding a reintegration meeting was to discuss the suspension incident itself (mentioned in 8 out of 13 responses, 62%). Notably, only one participant (8%) mentioned fostering a sense of belonging (see Table 8).

Perceived Strengths of Reintegration Meetings

Staff participants were asked to comment on the strengths of their reintegration meetings and suggest improvements. Twelve participants (80%) provided comments on strengths, while 11 (73%) offered suggestions for improvement.

Table 9. Frequencies of participant responses relating to the strengths of their reintegration meetings. (N = 12)

Category	Subcategory	Code Description	Example Response	Frequency of Code (n)
Student Focused (85%)	Individual Approach	Tailoring the reintegration meeting to the needs of the students.	'The appropriate staff for the individual student are chosen, it will be tailored to that student.'	4
	Providing Support	Being able to discuss what support is needed to ensure that the student's needs are met.	'Allows all concerned to discuss any necessary support that may be required.'	3
	Home School Discussions	School to meet with home to support the student.	'An opportunity for home and school to discuss how to move forward in a positive way.'	3
	Supportive/Nurturing Approach to Set Expectations	Setting boundaries while ensuring it is supportive and nurturing rather than having an authoritarian approach.	'Clear expectations communicated through a supportive and nurturing approach.'	3
	School Values	School values are incorporated into the meeting.	'Our school values'	2
	Restorative Approach	Having a restorative approach.	'...using a restorative approach...'	1
	Knowing Students Well	Knowing the students.	'We know our pupils well'	1

	Recording Process	Having a structured process.	'Recording process'	1
Process Focused (15%)	Headteacher Involvement	Involvement of Headteacher.	'Headteacher is involved in every reintegration meeting'	1
	Making Referrals	Seeking external support for the student.	'... might refer student to outreach programs...'	1
				Total
				20

The most common strength identified was the use of an individualised approach for each student during the reintegration meeting (n = 4). Other frequently mentioned strengths included providing support to the student, engaging in discussions with the student's family, and utilising supportive and nurturing approaches to set expectations (each mentioned three times). Table 9 provides an overview of the identified subcategories, example responses, frequencies, and overarching categories.

The overarching categories were "Student-Focused" (85% frequency), which encompassed subcategories centred on the student's individual needs, and "Process-Focused," which encompassed subcategories related to the procedures involved in conducting the meeting.

Interestingly, two participants from School C mentioned "school values" as a relevant factor but did not elaborate on how they related to their reintegration meetings.

Improvements to current Reintegration Meetings Practice

School participant responses related to three main categories of improvements to reintegration meeting practices: no improvements needed/unsure, meeting processes, and relational approaches.

Table 10. Frequencies from the sample school staff participant responses relating to the improvements to their reintegration meetings. (N = 11)

Category	Subcategory	Code Description	Example Response	Frequency of Code (n)
No Improvement Needed/Unsure (33%)	No Improvements	Staff feel that there are no improvements to be made to the reintegration process.	“Nothing!”	2
	Unsure	Staff are unsure or do not know what improvements they would make to the process.	“I’m not sure. If we made the meeting too nice.”	2
Meeting Processes (50%)	Information Sharing	Sharing information with key staff to support the student.	“...lag in communication between meetings and sharing with all staff”	2
	Formalising Processes	There would be a set system that staff can follow for reintegrating suspended students.	“This is done in many of them, but it could form part of the framework”	2
	Support Plan	To create a support plan to support the reintegration of the suspended student.	“Placing students on a support plan”	1

	Utilise Approaches Based on Behaviour	The reintegration process is tailored to depend on the cause of the suspension.	“More formal restorative options where behaviours may be considered dangerous...”	1
	Bespoke	An approach tailored to the needs of the students.	“...allow more bespoke reintegration work”	1
Relational Approaches (17%)	Fostering a Sense of School Belonging	Ensuring that the student feels valued and part of the school community.	“Add in the reinforcing how valued they are as part of the community...”	1
				Total
				12

Notably, two school staff with different roles from School C saw no need for improvement. One participant from School C did suggest placing students on a support plan, implying a potential gap in current practices regarding post-suspension support. Additionally, two participants (Schools B and I) recommended formalising certain meeting processes, while two others (Schools A and B) highlighted the need for better information sharing with staff after reintegration meetings (see Table 10).

4.2.8.5 Summary of Reintegration Meeting Findings

School participants consistently reported being aware of students' special educational needs (SEN), other relevant characteristics, and family context during reintegration meetings, and they believed they clearly communicated the reasons for suspension to students. However, findings revealed inconsistencies in reintegration meeting practices across and within schools, particularly regarding meeting duration and the setting of targets. These inconsistencies suggest potential differences in school staff perceptions or implementation of these practices.

A significant finding was that some schools opted not to conduct reintegration meetings without parental/carer attendance, raising concerns about the purpose and effectiveness of these meetings in the absence of key stakeholders.

Content analysis of open-text responses indicated that the most common reason for holding reintegration meetings was to address the reasons behind the suspension. The most frequently identified strength was the use of individualised approaches for students during these meetings. Areas for improvement identified primarily focused on reintegration meeting processes such as improving information sharing and formalising certain processes. Notably, there was a lack of emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging during reintegration meetings, and no single response encompassed all the recommendations provided by the DfE.

4.2.8.6 Communication with Staff Following Reintegration Meetings

School participants (N = 15) were asked to rate, on a scale of 0 ("Never") to 10 ("Always"), with which (a) suspended students' teachers were informed of targets set during reintegration meetings and (b) teachers were informed on how best to support returning students.

The average rating for informing teachers of set targets was 6.47 (SD = 2.56), with seven participants rating this practice 6 or below. This suggests that information sharing about student targets is inconsistent across schools. The lowest ratings were from School C (1) and School E (2). Similarly, the average rating for informing teachers on how best to support returning students was only slightly higher, at 6.73 (SD = 2.46). This indicates that information following a reintegration meeting is not consistently shared with teachers. The lowest ratings were again provided by School C (1) and School E (3). Within-school inconsistencies were evident, particularly at School C, where ratings ranged from '1 to 10' across the two questions. School B also showed some variability, with ratings ranging from '5 to 7.' (See Appendix 11).

4.2.8.7 Methods of Communication Utilised for Information Sharing Following Reintegration Meetings

School staff participants (N=15) were asked to select the methods they used to communicate student support plans and targets discussed in reintegration meetings.

All responded, with some selecting multiple options. Email was the most frequent method (60%, N=9), used exclusively by 20% of participants. Staff meetings and "SEN plans" were each chosen by one-third of the participants (N=5). Notably, information-sharing methods varied within schools, suggesting a lack of formal processes for communicating about the reintegration of suspended students.

4.2.8.8 Additional Steps Taken to Support the Reintegration of the Suspended Student

School participants (N = 15) rated, on a scale of 0 ("Never") to 10 ("Always"), how consistently their schools took specific actions to ensure reintegration extended beyond the initial meeting.

Table 11. Ratings on the steps taken to reintegrate suspended students back into schools from the sample of School participants (N = 15). Darker shades indicate lower ratings.

School Code	Where appropriate, is a 'restore and repair' time between the student and teacher(s) set up?	Does a staff member check in with the student after they return to school?	If targets are set for the student, are they reviewed after a set time frame?	Are parents/carers updated on the student's progress?	Do you involve other agencies if the student is not showing signs of improvement following support plans?	Mean Score by Staff Participant
A	8	10	10	10	10	9.60
B	6	7	6	6	8	6.60
	8	4	3	5	10	6.00
C	7	6	6	5	7	6.20
	10	7	2	3	2	4.80
	10	9	9	10	10	9.60
	10	10	9	10	8	9.40
	8	10	9	10	10	9.40
F	10	10	9	10	10	9.80
	8	10	8	8	10	8.80
K	10	9	7	8	9	8.60
D	8	10	9	8	8	8.60
E	9	5	7	7	9	7.40

	H	I				
	6	6	6	7	7	6.40
	8	8	9	8	8	8.20
Descriptive Statistics Per Question	Mean	8.40	8.07	7.27	7.67	8.40
	Median	8.00	9.00	8.00	8.00	9.00
	Mode	8.00	10.00	9.00	10.00	10.00
	Std. Deviation	1.40	2.09	2.34	2.19	2.10
	Range	4.00	6.00	8.00	7.00	8.00
	Minimum	6.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
	Maximum	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00

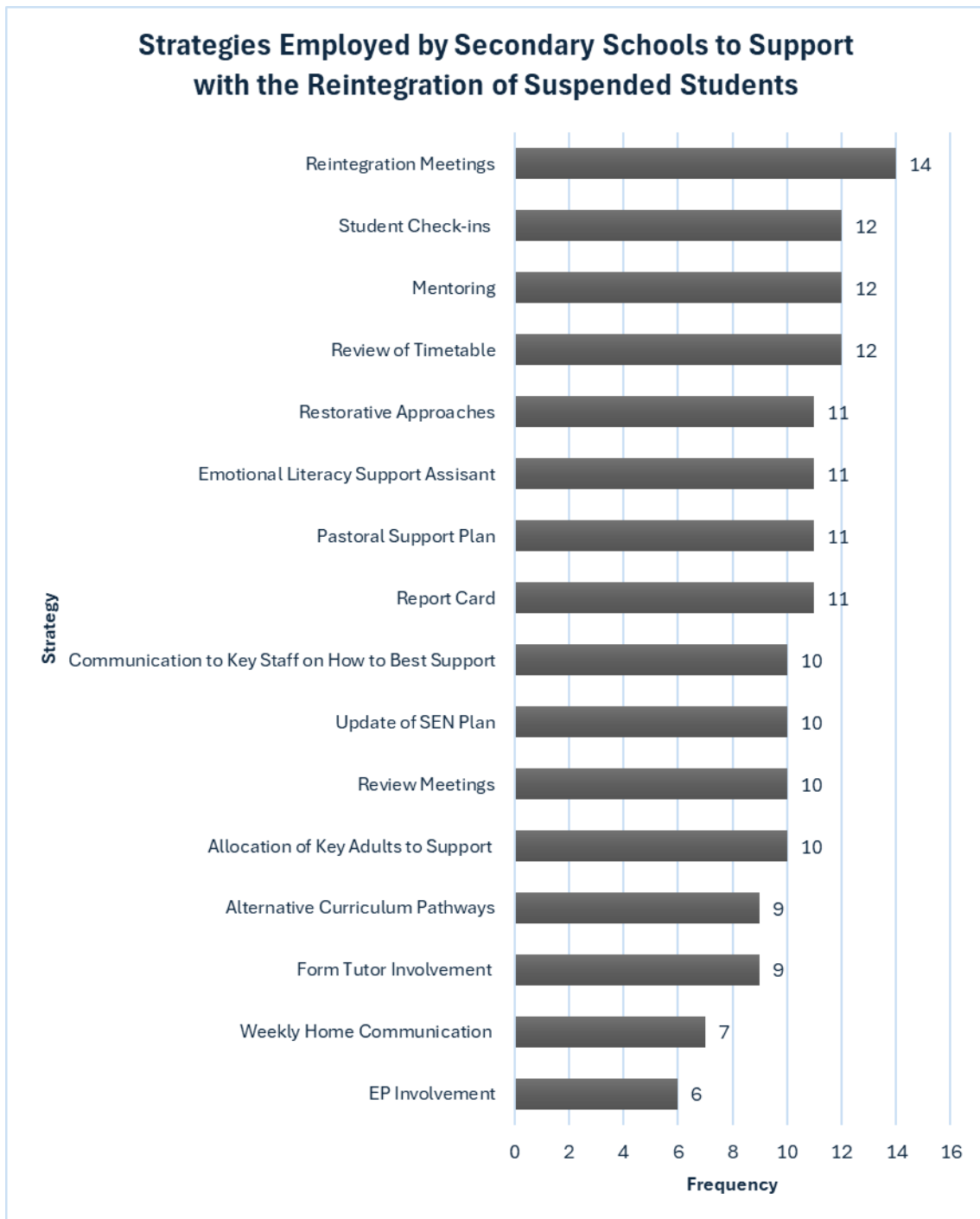
Participants indicated that involving external agencies when students didn't improve and conducting "restore and repair" time between teachers and students were the most consistently implemented practices (Mean = 8.40, SD = 2.10 and 1.40, respectively). However, reviewing set targets after a specific time was less consistently implemented (Mean = 7.27, SD = 2.34) (see Table 11).

Notably, within-school inconsistencies were evident. At School B, all three participants (all with the same role) gave different ratings for 'staff members checking in with suspended once they return to school' (4, 6, and 7). With School C, one participant gave a notably low rating of '2' for 'reviewing targets' compared to colleagues who rated this practice consistently higher (9). This suggests variability in how consistently schools implement reintegration support beyond the initial meeting.

4.2.8.9 Support Strategies Implemented During the Reintegration Process

Fourteen (93%) staff participants reported on strategies used to support student reintegration following suspension.

Figure 5. Frequencies of strategies employed to support the reintegration of suspended students from the sample of School participants (N = 14).



All participants selected "reintegration meetings" as a strategy, with two participants (School B and School C) indicating it as the only strategy used at their schools. The least frequently reported strategy was the involvement of EPs utilised by 43% (6) of participants, with four of these participants coming from School C (see Figure 5).

Additional strategies mentioned by some participants included: daily communication with home (School C), weekly staff meetings to discuss at-risk students (School F), referrals to intervention services (School A), and signed contracts for accountability (School E). The variation in strategies employed within School C (where one participant reported only utilising reintegration meetings, and another reported employing additional strategies) suggests that reintegration practices may not be standardised across staff, potentially leading to inconsistent experiences for students.

4.2.8.10 How EPs have Supported or been Involved with the Reintegration Process of Suspended Students

Of 14 school participant responses, 13 (93%) reported working with an EP. The extent of EP involvement in reintegration varied greatly. Participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 0 ("Never") to 10 ("Always"), how often specific practices involving EPs occurred. Inviting EPs to reintegration meetings was the least common practice, with a mean rating of 2.79 (SD = 2.83), indicating this rarely happened, with only one participant giving a rating over 5 (School B gave a '9'). Seeking EP involvement for students who showed no improvement was inconsistent across and within schools, with a mean rating of 5.71 (SD = 3.07), suggesting this practice occurred sometimes. Working with EPs to reduce exclusions was rated more highly, with an average rating of 6 (SD = 3.09), indicating this was a more common practice, though still with some variability between schools. Notably, participants' ratings within schools and with the same roles showed inconsistencies, suggesting there may be differences in practice based on who is involved with the student. For example, at School B, one participant reported rarely involving EPs in reintegration meetings (rating of 2), while the other reported almost always involving them (rating of 9). Notably, participants from Schools E, H, I and C had the lowest mean scores (see Appendix 12).

4.2.8.11 How EPs Working with Secondary Schools Support with the Reintegration Process for Suspended Students

EP participants specifically working with secondary schools (N = 9) were asked to select the ways they supported the reintegration of suspended students. The most selected option (n = 9) was 'working directly with students.' This was followed by 'home school consultation' (n = 8) and 'Working with a group of staff' (n = 4). EPs were given the

option of including further responses. One EP participant included “*Attending meetings such as annual reviews*” (see Appendix 13).

4.2.9 Research Question One: Summary of Findings

The school staff questionnaire revealed that six (67%) schools reported having a formal reintegration policy, with reintegration meetings being a standard practice for suspensions.

Reintegration meetings were typically conducted face-to-face, although virtual meetings were conducted in some cases when parents/carers could not attend in person. The meetings usually involved two members of school staff, most often a senior leader and the Head of year. Interestingly, pastoral staff were not found to attend the reintegration meetings. A key finding was that school staff participants consistently rated staff attending the reintegration meeting as being knowledgeable about the student's family context (mean = 9.27, SD = 0.96), SEN needs (mean = 9.67, SD = 0.62), student characteristics (Mean = 9.53, SD = 0.74) and also tended to know the student well (mean = 9.53, SD = 1.06). However, there were no findings to suggest how knowing the student's background supported the reintegration process, as this was not referred to in any of the open-text responses.

School staff also felt that the specific reasons for the suspension were always communicated clearly to the student (mean = 10, SD = 0).

A significant finding was that reintegration meetings were not always held when parents/carers could not attend. The mode score rating for holding a reintegration meeting if the parents could not attend was ‘0’ (mean = 4.07, SD = 3.81). Furthermore, there were inconsistencies within the school where one participant had given a rating of ‘10’ (School B). This finding suggests that not all suspended students have a reintegration meeting indicating inconsistent practices.

Setting targets during a reintegration meeting had varied scores across and within schools, suggesting that this practice was not consistently carried out within and across schools. Other significant inconsistent scores within schools were on allocating key staff members to the students, inviting other agencies to the meeting when necessary, and discussing the students' strengths (School B).

Other inconsistencies across schools were with the length of reintegration meetings. One participant reported 14 minutes, and another reported between 30 minutes and 90 minutes, suggesting a large variation between practices.

Schools I and E had the lowest overall mean ratings across the reintegration meeting practices. Both schools had the lowest ratings for welcoming the student back, discussing the student's strengths, and explicitly communicating to the student that they were valued.

Findings regarding the importance of the reintegration meeting found that the most mentioned reason was about discussing why the suspension had occurred. None of the responses encompassed all the DfE recommendations. Strengths that school staff participants believed to be the strengths of their reintegration meeting were mainly focused on the student. When asked about areas of improvement 50% of the responses were around the operation aspects of the meetings.

Most school staff participants reported using e-mail to share information following a reintegration meeting. Findings suggest that schools inconsistently shared targets with teachers, where eight participants gave a rating of 6 or below. Informing teachers of how best to support the student had a slightly higher average but also had inconsistencies between and within the schools. Schools B, C, E and I reported the lowest overall ratings for communicating with teachers following the meeting (5 and below), indicating a lack of communication and possible inconsistencies.

Facilitating "restore and repair" time between teachers and students and involving external agencies when needed were consistently rated highly among school staff participants suggesting it was common practice among schools. However, reviewing student targets was less consistently implemented with notable within-school inconsistencies observed.

Reintegration strategies after suspension varied across schools. All schools used reintegration meetings, with two staff participants reporting that this was the only strategy used. EP involvement was reported as the least common (43%), while other strategies like daily communication with home, weekly staff meetings, referrals to intervention services, and signed contracts were included as additional methods.

Notably, within-school inconsistencies were observed, particularly in School C, suggesting potential disparities within the school.

EP involvement in student reintegration varied significantly among schools. Inviting EPs to reintegration meetings was found to be rare. Seeking EP help for students who did not improve scored higher but was still inconsistent (mean = 5.71). Working with EPs to reduce exclusions was more common (mean = 6) but with notable inconsistencies within schools, suggesting differences in practice depending on the specific individuals involved. Staff from Schools E, H, I and C had the lowest mean scores with EP involvement. When asking EP how they supported the secondary schools they worked with the reintegration process, the most common response was working directly with students.

4.2.10 Research Question Two: What Factors Contribute to the Effective Reintegration of a Suspended Student?

4.2.10.1 Factors Needed to Ensure Strategies Employed in the Reintegration Process are Successful

Content analysis was used to explore the school staff participant responses (N = 8) from the open-text questions on what they thought was vital to ensuring the success of the strategies they implemented to reintegrate suspended students. School participants identified several key factors they believed contributed to the success of their reintegration strategies. Participants (Schools C and F) responded with “Communication.” As they were referring to strategies that they utilised in the previous part of the question, their response suggests effective communication with school staff, home, and the student to ensure these strategies are effective. Two participants from schools A and D responded with “*Consistency*” and “*Continuity*”, with the School A participant adding “*Reviewing of progress with students.*” Parent and student engagement was shared by School E. Providing the ‘pupil with a fresh start’ was shared by School K. Finally, School I participant shared “*HoY/Pastoral overseeing the process*”.

4.2.10.2 Strengths of the Reintegration Process for Suspensions Currently Employed by Schools

Content analysis was used to explore the school staff participant responses (N = 9) regarding the strengths of their school's reintegration processes, which revealed 12 distinct subcategories grouped under four main categories: Operational, Supporting the Individual, Working Collaboratively, and Having a Positive Impact.

The most frequently mentioned strength was 'Target Setting' (Operational), cited by four participants (two from School C). Responses coded as "Providing Opportunity to Talk" and "Supporting Student Needs" (Supporting the Individual) were each mentioned three times. The remaining subcategories were each mentioned once (see Appendix 14).

Illustrative Quotes:

Target Setting: "*We set clear targets*" (School C)

Providing Opportunity to Talk: "*Students are able to voice their upset, and this is discussed*" (School D)

Supporting Student Needs: "*Amendments to student support are made if needed*" (School A)

4.2.10.3 Strengths Needed to Reintegrate Suspended Students Successfully

A content analysis of open-text responses from 19 educational psychologists (EPs) identified several key strengths needed for a successful reintegration process; these were divided into two main categories: School System Level (n = 31) and Staff Level (n = 40).

Table 12. Frequency of responses from the sample EP participants regarding the strengths needed from a school to successfully reintegrate suspended students. (N =19)

Category	Subcategory	Code Explanation	Example Quote	Frequency of Code (n)
School System Level	Embedded Relational Practice	Includes trauma-informed practices and policies	"They need to understand attachment, belonging, trauma-informed practice."	6
	Inclusive School Ethos	Being an Inclusive school.	"Schools that have a strong ethos of inclusion..."	5
	Clear Reintegration Process	Having a clear reintegration policy and procedures in place that can be followed by staff	"Having a clear procedure/ policy for reintegrating students - a short and long-term plan to minimise re-suspension. "	4
	Flexible Approach	Having flexibility in the systems where suspended students can be supported so that their needs are met.	"A thoughtful and flexible approach to considering what reintegration will best look like for individuals."	4
	Increase Staff Capacity	Providing staff to support the suspended students. This includes pastoral staff who can support on an individual level.	"Enough staff to ensure the child/YP has a significant adult/significant group of adults available to offer flexible support when needed."	3
	Restorative Practice	Embedding Restorative Approaches	"They need to have a restorative approach to managing conflict."	3
	Have Resources	Having resources to support the	"An alternative on-site physical space/spaces for those students who routinely disrupt others"	2

		needs of students.		
	Supporting Staff	Staff being supported.	"They need to understand their staff's mental health and be able to support this. "	2
	Training	Providing Training	"Training for staff."	2
				31
	Understanding or Seeking to Understand the Situation	Understanding the situation the student is in. Understanding what caused the suspension. Seek to understand a situation. Be open to change.	"Seek external advice to better understand what is going on for the student ..."	8
	Supportive	Having empathy for the student. Not negatively judging the student and putting aside biases.	"They need to be able to empathise with the student and their situation."	5
	Child Centred	Placing the student at the centre of the reintegration process.	"...YP views in the centre."	4
Staff Level	Knowledgeable	Having the knowledge and understanding to support the students.	"Knowledge and understanding of adolescents "	4
	Work collaboratively	Working collaboratively with others to support the student.	"Collaboration with multi-agencies involved"	4
	Form Good Home School Links	Foster good home-school relationships and communication. Be able to resolve conflict.	"Good communication between family/carers"	4

Value and Build Relationships with Students.	Value, be able to build positive relationships /rapport with students.	"...and time to build relationships with the children to create a sense of belonging."	4
Senior Leaders	having a supportive and strong SLT /Headteacher	"Strong, supportive SLT who have influence"	3
Individual Reintegration Plan	Tailoring the reintegration plan to meet the needs of the student do that it is supportive.	"- A personalised and individualised supportive reintegration plan"	2
Accept Responsibility	Accepting the responsibility that the systems in place have resulted in the student's exclusion.	"A willingness and confidence to accept the part that schools and systems may have played in the situation which arose.	2
			40
Total			71

Under the School-System-Level category, EPs most notably stressed the importance of a supportive school environment. This was emphasised by the frequent mention of the need for embedded relational practices (n = 6; defined as practices used to form and foster school belonging and value relationships), an inclusive school ethos (n = 5), a clear reintegration process (n = 4), and flexible approaches (n = 4). Other factors mentioned included increasing staff capacity to support students (n = 3) and utilising restorative practices (n =3). Additionally, EPs highlighted the importance of supporting staff (n = 2), providing staff training (n = 2), and having resources (n = 2) such as designated areas for the students.

Under the Staff Level category, subcategories emerged from the EP responses that highlighted the importance of relationships and understanding the student's needs and context. The most frequently mentioned subcategory within the EP responses was the need for staff to understand the needs of students and a willingness to learn more (n = 8). EPs also particularly emphasised the need for supportive staff who are empathetic and non-judgmental (n = 5), child-centred approaches (n = 4), knowledgeable staff who

can effectively support their students (n = 4), collaborative efforts to support students (n = 4), fostering positive home-school links (n = 4), and valuing and building relationships with students (n = 4). Other factors mentioned included supportive and strong senior leaders (n = 3), staff accepting responsibility for the role of systems in exclusions (n = 2), and staff tailoring reintegration plans to individual student needs (n = 2) (see Table 12).

4.2.11 Research Question Two: Summary of Findings

The findings for research question two highlight the different views that school staff (emphasising operational factors like communication and consistency) and EP participants (emphasising inclusive and relational approaches at both systemic and individual levels) hold regarding the strengths needed for successfully reintegrating suspended students. When school participants were asked about their reintegration process strengths, the most frequent response was around setting targets (n = 4). Providing students with an opportunity to talk (n = 3) and supporting their needs (n = 3) were also mentioned, aligning more with the EP responses. Notably, the response rate was far higher for the EP participants than the school staff, making direct comparisons challenging. Nevertheless, these differing perspectives highlight a key difference between what EPs and school staff prioritise for successful reintegration. The next section will report on the findings from school staff and EP participants on what they consider to be challenges and barriers with the reintegration process for suspended students.

4.2.12 Research Question Three: What are the Challenges that Secondary Schools Face when Reintegrating Suspended Students Back into School?

4.2.12.1 School Staff and EP Views on Barriers to Successful Student Reintegration.

The factors that school staff and EP participants perceived as possible barriers to the reintegration process of suspended students were explored by asking both sets of participants to answer the same six questions using a five-point agree/disagree Likert scale. These questions explored the views on where the responsibility of a successful reintegration was placed, the demands faced by schools, and the contributing factors that may hinder the process (see Table 13). As there were more EP participant

responses (N = 21) than School participants (N = 15), results were represented in percentages to make comparisons.

Table 13. shows a breakdown of the results displayed by the sample participant group of EPs (N = 21) and School Staff (N = 15).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Participants	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
The secondary school is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful.	School Staff	10 (67%)	5 (33%)	0	0	0	15
	EPs	15 (71%)	6 (29%)	0	0	0	21
The parent/carer is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful.	School Staff	10 (67%)	3 (20%)	2 (13%)	0	0	15
	EPs	8 (38%)	12 (57%)	0	1 (5%)	0	21
Teachers need training to understand how best to support students who have been suspended.	School Staff	4 (27%)	8 (53%)	1 (7%)	2 (13%)	0	15
	EPs	13 (62%)	7 (33%)	0	1 (5%)	0	21
Secondary schools do not have the resources to support all students who have been suspended.	School Staff	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	3 (20%)	0	0	15
	EPs	6 (29%)	6 (29%)	4 (19%)	4 (19%)	1 (5%)	21
GCSE targets mean that schools have no choice but to place all their focus on academic progress.	School Staff	3 (20%)	4 (27%)	3 (20%)	4 (27%)	1 (7%)	15
	EPs	0	13 (62%)	1 (5%)	4 (19%)	3 (14%)	21
Getting all secondary staff on board is key to supporting the reintegration of a student.	School Staff	7 (47%)	6 (40%)	2 (13%)	0	0	15
	EPs	17 (81%)	4 (19%)	0	0	0	21

Responsibility for Successful Reintegration of Suspended Students

Both groups largely agreed that the secondary school is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful, with 67% of school staff and 71% of EPs strongly agreeing. The remaining participants in both groups somewhat agreed. However, a notable difference emerged regarding parental responsibility. 67% of school staff strongly agreed that it was the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure a successful reintegration, compared to only 38% of EPs. 20% of school staff and 57% of EPs somewhat agreed. However, 13% (N = 2) of School participants neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5% (N = 1) of EPs somewhat disagreed.

Teacher Training

While there was a consensus, with 80% of school staff and 96% of EPs agreeing that teachers needed training to understand how best to support suspended students, 62% of EPs strongly agreed compared to 27% of school staff. Interestingly, 13% of school staff and 5% of EPs somewhat disagreed.

Perceived Lack of Resources

The majority of both groups agreed that schools lacked the resources to support the needs of suspended students, with 80% of school staff and 58% of EPs strongly agreeing. There was more disagreement among EPs (24%) compared to school staff (0%), with 19% of EPs remaining neutral.

GCSE Targets Pressure

The statement regarding the pressure of meeting GCSE targets forcing schools to focus on academic progress solely elicited varied responses from school staff. Among school staff, 47% agreed (20% strongly, 27% somewhat), 20% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 34% disagreed. In contrast, 62% of EP participants somewhat agreed with the statement, while 33% disagreed, while 5% remained neutral.

Whole School Staff Involvement in Supporting Reintegration

All EPs agreed (81% strongly, 19% somewhat) that involving all staff is key to supporting the reintegration process of a suspended student. Agreement among school staff was

less pronounced, with 47% strongly agreeing, 40% somewhat agreeing, and 13% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

These results highlight both areas of consensus and divergence in the perspectives of school staff and EPs regarding the barriers to successfully reintegrating suspended students. While both groups acknowledged the school's responsibility for reintegration and the need for teacher training, differences emerged regarding the role of parents, the pressure on schools, and the adequacy of resources. The next sections will examine the open-text response to the barriers perceived by school staff and EPs.

4.2.12.2 Factors that Cause Strategies Employed During the Reintegration Process to be Ineffective

Content analysis was used to explore the school staff participant responses (N = 6) from the open-text questions on their thoughts on why the strategies they utilised for supporting suspended students were not always effective. Responses were coded under three different subcategories: Student behaviour and disengagement (n = 3), parental/carer engagement (n = 3), and factors within school with reasons including staff not being consistent (School D), not providing the student with a fresh start and not knowing the student which were both from School K (n = 3).

Illustrative quotes:

Parent/ Carer Engagement: *“Parental issues causing the pupil to not value the process.”* (School E)

Student Behaviour and Disengagement: *“Student disengagement /reoffending”* (School I)

Factors Within School: *“When we are not consistent with our strategies”* (School D)

4.2.12.3 Barriers Faced by Secondary Schools When Reintegrating Suspended Students

School Staff Participant Perspective

School staff participants were asked what their main barriers were to the reintegration of suspended students. Open-text responses (N = 11) were examined using content analysis.

Table 14. School Staff Questionnaire: Frequencies of responses relating to barriers to reintegrating suspended students. (N = 11).

Category	Subcategory	Code Description	Example Response	Frequency of Code (n)
Home	Parental Engagement	Parents/carers are not engaged or supportive in the reintegration process.	“Refusal of parents to support school”	6
	Justifying Behaviours	Parents/carers justify their child's behaviour.	“... make unless excuses about poor behaviour. E.g. Bullying is their ADHD which is not a fair feeling. “	2
Student	Engagement and Behaviour	The student is not engaged in the reintegration process. The student does not take onboard advice or targets.	“The child does not engage with moving forward or the targets they have been set.”	6
School	Capacity	Staff do not have the time or capacity to engage in the reintegration process fully.	“Staff Capacity”	2
	Collaboration within School	Departments within schools do not work together to support the reintegration of the student.	“There is sometimes a lack of joined-up thinking between pastoral and SEN.”	1
Total				17

Parental engagement (n = 6) and student engagement and behaviour (n =6) were the most reported responses. Other barriers raised were lack of staff capacity (n =2) and parents/carers making excuses for their child’s behaviour (n = 2). One participant (School H) reported the barrier being a lack of joint working between the SEN and the Pastoral team (see Table 14). Two participants (School H and B) did not place the responsibility on the parent or student.

EP Participant Perspective

EP participants were asked to share their thoughts on the challenges and barriers secondary schools faced when reintegrating suspended students. Content analysis of EP responses (N = 18) revealed three distinct categories of challenges: Student-Level Barriers (n = 23), School-System Level Barriers (n = 26), and Resource and Capacity Limitations (n = 21).

Table 15. Frequency of responses from the sample EP participants relating to the school challenges and barriers with reintegrating suspended students. (N =18)

Category	Subcategory	Code (Description)	EP Response Example	Frequency of Code (n)
Student-Level Barriers	Within Child	Locating the issues within the student	"Challenges that I have seen over the years include locating the problem to be with the child/YP"	2
	Unsuitable Curriculum	The curriculum does not meet the needs of the student.	"So many YP cannot access the formal curriculum"	2
	Relationships	Difficulties around trust and relationships with students and /or home.	"The trust between the school and family/student might have broken down before the suspension"	2
		Difficulties forming relationships		
	Communication	Ineffective communication between school, student, and home.	"Weak communication between student, family/carer and school."	2
	Disengagement	Lack of engagement from home and/ or Student	"Students' unwillingness to engage"	3
	Not addressing Problems	Not making changes to address the issues.	"Not addressing any of the issues of support structures"	3

			properly during reintegrating meetings"	
	Bias	Schools forming negative views of the student and/or family.	"Negative views of the student seem to build between staff"	4
	Understanding of Student Needs	Not having the knowledge or training needed to understand the student's needs.	"Not enough understanding of student needs and preferences."	5
		Not supporting the student.		
Total				23
	Academic Achievement Focus	Focus or prioritisation on academic curriculum and results	"Central government ethos currently leans toward academic curriculum, and this is what secondaries get measured on (e.g. Progress 8 scores"	3
	Operating Separately	Not working jointly across departments or other systems.	"...not recognising the interplay between SEN and pastoral support... "	5
School-System Level Barriers	Flexibility	Not having flexibility in the system for student support.	"Inflexibility within the system."	5
	School Structures	The way secondary schools operate. Established secondary school systems. The secondary school set up.	"They tend to be huge organisations with too many pupils to look after, and so spending extra time on focusing on one or a group of suspended pupils is challenging..."	6
	Behaviour Management Approaches	Issues with how behaviour is addressed. Behaviour policies that are too punitive.	" A rigid approach to behaviour/discipline or a perception that this is the approach to thrive for."	7
Total				26
Resource and Capacity Limitations	Demands and Pressure	Internal and external pressures and demands.	Pressure on schools around attendance, attainment data, etc."	4
	Impact On Staff	Stress and negative impact on staff.	"Staff morale and energy"	4

Resources	Lack of resources and capacity to support students.	"...limited capacity to offer the time to the students."	13
		Total	21
		Total Frequency	70

Student-Level Barriers: This category encompassed challenges that directly impacted the student's reintegration. The most frequently mentioned barrier (n = 5) was a lack of understanding of the student's needs by surrounding staff. Other barriers identified were negative bias towards the students among staff (n = 4), not addressing issues to support the student (n = 3), and disengagement from the student and home (n = 3). Other factors mentioned were ineffective communication between the school, student, and home (n = 2), the breakdown of relationships between home and school (n = 2), unsuitable curriculum for the student (n = 2) and staff locating the problems within the student (n = 2).

School-System Level Barriers: This category focused on systemic issues within the school that hindered reintegration. The most prevalent challenge identified by EPs was the school's behaviour management approach, which was described as unhelpful for students (n = 7). Additional challenges included school structures and how the systems are set up in secondary schools (n = 6), lack of flexibility to be able to make adaptations to support the student (n = 5), departments with schools operating separately (n = 5) and the focus on academic achievement due to government targets (n = 2). See Table 15.

Resource and Capacity Limitations: The biggest barrier to a successful reintegration that was perceived by EPs was the lack of capacity and resources to support students at secondary schools (n = 13). The demands and pressures on schools (n = 4) and staff wellbeing (n = 4) were also raised as barriers to the reintegration process.

4.2.13 Research Question Three: Summary of Findings

Findings show that school staff and EP participants agreed that it was the responsibility of the secondary school to reintegrate suspended students successfully. Despite this consensus on school responsibility, both groups identified various barriers to

successful reintegration. The second most frequent reason provided by school staff was related to student behaviour and disengagement upon returning to school. Interestingly, EP participants most cited reason under systemic challenges impacting on a successful reintegration was the behaviour management approaches used on the students.

The most common reason provided by school staff participants as a barrier to a successful reintegration was lack of parent/carer engagement (mentioned in eight out of the 11 responses). This was also echoed in the Likert-scale question, where nearly 70% of school staff participants strongly agreed that it was the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure the successful reintegration of the suspended students, compared to 38% of EPs. Furthermore, EPs also identified student disengagement as a barrier, but in only three out of 19 responses.

Both school staff and EPs identified a lack of resources as a barrier to supporting suspended students. 80% of school staff agreed with the statement about schools lacking resources on the Likert scale. This was also echoed in the EP open-text responses, where lack of resources was the most cited reason for being a barrier to a successful reintegration (n = 13). It is important to note that when examining the views of school staff on why the strategies employed for integrating students were ineffective, the most common reasons provided were to do with the parent or the student, with only two staff responses acknowledging factors within the school (such as not knowing the student and schools not being consistent with their approaches). The next section will examine the views of school staff and EP on whether a formal guidance for reintegrating students following a suspension should be provided by the DfE.

4.2.14 Views on the DfE Producing a Compulsory Guidance for All Secondary Schools on Reintegrating Suspended Students

School staff (N = 15) and EP participants (N = 21) were asked whether they believed the DfE should provide compulsory guidance for all schools on reintegrating suspended students.

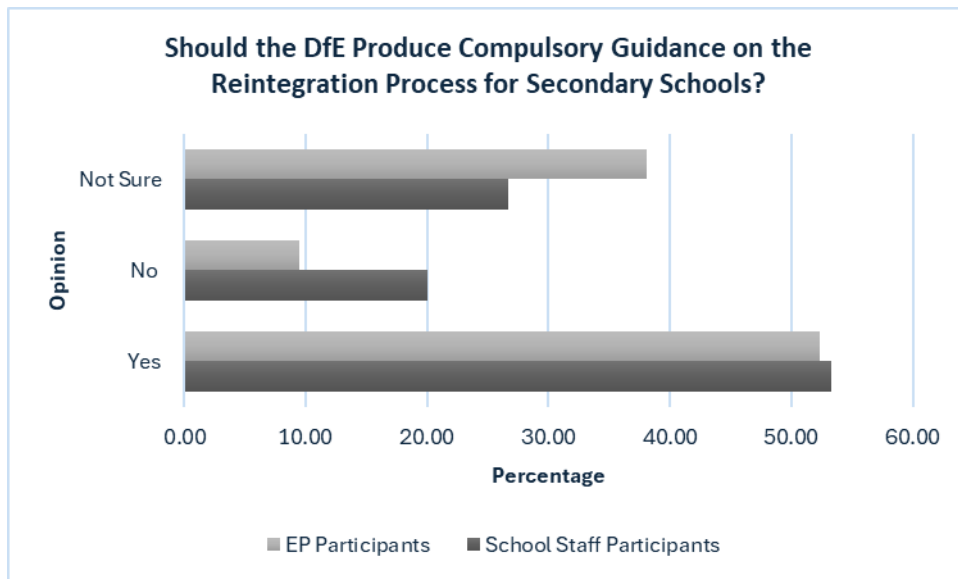


Figure 6. Shows the responses by percentages of the sample population of EP (N = 21) and Staff (N=15) to the DfE producing a compulsory reintegration following suspension guidance (N = 36).

Just over half the EP and staff participants were in favour of the DfE producing a formal guidance. Twenty percent of staff and just under 10% of EP participants were against the idea. This suggests that school staff were more apprehensive about the DfE producing complete guidance. 27% of staff and 38% of EP participants were unsure. Fifty-two percent of EPs and 53% of staff were in favour, indicating that just over half of both groups supported the idea. 20% of staff and 10% of EP participants were against the idea, suggesting that school staff expressed slightly more opposition to the DfE producing compulsory guidance. This was further reflected in the higher percentage of EPs (38%) who were unsure compared to staff (27%) (see Figure 6).

Explanation to Response

EP and school staff participants were asked to explain their responses to their closed-question responses of 'Yes', 'No' or 'Unsure'

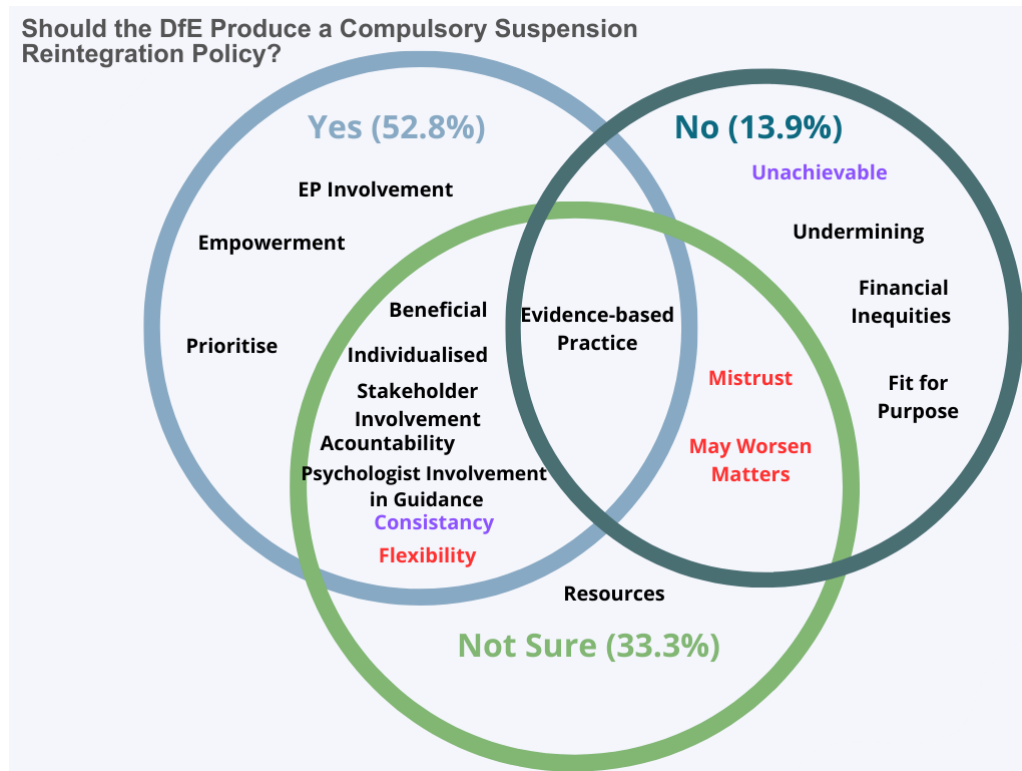


Figure 7. A Venn diagram of EP and school staff participants' combined responses on whether the DfE should produce suspension reintegration guidance for secondary schools. It shows the commonalities of the explanations between the yes, no, and not sure responses. Categories in red were found in EP and School responses, categories in black were found in EP responses, and categories in purple were School responses. (N = 36).

Content analysis of EP responses (N = 18) and school staff responses (N = 8) revealed 18 key reasons. Some of the same reasons provided by different participants were given alongside different responses to the closed question. For example, a response that provided a reason involving evidence-based / research-informed had responses of 'Yes', 'No' or 'Unsure' to the closed question. Notably, all responses were evidence-based/research-informed were provided by EPs (n=5) (see Figure 7).

Illustrative quotes (EPS):

'Yes, it would be helpful to have guidance on the most evidence-based approaches that work and the expectations of what should be in place.'

'No, ...the DfE tends to bypass us and not provide guidance that considers psychological research.'

'Not Sure, ...to ensure the guidance is trauma/attachment/neurodiversity informed. Schools also need more than just a piece of paper with instructions to follow.'

Most explanations for selecting 'Not sure' overlapped with the 'Yes' or 'No' responses. Interestingly, both groups of participants shared concerns that introducing compulsory guidance could worsen matters (n=4) and that the guidance needed to offer flexibility (n=4). The most cited shared concern was their lack of confidence in the DfE (n = 6). For example:

"I have no confidence in the DfE being able to provide useful guidance. E.g guidance., looking at the current consultation on 'gender questioning children', they have failed to consider anything in a balanced or evidence-based way" (EP participant)

"Direction from above rarely adds clarity—note the recent mobile phones policy, which added nothing of value to what different schools do for their communities." (Senior Leader)

Other shared views between both groups of participants were the importance of the guidance offering flexibility (n = 4) and the possibility that the guidance could make matters worse (n = 4).

EP participants (n = 7) felt an advantage to having the reintegration guidance was to increase school accountability. This was the most cited reason in EP responses.

"Supporting schools, increasing accountability and..." (EP participant)

While over a third of school participants (n = 3) saw the guidance as advantageous as it would ensure consistency across all schools. This was the most cited reason in school staff responses.

"This would make it a consistent approach across all schools" (SENCo)

EP participants (n= 6) voiced the importance of the DfE involving psychologists and stakeholders in producing the guidance.

"...in this case, educational and clinical psychologists. So, yes, best practice guidance is needed but from the right people." (EP participant)

Overall, over 50% of both groups of participants welcomed the DfE producing compulsory guidance. School participants highlighted it as beneficial, as it would ensure a consistent approach across schools. EPs noted it would hold schools to account and could be helpful and beneficial. EPs felt it important that guidance needed to be informed by the right professionals and stakeholders and be research/evidence-based informed. Both groups had concerns about the guidance, making matters worse and there was a lack of confidence in the DfE. Both groups highlighted the importance that the guidance needed to be flexible so that it could work for the individual school. Appendix 15 shows the different themes that emerged from the responses, as well as example responses to illustrate the categories and their frequencies. These findings suggest important implications for the DfE to consider if they were to introduce a reintegration policy for suspensions.

4.2.15 How can EPs support Schools with the Reintegration Process of Suspended Students

EP participants were asked how they could support secondary schools in the reintegration of suspended students. 18 EPs responded. Using content analysis, three categories arose from the responses: EP involvement, Strategic influences on school practice, and Student Support.

EP involvement: This included subcategories on how EPs could be directly involved in supporting with the reintegration process. This included reintegration meetings and plans, where EPs felt they could attend the meetings and support in creating reintegration plans for suspended students (n = 6), *“Attend reintegration meetings (I am rarely invited, maybe I should invite myself!)”*. Changing how EPs were utilised was also a subcategory that was highlighted in the responses (n = 5), as EPs felt that schools did not always utilise them in supporting the reintegration process *“Schools need to utilise us more than for just EHCPs”*. Finally, a subcategory on relationships (n =2) emerged where EPs felt they could support by building relationships with staff.

Strategic influences on school practice: EPs felt they could support the school on a strategic level by supporting and creating guidance on school policies and processes (n = 8). *“Influencing the development of guidance based on what works, together with focus consultative support to help the secondary schools implement it”*. Other

subcategories mentioned were providing training for staff (n=9), Supporting collaboration (n = 8), *“Supporting secondaries not just to work in isolated departments more collaboratively to support students”*, and supporting the understanding of school staff (n = 5), *“Utilising EP to support the staff to view the child holistically.”* Shifting perspectives (n = 2) and holding the school to account were also mentioned (n = 2).

Directly supporting students. This involved the subcategories providing students with a voice (n = 5) *“...also champion and elicit the voice and strengths of the student”*, ensuring the student is at the centre of the reintegration process (n = 3), Identifying the student's needs (n = 4), directly working with students who are at risk of suspension (n =3) and advocating for the student (n = 4), *“from advocacy through to identifying needs.”* (See Appendix 16).

In summary, EPs identified a variety of ways they could support schools in reintegrating suspended students. The most highlighted area that EPs felt they could support was at a systemic level, where they could support the school with their practice, and at a strategic level. Importantly, EP participants noted the need to change how they are utilised within schools.

4.2.16 Is There a Relationship Between School Reintegration Practices Following Suspensions and Suspension Figures?

Out of the nine different schools that participated in the staff questionnaire, schools I and E had the highest suspension rates and were found to have suspended the same students three or more times (Sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.3). The staff participant from School E reported not having a formal policy for reintegrating suspended students.

When examining the findings, the most notable findings where the participants rated the lowest compared to the other participants were in reintegration meeting practices (Section 4.2.8.3). The lowest ratings given compared to the other schools were regarding ‘explicitly communicating that the student is valued’ and ‘welcoming back the student’ during reintegration meetings. Discussing the strengths of students during reintegration meetings was also in the lowest three ratings provided where school E gave a rating of ‘2’. Furthermore, these two schools averaged out with two out of the three lowest scores for reintegrating meetings. Notably, the other overall lowest

average score for reintegration meeting practices was provided by a staff participant in School C. Interestingly, this participant was one of five participants from the same school that took part in the questionnaire. Scores given by School C tended to be inconsistent in most areas, with the aforementioned participant providing much lower ratings compared to his/her colleagues across most areas in the rating questions on reintegration practices. With regards to School C's exclusion figures they are not considered to be within the highest or lowest suspending schools.

School staff participant ratings for Information sharing following reintegration meetings (Section 4.2.8.6) revealed that the overall lowest ratings were from schools B (Mean = 5), C (Mean = 1), E (Mean = 2.50), and I (Mean = 5). Interestingly, Schools C and B had multiple school staff members participate in the questionnaire, and ratings were found to be inconsistent within the schools. Regarding School B's exclusion figures, they only had one recorded suspension for autumn 2023.

Notably, school staff participants and their EPs all reported that schools used other forms of exclusions, such as internal exclusions and students being directed off-site (Section 4.2.6). As these are informal exclusions, their frequency of use is unknown. While internal exclusions were reported as the most common use of exclusions among all schools, it is unknown whether some schools have low suspension figures because they can direct their students 'off-site' to other schools for a few days rather than formally suspending them. Therefore, these results need to be interpreted with caution.

When examining the open-text responses regarding additional strategies schools do as part of the reintegration process. A staff participant from school F reported that they now have weekly staff meetings to discuss how to provide additional support 'to students at risk' of exclusion. While school F's exclusion data is not the lowest, their exclusion figures in autumn 2023 have shown a marked decrease, suggesting that their number of exclusions was less than in autumn 2022. School A's participant, whose school had also seen a large decrease in exclusions from the previous autumn term, reported making referrals to intervention services to support their students who had been suspended. Furthermore, School A and F participants also gave ratings of '8 and 9' for information sharing following reintegration meetings, where the overall mean scores across schools were around '6', and the scores within schools were

inconsistent. Notably, when reporting on the strengths of their reintegration process (Section 4.2.10.2), School A mentioned that 'Parents were always involved' and School F reported that they had 'Very few re-offenders'. These responses were unique to these schools.

4.3 Summary of Overall Findings

Findings suggest that schools have formal policies in place to reintegrate suspended students. The primary strategy implemented was reintegration meetings, which at least two members of staff attended and were typically conducted face-to-face. However, it was found that pastoral staff did not attend the meetings and that some schools used the meetings as their only strategy. The length of reintegration meetings varied significantly across schools and within schools. School staff felt that those attending the reintegration meeting tended to be aware of the student's needs and family context. It was felt that staff communicated clearly to students why they were suspended. Content analysis revealed that most school staff felt that reintegration meetings were important to address the reason behind the suspension. A key finding was reintegration meetings were not always held if parents/carers could not attend, indicating inconsistent practices. The most common way to share information following the reintegration meeting was found to be through email. Findings highlighted inconsistencies in sharing targets and important information with key staff following a meeting; interestingly, the most common strength school staff shared regarding their reintegration process was staff setting targets. The least implemented strategy was found to be EP involvement. Content analysis revealed that the most common strength shared regarding reintegration meeting practices was providing individualised support for the student. When it came to making improvements, 50% of the staff responses indicated areas around formal meeting processes needed to be addressed. Inconsistencies around the reintegration practices were found within schools, and this also included school staff with the same roles.

EPs and school staff views differed when it came to identifying strengths for a successful reintegration process. School staff emphasised operational factors like setting clear targets, consistent communication, and structured processes, while EPs prioritised inclusive and relational approaches, focusing on understanding the

student's needs and creating a supportive environment. The response rate was higher among EPs, making direct comparison difficult, but the difference in perspectives highlighted the significant differences in perspectives.

School staff and EPs agreed that schools were responsible for the successful reintegration of suspended students, but their views on the barriers differed. School staff strongly emphasised the lack of parent/carer and student engagement as the primary obstacle, while EPs focused more on systemic issues within the school, particularly the behaviour management approaches used. Both groups identified the lack of resources as a significant barrier, which was highly evident in the EP responses. EPs felt that they could mostly support schools with the reintegration process at a systemic level where they could support with creating school policy and provide training for staff. over 50% of school staff and EP participants supported the suggestion that the DfE should create a reintegration policy for suspensions and emphasised the need for consistent and evidence-based guidance.

Analysis of school suspension data revealed that schools with high suspension rates (Schools I and E) often lacked consistency in their reintegration practices and rated their schools low in practices aimed at valuing and welcoming back suspended students. All schools reported using informal exclusion methods, complicating the interpretation of formal suspension data. However, some schools like F and A had seen significant decreases in suspensions due to proactive strategies like weekly staff meetings and referrals to intervention services. These schools also emphasised parental involvement (A) and low rates of repeat offences (F) as strengths in their reintegration processes. While there were associations found between the exclusion figures and the school staff questionnaire results, the findings need to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size. This limitation is further discussed in the next chapter.

5 Discussion

5.1 Overview

This research set out to explore and examine the reintegration processes of suspended secondary students. There is currently a gap in the literature that does not explore what secondary schools do to reintegrate their suspended students back into school. While there is research that explores the experiences of suspended students, only a very limited amount explores what secondary schools do to support their students back to school, what practices are successful, and what the barriers are for secondary schools. In this section, the key findings from the current study will be explored in relation to the research questions. Strengths, further research, and limitations will then be discussed. The implications and recommendations for policy, secondary schools, and EPs will follow this ending with an overall conclusion.

5.2 Discussion Research Question One: In Secondary Schools, what Steps are Taken and what is Involved when Reintegrating Suspended Students Back into School?

Findings from this study indicate that secondary schools generally have a reintegration process in place for suspended students. The results did highlight significant inconsistencies in practice within and across schools.

5.2.1 Reintegration Meetings

Reintegration meetings following suspensions were found to be common practice across schools. A significant finding was that some schools bypassed these meetings due to parent/carer unavailability, raising concerns about equitable access to support for suspended students. It is worth noting that there is no data to indicate the frequency of parents/carers not attending the reintegration meeting. Nevertheless, this practice inadvertently creates a disparity in the reintegration experience, potentially leaving some students without the structured guidance and support that meetings are intended to provide.

Furthermore, the absence of a reintegration meeting could be particularly detrimental for students with SEN or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. These students may rely on these meetings to establish personalised support plans and address any

underlying challenges that contributed to their suspension. This is a particularly pressing issue as the exclusion data examined has highlighted a large number of students who have been suspended, have had SEN, or have been from disadvantaged backgrounds. This raises questions about whether the current reintegration approach aligns with the principles of inclusive education and equitable treatment for all students, regardless of their family circumstances.

The quantitative data collected from school staff participants linked with fostering school belonging and the exclusion figures revealed an interesting relationship: the two schools with the highest suspension rates and multiple suspensions of individual students were also the ones that provided the lowest ratings in terms of welcoming students back, acknowledging their strengths, and making them feel valued. Previous research has highlighted the importance of fostering a sense of belonging for a successful reintegration following an exclusion (G. Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013; Rose et al., 2018). While acknowledging that the sample size was small, there is evidence to suggest that these schools do not prioritise fostering a sense of belonging among their students. This is particularly important as fostering a sense of belonging has been found to be associated with many positive outcomes, including improved behaviour (Demant & Van Houtte, 2012).

Furthermore, this finding raises significant questions about the efficacy of current reintegration practices, particularly in schools struggling with high rates of exclusionary discipline. It is possible that a punitive approach to discipline does not sustain the desired changed behaviour, as attempts to support the students have not been prioritised (Jones, Kreppner, Marsh, & Hartwell, 2023). This could, in turn, perpetuate a cycle of disengagement and further behavioural issues. Arguably, the DfE (2023) guidance does not address the importance of fostering a sense of belonging for the returning suspended students, and therefore, it may not be apparent to some schools that this is necessary. School belonging is particularly important during adolescence as it is considered a crucial time when students are transitioning to adulthood (Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodick, Hattie, & Waters, 2018). This highlights that secondary schools need to ensure their reintegration practices best support adolescents' needs, with particular attention paid to fostering school belonging.

Another key finding was the discrepancies in time lengths of reintegration within and across schools, ranging from 14 minutes to 90 minutes. This raises concerns about the equitable treatment of suspended students and the variability suggests a lack of standardisation in reintegration meetings, with potentially significant consequences for student outcomes. Shorter meetings may not allow enough time to discuss the issues that led to the suspension, explore and actively listen to the student's views, or collaboratively develop a comprehensive reintegration plan. Also, it does not consider the needs of students with SEN, where some may need additional time to make sure that they feel heard and supported. This raises questions about the effectiveness of such brief encounters, especially in ensuring that the student feels accepted back into school and genuinely understands their support plan and how to move forward.

Carlile (2011) argues that processes such as reintegration meetings have become more of an exercise to show that schools are supporting the students rather than being a supportive exercise. The current findings indicate that reintegration meetings may not happen if parents/carers cannot attend, along with how short they can be, supporting Carlile's (2011) perspective. School staff may be conducting reintegration meetings because they are believed to be good practice rather than understanding how impactful they can be for students if executed well.

Moreover, the rushed nature of short meetings could inadvertently communicate a lack of value for the reintegration process, potentially undermining the seriousness of the exclusion itself. This could send a mixed message to students, blurring the lines between restorative practices and punitive measures. Such inconsistencies in the reintegration experience could also lead to feelings of inequity among students, with some receiving more comprehensive support than others. Notably, limited staff capacity, as mentioned by school staff and EP participants, may contribute to shorter meetings due to the time pressures faced by school staff.

The DfE's (2023b) guidance emphasises that exclusions should be used as a last resort, highlighting the gravity of such measures and the importance of investing adequate time and resources into supporting students' successful return to school. This finding underscores the need for schools to prioritise reintegration as a crucial component of

the exclusion process. It is important to acknowledge that my sample size was small, consisting of only 15 participants, which may limit the generalisability of these findings. Additionally, there is currently no guidance or research that provides an optimal time for how long reintegration meetings should be following a suspension. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further research to establish evidence-based guidelines that can support standardising reintegration meeting practices across schools. To address these issues, schools should invest in providing training for staff to support the understanding and the value of investing in the reintegration meeting so it effectively supports the reintegration of suspended students. By doing so, schools can ensure that reintegration meetings are not just a procedural formality but a meaningful process that genuinely supports students' return to school.

5.2.2 Communication Following Reintegration Meetings

The current study's findings indicate that schools do not always consistently share information that was discussed in the reintegration meeting with relevant teachers. The inconsistencies within the same schools suggest that practice is dependent on the individual members of school staff involved in the reintegration process. This raises concerns about the reintegration meeting's relevance and potential impact of conducting them especially when the DfE (2023) recommends that a reintegration plan be discussed at the meeting. At secondary schools, students can potentially be taught by over ten different teachers, and therefore, it is vital that information impacting the students' learning is communicated to them, so they are aware of the targets set and possible adaptations that need to be made. The findings from the EP questionnaires also highlighted that complexities within secondary school structures made it more challenging to successfully reintegrate suspended students than in primary schools. A lack of communication can mean that teachers are not best informed to help the student. As schools are complex organisations, effective communication of information and shared goals within them is fundamental for success (Sammons, 1995).

When comparing the findings to the exclusion figures, an association was found between high suspension rates and low information sharing among schools. It's

important to note that the sample size was small, and association does not imply causation. However, the findings suggest that, in some cases, suspended students may return to school without adequate adaptations to their environment. This could place them in a similar situation that led to their initial suspension. While students bear some responsibility for their behaviour, this lack of support places a significant burden on them to change; this lack of consistency in school is contradictory to the staff participants' view, where all of them felt that it was the school's responsibility to reintegrate the suspended student successfully. The link between inconsistent information sharing and high suspension figures is in keeping with research findings that found effective communication to be significant in successful reintegration (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015).

Furthermore, poor information sharing following the reintegration meeting could potentially jeopardise trust between the student and their teachers. While a student may initially leave the meeting feeling supported, in cases where the relevant information is not shared, they might feel let down by the staff members. This perceived lack of follow-through could impact the student's overall trust in the school. Students' feeling that they can trust their teachers during the adolescence period has been found to be important for fostering school belonging (Ahmadi, Hassani, & Ahmadi, 2020). This further emphasises the need to share key information with key staff so that students feel listened to and supported.

5.2.3 Strategies Incorporated in the Reintegration Process

While findings suggest that many school participants utilised many strategies to support the reintegration of their suspended students, it was the inconsistencies within schools that stood out. This again highlights the disparity in the reintegration experience among suspended students, with some appearing to get far more or less support than their peers. These inconsistencies also contradict the reporting that schools have a reintegration policy for suspended students. School policy exists to provide details on how to apply the school's aims through practice, inform stakeholders and ensure consistency across the school (Key, 2023). This, therefore, suggests that the reintegration policy is either not fit for purpose, which is highlighted by the variability in practices within schools or it is not followed. Arguably, schools are not

provided with sufficient advice on best reintegration practices for suspension as the advice from the DfE (2023) is itself limited.

Another consideration is that all recommendations provided by the DfE (2023) on reintegrating students are not mandatory. This sends a message that normalises exclusion practice without providing any accountability for the responsibilities that come with ensuring that the suspended student effectively reintegrates back into school. Also, placing demands on schools to reduce suspensions while providing limited guidance on how to reintegrate suspended students encourages schools to divert to informal exclusions where figures are not recorded. Furthermore, the use of informal exclusions has been attributed to a reduction in suspensions making it an acceptable practice among schools (Golding, 2021; Mills & Thomson, 2018). This may explain why the current study found that informal exclusions are more commonly used than suspensions, with no reintegration practices being utilised. This raises significant concerns about the lack of regulation in ensuring that suspensions are reduced through inclusive practices rather than segregation (Rose et al., 2018). This is a systemic issue that needs addressing at the government policy level, so schools are equipped with the correct advice and information to support their suspended students.

Additionally, the absence of a unified approach to the reintegration process raises questions about the effectiveness of suspension as a disciplinary tool and the ability of schools to create a truly inclusive and supportive learning environment. These findings accentuate the urgent need for a comprehensive and evidence-based reintegration policy that provides clear guidance and promotes a consistent approach across schools. Without such guidance, the effectiveness of suspension as a disciplinary tool and the overall well-being of students are being compromised. Furthermore, over 50% of school staff and EP participants supported the suggestion that the DfE should create a reintegration policy for suspensions and emphasising the need for consistent and evidence-based guidance. Of the 33% who felt uncertain, those who provided a reason voiced concerns about the policy being punitive, lacking in flexibility, or being unhelpful for schools, suggesting that addressing these concerns would be crucial for the policy's overall success and acceptance.

5.3 Research Question Two: What Factors Contribute to the Effective Reintegration of a Suspended Student?

Lawrence (2011) highlighted that for students reintegrating back into mainstream schools from PRUs, effective reintegration required good communication and a proactive approach at a systemic level. While their findings were not specific to suspensions, they indicate that the reintegration meeting is only part of the process, relying heavily on schools to communicate information to key staff and implement necessary support measures. A possible overarching factor to ensure effective communication is the school ethos, which was highlighted within the views of the EP responses. According to Munn, Cullen, and Lloyd (2000) school ethos underpins school practice and informs the way schools operate, providing a collective understanding of how things are done. This suggests that a school ethos that has successful reintegration practices for suspended students prioritises ensuring that all staff understand the needs of these students. Such an ethos supports the idea that students' success rests on shared approaches to supporting what works for them. By fostering a collective understanding and consistent communication, schools can better implement the strengths identified in the reintegration process, making these efforts more impactful. School ethos was also highlighted in previous reintegration practices following exclusions (Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015).

The importance of relationships was highlighted frequently by EPs at a systemic and staff level for the successful reintegration of a suspended student. The importance of forming relationships was not explicitly highlighted by school participants, suggesting a difference in thinking between the two groups. This is not a surprising finding as school staff work at the front line, where they interact with students daily. Whereas EPs have a holistic perspective as they do not work in the school and are applied psychologists trained to think at a systemic level. Importantly, the findings of the current study demonstrate that seeking views from school staff and EPs allows different perspectives to be incorporated to examine how best to support students who have been suspended. Lastly, it is important to note that the sample size of the staff participants (N=9) was much smaller than that of the EPs (N=19), which means the findings need to be interpreted with caution.

5.4 Research Question Three: What are the Challenges that Secondary Schools Face when Reintegrating Suspended Students Back into Schools?

The far majority of school staff participants unanimously agreed that home and student engagement were perceived as barriers to successful reintegration. Previous research on reintegration practices supports this finding, as it was found that parental support and student engagement are crucial for successfully reintegrating an excluded student back into school (G. Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Lally, 2013; Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2015). Arguably, student and parent engagement are factors that are out of the school's control.

The findings of the current study highlight inconsistencies in the schools' reintegration processes, including the length of reintegration meetings and effective sharing of information among key staff. While probably not intentional, these inconsistencies may hinder a student's engagement in the process, making it crucial to address the systemic issues within the schools first. Locating the problem within the student is not unusual and permeates many education systems (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). Previous research has concluded that there is a belief in schools that pupils choose bad behaviour, validating the need for discipline as a form of consequence to learn from their actions (Nash, Schlösser, & Scarr, 2016). This belief is known as a behaviourist approach, which is followed by many schools in the UK; it is embraced by the behaviour management advisor for the DfE, Tom Bennet (Mellor, 2023). The latest DfE (2024a) advice on behaviour suggests schools use punitive approaches to sanction pupils, such as detentions and loss of privileges.

While the new DfE advice does address supporting pupils with SEN and seeking to understand why the behaviour happened, they do not consider a relational approach to creating good behaviour. This view supports findings from the EP participants who felt that the behaviourist approach adopted by schools was what hindered the reintegration process for the suspended students; they felt that suspended students needed relational approaches to support their reintegration. Furthermore, there is strong evidence to suggest that the impact of teacher-student relationships has been found to promote school engagement, improve behaviour and foster school belonging (Fan,

2012; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011; Varga, 2017). A behaviourist approach may work for many students as it provides clear boundaries, but it does not address the needs of all students (Mellor, 2023; Nash et al., 2016). This is indicated by the exclusion data for Bi-borough Londonia, where 30% of the suspensions were because of students being suspended at least three times.

Foucault (2023) believed that authoritarian systems, such as schools, implement strategies that pathologise the students. This means that suspending the student is more about control and conformity rather than supporting the individual. Rather than schools examining their systems, they expect the students to return to school and be ready to comply. This may explain the current study's findings that highlight the inconsistencies that exist within the reintegration process. While schools may be aware that the student has SEN or is from a disadvantaged background, making them the problem limits the school's attempts to remove the barriers the student may have (Carlile, 2011). This can also be applied to how the government responds to suspensions and exclusions. They highlight the rise of exclusions, but instead of examining the policies (such as behaviour and exclusion policies) they impose on schools, they place the blame on schools and threaten them with punitive accountability measures such as Ofsted ratings. Arguably, schools are large organisations that serve many students and need to implement rules to run effectively. Therefore, maintaining boundaries and rules to ensure the well-being and safety of all students needs to be taken into consideration. This does not mean that relational approaches cannot be used alongside current approaches, and this should be considered, especially with the rise in exclusions.

Responses from EPs indicated that a barrier to reintegration was the breakdown of relationships and ineffective communication between home and school. This perspective provides an alternative view to parents/carers not engaging. This emphasis on home-school collaboration aligns with Bronfenbrenner (1992) systems theory, which posits that positive relationships between these two crucial environments within a student's life can significantly impact on their overall development. The findings, in line with Lawrence (2011), suggest that schools and parents need to form strong positive relationships to support the suspended to reintegrate into school successfully.

Furthermore, schools will not always have parental support, and instead of penalising the student for the actions of the parents/carers, they need to continue to support the student. Students who have experienced school exclusion have found that having a school staff member to support them where they did not feel judged made a great difference to them (Lamrhari, Maitland, Morris, & Petty, 2021).

A noteworthy finding was that of a school that had designated non-teaching staff to support students but felt the barrier to reintegration was the lack of collaboration between the SEN and pastoral department. This issue of insufficient joint thinking and working was also echoed in the responses from EPs, suggesting this was a systemic concern. Interestingly, the school's suspension figures were one of the lowest across Londonia, but many of the school's suspended students were found to have SEN. This disparity suggests that while the dedication of individual staff members is a strength, systemic issues in the coordination between departments undermine efforts to support SEN students effectively. Addressing these collaboration gaps could be pivotal in reducing the suspension rates of SEN students and enhancing their overall school experience. Previous studies have discussed the importance of good home-school communication links (Lawrence, 2011). However, they did not identify the importance of collaborative working between the SEN and pastoral departments as identified in this present study.

With financial pressures faced by schools being cited as a cause of rising exclusions (Committee of Public Accounts, 2022; Partridge et al., 2020) it is unsurprising that many EP participants identified reintegration barriers related to staff capacity and resources. This suggests that suspended students are not always getting the support they need, as schools do not have the capacity to provide them with adequate resources. This lack of support may contribute to inconsistencies in the reintegration process for suspended students. School staff may be struggling to find the time to set up meetings or effectively pass on relevant information needed to support the students.

Findings regarding the processes of reintegration found that some schools had three or more members of staff attend reintegration meetings. Previous research has indicated that reintegration meetings have been found to be intimidating for students and their parents/carers, negatively impacting the reintegration process (Lawrence, 2011). The

findings also indicated that pastoral staff tended not to attend reintegration meetings. This was surprising as pastoral staff have the role of supporting students and are known to work closely with teachers, parents/carers, and external agencies (Cochrane, 2018). Schools may feel they have valid reasons for having so many staff attend reintegration meetings. There appears to be tension between having too many staff and ensuring the right people are included. Schools may wish to consider the impact of having so many adults at the meeting, which staff would best be there to support the student and to ensure relevant information is shared afterwards. Having fewer school staff with a distinct purpose at the meeting may support the suspended student and take the pressure off staffing. Addressing these issues requires a more flexible and resource-conscious approach that prioritises the needs of suspended students and their successful reintegration into the school environment.

While EPs were involved in supporting the reintegration through training, consultation, and direct work, nearly a third of EPs reported that schools need to utilise them differently, not just prioritise them for statutory work. Recent research commissioned by the DfE on Educational Psychology services found inconsistent awareness of what the role of the EP entailed. With schools utilising them for statutory assessments rather than involvement in early intervention and systemic work (Atfield et al., 2023). The shortage in EPs combined with the increasing demands of statutory work may provide a potential reason to explain why EPs are not utilised as systemically or as preventatively as they would like to be (Lyonette, Atfield, Baldauf, & Owen, 2019). Nevertheless, EPs play a vital role in identifying SEN in CYP, and they are crucial and well-equipped to upskill educators and those who work with CYP to support and ensure that high-quality SEN provision is available (Lyonette et al., 2019). A significant part of their role is to also support the social-emotional and mental well-being of CYP, families and school staff (Lyonette et al., 2019). The current study's findings highlight the potential for EPs to work with secondary schools to ensure the reintegration process is evidence-based and psychologically informed to support all students.

5.5 Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths and limitations that need to be considered. While there are studies that explored the reintegration of suspended students, there appears to be

none that explore the operations and strategies for the reintegration process related to secondary school suspensions. This is a significant strength in the current study as it provides some insight into the reintegration process of suspended students.

Additionally, the study includes the perspectives of EPs on the reintegration of suspended students. This provides a crucial perspective of professionals who work within schools and understand child and adolescent development. The study utilised exclusion data to triangulate some of the findings and provide context. The use of open and closed questions with the questionnaire meant qualitative and quantitative were used to explain findings further and make connections between the findings. Furthermore, the questionnaire went through a rigorous pilot study phase to ensure that the questions were reliable.

As with any study, there were several limitations that need to be considered:

Low school staff response rate

The school staff sample size was small due to the low response rate. There were some potential reasons for this. Firstly, some schools and LA professionals shared that the topic was sensitive, and there was reluctance to share the research and participate. This may have been because the questionnaire requested school staff to include their school's name, which may have been off-putting. This was considered in the **research design stage**, and it was decided to include the school's name so that the consistency of answers between schools could be examined, which highlighted important findings. Furthermore, knowing that there were multiple responses from one school enabled this to be factored in when reporting the findings. The other potential for the low response rate was staff capacity. It was shared that some schools were dealing with Ofsted and preparing their students for GCSEs.

Due to the low staff response rate, any observed differences or comparisons made between the EP and staff participants should be interpreted with caution. School staff who did not participate may have held different views than those who did.

Questionnaire Design

A risk taken that may have hindered the response rate due to time and capacity was the length of the questionnaire. The staff questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to

complete, and there were many open-text questions. By the end of the data collection phase, there were five incomplete questionnaires; these had to be excluded from the findings. The length of the questionnaire was considered during the **research design stage**. Due to concerns that there would be a low participation rate because of the sensitivity of the topic, there was an attempt to counteract this by creating a thorough questionnaire. However, this action itself may have impacted the response rate. Furthermore, the EP questionnaire took under 15 minutes to complete, and the response rate was over 80%, suggesting that the questionnaire length may have affected the response rate. Questionnaire findings ultimately represent the views and perceptions of the participants, and as a result, this limits their objectivity. While the question design was carefully considered, the school participants' rating responses are subjective, for example, a score of '6' from one participant does not necessarily mean the same to another.

Adaptations to Research Design

Due to the **difficulty in recruiting school participants** to complete the questionnaire, the data collection period took far longer to complete than anticipated which meant the **research design had to be adapted**. It was hoped to use the school staff questionnaire findings to inform the phase two data collection which was going to involve interviews. **The interview phase would have addressed and dug further into the practices and strategies school staff utilised to support the reintegration process**. For example, addressing what schools did differently to support students with SEN, investigating further what schools meant by setting targets and addressing the inconsistencies within schools. There was curiosity regarding how all school staff unanimously felt that 'the reason for the suspension was clearly communicated' in the reintegration meeting and what this meant for students with SEN or those who had limited English. Other factors to be explored were what 'school belonging' meant to school staff, the school's reintegration policy and how long the reintegration process lasted. A focus group would also have been conducted in the second phase with EPs. However, the EP questionnaire responses provided rich data and conducting a focus group would not have added further insight to answering the research questions.

Sampling Method

At the research design stage, a decision was made to limit the research to two London boroughs. This was to focus on a group of schools to gain a holistic understanding of the reintegration process through a multi-method approach with the given time constraints. This does mean that the recommendations are probably context-dependent. Arguably, many secondary schools operate in similar ways, and the outcomes of this research can, therefore, be used to inform them.

Anonymity

During the data analysis stage, it became clear that certain data points would allow the identification of participating staff members, schools and EPs even despite the use of pseudonyms. To maintain their anonymity, these data were not included in the final findings.

Future research

This study could be expanded to other boroughs and include interviews with schools to better understand the reintegration process for suspended students. Interviews would provide an opportunity to explore the findings of the study. For example, the inconsistencies found within and between schools, exploring further information-sharing practices, what schools with lower suspension rates were doing differently to those with higher suspensions and so on.

Additionally, exploring reintegration practices in primary schools would provide a valuable comparison to the current findings. A positive outcome emerged from this study where some school staff reported that the questionnaire made them reflect on their reintegration processes and requested a copy of the questionnaire to discuss it with their teams. Furthermore, a request was made for staff training in conducting effective and supportive reintegration meetings.

Overall, this study set out to explore what the reintegration process looked like for suspended students. The findings provided rich data that was triangulated and compared. It is worth noting that the findings need to be interpreted with caution due to

the small sample size and that the associations found do not mean causation. However, the findings of this study generated many questions and ideas for improving the process for all stakeholders involved. While this study only examined the reintegration process from a suspension perspective, the results of the questionnaire also revealed that internal exclusions were the most used disciplinary practice across all schools and that there was no formal reintegration process for students who were directed offsite or internally excluded. This has left an opportunity for EPs and researchers to extend the study further and or to begin to implement possible recommendations that will be discussed in the next section.

5.6 Implications for Policy and Practice

The complexity of secondary schools, with their informal and formal systems guided by policy, culture, and practice, can have a huge impact on the reintegration of a suspended student (Brady, 2008). ‘Complexity’ can provide an acceptance or a rationale that the reintegration process is bound to fail. This explicitly challenges the assumption that complexity absolves those within schools from responsibility for these outcomes (Healy, 2017).

This section will draw on Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development (BTHD) to offer possible implications and recommendations for achieving a reintegration process that supports suspended students. Notably, each secondary school is unique, and the possible implications and recommendations are based on results and associations found from a small sample size across two London boroughs from the present study. Nevertheless, this present study proposes recommendations that have tangible benefits to improving practice around the reintegration process of suspended students (Healy, 2017).

5.6.1 The Macrosystem: Clear, Informative and Supportive Government Guidance.

Findings from this study reveal both a desire for and apprehension towards DfE guidance on the reintegration process of suspended students. While most participants recognised its potential value, concerns arose about the guidance being unhelpful, overly rigid, or driven by measurable targets rather than evidence that supports

schools. The current guidance on exclusions provides very limited guidance on the reintegration process for suspensions, even though it has been expanded on in the last year. It would be beneficial for schools to have a reintegration policy that was informed by evidence-based and had input from professionals such as Educational Psychologists to provide psychological input to support the needs of the students. A notable observation from the questionnaire responses was that school staff participants had processes in place, but there appeared to be inconsistencies between and within schools around the strategies used. This implies a lack of appreciation of the importance of the reintegration process.

Providing guidance developed with input from educators, psychologists, parents, and students means that schools can have a reintegration policy that:

- is informed by evidence-based research that increases and raises awareness for supporting students who have been suspended.
- is flexible enough to suit individual schools without adding additional financial and resource pressures on schools and responsive to diverse student needs.
- recommends the involvement of other professionals, such as EPs, not just to identify the student's needs but also to provide a holistic understanding in which the student is central to the process.

Daniels, Porter, and Thompson (2022) highlight the danger of policies that address data rather than the root causes of a problem. For DfE guidance to be effective, it should empower schools to address their systemic barriers, e.g. current behaviour policy, that may be causing the suspensions of certain students. This is pathologising students rather than considering that there may be potential broader systemic issues and biases that need addressing. Findings from the study suggest that from the school staff perspective, the failure of suspended students to reintegrate was due to parent/carers and student engagement. Interestingly, it was also felt by the school participants that it was the school's responsibility to reintegrate the students successfully. This suggests a need for schools to be supported in examining the root cause or systemic issues that have resulted in the lack of engagement. This highlights the importance for the DfE providing clarity,

consistency and a fit-for-purpose policy that addresses systemic barriers that have caused the lack of engagement and initial suspensions.

5.6.2 The Exo-system: Implications for Educational Psychologists

Educational Psychologists (EPs) do not have to work directly with students to have a positive impact on the reintegration process. They can work at the exosystem level to create systemic change to support the reintegration process of suspended students. EPs can address this by discussing trends observed in the school's exclusion data and supporting schools in looking closely at the systemic barriers for the students such as joint working between departments or examining behaviour policies. Notably, these can be quite difficult conversations and are dependent on the relationship between the EP and the school. A potential solution is that LAs could encourage schools to seek support from EPs to address the issue. The LA could also commission EPs to work on a toolkit to support the reintegration process and provide training to schools.

While EPs provide invaluable training to schools, there may not be a focus placed on how the training could be used to explicitly address exclusions and how to support the reintegration of suspended students. A recommendation would be that training provided by the LA where they utilise EPs should directly address exclusions, reintegration and how to support students who have been suspended or at risk of suspension. For example, some LAs, including where the present study was conducted, currently have EP-led training in areas like attachment and neurodiversity, which provides a strong base. Adding explicit sections on their application to exclusion prevention and reintegration could enhance the training impact, offering schools practical tools and a systemic perspective. This would be an opportunity for LAs to utilise EPs for psychological knowledge, use evidence-based and best practices to combat systemic biases and barriers to support CYP who are suspended or at risk of exclusion (Stewart-Hall, Langham, & Miller, 2023). Furthermore, training commissioned by secondary schools from the EP they work with would include a practical section on theory application to reduce suspensions or support in reintegration practices.

In summary, LAs can play a key role in facilitating and encouraging EPs' effective involvement in the reintegration process. Here are some suggested actions:

- Actively encourage schools to seek EP support for addressing exclusion trends and systemic barriers impacting reintegration.
- Commission EPs to design and deliver a toolkit specifically focused on successful reintegration practices.
- Update existing LA-delivered training to explicitly address exclusion prevention and reintegration support.
- Facilitate collaborative workshops to help schools implement toolkit strategies and analyse exclusion data with EP support.

EPs can support their secondary schools by:

- Dedicating time during regular planning meetings to discuss exclusion trends and identify support needs for reintegrating students.
- Ensuring their training, where relevant, addresses real-life examples of how psychological theory can be utilised to prevent exclusions and support excluded students. For example, training on fostering a sense of belonging in schools and the evidence-based strategies to achieve this.
- Encourage collaborative working across the school by working with teachers as a team to provide support for suspended students (e.g., Circle of Adults).

5.6.3 The Meso-system: School Policy

Within Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Bioecological Theory of Human Development, the mesosystem highlights how school policies play a pivotal role in shaping the interactions between a student's various microsystems. For example, whether it is examining the suspension figures from the present study or the national suspension figures from the DfE, there is strong evidence to suggest that students from marginalised groups are experiencing suspensions on a disproportionate level compared to their peers. As well as addressing policy on a national and area level, school policy must also be addressed. This is significant because school policies can hugely impact a student's microsystem (i.e. their home environment, peer relationships, and interactions with teachers), which will ultimately influence their academic outcomes, engagement and beyond. It has been found that some school policies and practices have placed historically marginalised groups at a heightened risk

of receiving negative messages regarding their self-worth at school (Gray, Hope, & Byrd, 2020). The exclusion data examined at school level found that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with SEN have experienced greater suspensions in some secondary schools than in others. There was also a lack of joint working between departments in schools, especially between pastoral and SEN, suggesting that school policy should aim to ensure that departments are working collaboratively to support their students.

Most schools indicated that they had a reintegration policy for suspensions, but when examining the findings from the school staff questionnaires, there appeared to be inconsistencies between and across schools with how the reintegration process was conducted. EP participants indicated that one of the most significant barriers faced was staff and resource capacity, which could potentially explain some of the inconsistencies observed, such as not always revisiting targets set at the reintegration meetings. It was not common practice for schools to have reintegration meetings with suspended students if their parents and carers could not attend. This indicates that some suspended students are not getting the same opportunities for support as their peers, considering the main purpose of reintegration meetings from the perspective of the DfE (2023) guidance is to welcome the student back and discuss a reintegration strategy to support the suspended student. Schools need to consider that this is not an equitable or inclusive practice and how school policies can be responsible for negatively impacting the most disadvantaged students (Gray et al., 2020). Furthermore, EP participants indicated that another barrier schools faced were their behaviour approaches adopted. This may also be contributing to systemic issues that may hinder the reintegration process. They need to ensure that the purpose of a reintegration meeting is to place the suspended student at the centre to reestablish a positive relationship and school belonging. A reintegration meeting should be conducted for all students. There were varying opinions about the importance of reintegration meetings, highlighting a lack of consensus. Furthermore, some school staff did not feel that the reintegration process could improve or were unsure, yet their ratings indicated that they were not consistently implementing strategies. These findings suggest that there is not a shared sense of purpose around the reintegration process.

Based on these findings, the senior leadership team should ensure that the reintegration process for suspensions should:

- Ensure that it is unique to its school population to address barriers faced where the student is at the centre of the reintegration process. where the process considers and responds to the needs of students from marginalised, at risk and SEND groups.
- Have a clear shared purpose and understanding of the reintegration policy
- Ensure that strategies employed within the process, such as reintegration meetings, are conducted after all suspensions, even if parents/carers cannot attend.
- Ensure the process is consistent and has clear systems in place that are followed by all staff involved.
- Ensure all school staff are aware of it and how it fits in with the school values. It is the shared collaborative process with all staff to ensure the students are supported.
- Address whether the reintegration process for suspended students is effective and whether it considers all stakeholders involved. This could be achieved not only by examining exclusion data but also by gaining a holistic understanding by seeking student views on what has worked for them and involving parents.

5.6.4 The Micro-System: School Practice

Building on the analysis of the macrosystem (government policy), exosystem (local authority), and mesosystem (school policy), this section delves into the microsystem, recognising that the relationships and interactions within a student's immediate environment are vital in shaping their reintegration experience. As previous findings highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses systemic barriers, this section focuses on the interpersonal dynamics that can either facilitate or hinder a successful return to school. While many external factors influence student behaviour, schools can significantly impact reintegration through their policies and the quality of staff-student interactions to foster school belonging. It is, therefore, essential that schools adopt reintegration policies that not only support fostering school belonging but also actively engage and invest in school staff to understand what a valuable role

they play in a student's life who may be experiencing difficulties. Findings highlight the need for teachers to be supported and feel supported to foster healthy and positive relationships with their students. This can be achieved through training and support for teachers to understand how the impact different systems around the suspended student can impact.

In summary, school staff working directly with suspended students would benefit from:

- Being trained on relational approaches, and why behaviourist approaches do not always work. This can be addressed by understanding how school staff can apply these approaches specifically to their practice within the classroom and outside of it. This can be achieved from ongoing training and collaborative working to suit the needs of suspended students and in line with how their school system operates.
- Creating safe spaces for school staff to reflect on their practices and address potential unconscious biases.
- Having their well-being supported by established support groups within their school.
- Ensuring that the student feels heard, supported, valued, and not judged or blamed. This can be achieved through school staff being informed on how best to support the suspended student and the key adults that they can approach for advice.

5.7 Conclusion

This study explored the reintegration process of suspended students at secondary schools, as research addressing this area is extremely limited and tends to examine the experiences of the suspended students rather than what secondary schools do. While this was a small-scale study, it has added some clarity to the reintegration process from the perspectives of the secondary school staff involved and EPs. The present study highlighted some of the school practices employed to support suspended students, and the strengths and barriers of the process. Importantly, the key messages are that secondary schools need to be provided with evidence-based approaches that work and do not involve another measure they have to meet. The exclusion figures

provided by the DfE highlight that suspensions are high and force schools to reduce them without providing evidence-based approaches that work and are preventative. The government supports a behaviourist approach, which is not inclusive of all CYP and then promotes inclusion through other policies. Inclusion should be seen as a foundation that is at the heart of all school policies (Ainscow, 2024). All who work with suspended students need to view the reintegration process as one to include rather than reintegrate. Schools need to be provided with not only recommended steps for the reintegration process but an explanation as to why. Reducing suspensions through processes that are meaningful to schools will ultimately reduce all forms of exclusions. Educational Psychologists have a valuable role to play here in supporting secondary schools. This present study, while small, hopes to raise awareness and understanding of the vital role reintegration practices play in reducing exclusions.

6 References

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Questionnaires

7.1.1 Appendix 1a: School Staff Questionnaire

Reintegration Process School Staff

Start of Block: Information and Consent

Questionnaire Information sheet and Consent form:

Dear colleague,

I am inviting you to take part in an exciting project about the reintegration process for suspended students in secondary schools. Currently, there is not a set reintegration process that is provided by the DfE, and therefore, different practices exist across schools. I personally feel it is important to explore:

1. What does the reintegration process for suspended students look like for schools?
2. What good practice has supported the successful reintegration of suspended students?
3. What barriers and challenges do schools face in the reintegration of suspended students?

Currently, there is limited research about the reintegration process of suspended students, what is involved in the process and what staff involved and educational psychologists think about it.

Participating in this research would mean that you are contributing your expertise and knowledge to an under-researched area. This is invaluable because we will gain a better understanding of the reintegration process following suspension, how we can use it to reduce school suspensions and how to support schools and young people. The greater the participation the more informed we are. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please answer openly to accurately represent your perspectives, experiences, and knowledge on the reintegration process of suspended students. Your answers will be confidential. You may exit the questionnaire at any time by simply closing the window.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time and knowledge.

Many thanks,

Minoushe Grant

Trainee Educational Psychologist
Doctorate in Child, Adolescent and Educational Psychology
UCL: Institute of Education

Data Protection Privacy Notice The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. This information is explained fully in the UCL Research Participant Privacy Notice, which can be accessed here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCL's Data Protection Officer on data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Consent section for the questionnaire

Please read the information below and tick 'I consent' if you wish to participate in the study:

1. I have read and understood the information sheet about the study.
2. I understand that the school's name and location will not be used in any report or publication.
3. I understand that once my answers have been collected and anonymised, removing the data from the study will not be possible.
4. I understand that the information gathered in the study will form the basis of a research report, and the findings may be used in future reports and presentations.
5. I have read and understood the information above and agree to take part in the study

I consent (1)

I do not consent (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Consent section for the questionnaire Please read the information below and tick 'I consent' if y... = I do not consent

End of Block: Information and Consent

Start of Block: Role

Q1. What best describes your role in school?

▼ Head of Year (1) ... Headteacher (7)

Q1b. How many years have you worked at your school?

▼ Under 1 year (1) ... Over 10 years (12)

End of Block: Role

Start of Block: Formal Reintegration

Q2. Do you have a formal reintegration policy for reintegrating students who have received a suspension (fixed-term exclusion)?

- No (1)
- Yes (2)
- Not sure (3)

End of Block: Formal Reintegration

Start of Block: Reintegration Meetings

Q3. Are reintegration meetings conducted as part of the process for reintegrating suspended students back?

- Yes (2)
- No (3)

Skip To: QID39 If Q3. Are reintegration meetings conducted as part of the process for reintegrating suspended students... = No



Q4. What is the importance of a reintegration meeting?

Q5. The following questions are regarding Reintegration Meetings with suspended students. (Please indicate your answers using the slider where '0' is 'NEVER' , '5' is 'HALF THE TIME' '10' is 'ALWAYS').

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Is a meeting conducted for every suspended student returning to school? ()	
Is there always a staff member present at the reintegration meeting who knows the student well? ()	
In the reintegration meeting are targets set for the student? ()	
Are staff conducting the reintegration meeting always aware of the student's SEN needs? ()	
Are staff conducting the Reintegration Meeting always aware of the students' Data (e.g. FSM, ethnicity)? ()	
Are staff conducting the meeting aware of the student's family context? ()	
During the meeting, Is the student allocated a key member of staff they know they can go to for support? ()	
During the meeting, is the reason behind the suspension clearly communicated to the student? ()	
During the meeting, are students asked how they can be supported? ()	
Are the strengths of the students always discussed in the meeting? ()	
Is the suspended student welcomed back to school during the meeting? ()	
Is it explicitly communicated that the student is valued? ()	
When necessary, are other services invited to attend the meeting where it is felt the school may need additional support for the student? ()	
Does the reintegration meeting still take place if parents/carers cannot attend? ()	

Q6. How are reintegration meetings conducted? (Please select all that apply)

Face to Face (1)

Telephone (2)

Online (3)

Q7. If applicable, briefly explain why the meetings are not always conducted face-to-face.

Q8. Approximately how long does a reintegration meeting last (minutes)? (For example, if the meetings are approximately 15 minutes, please input 15)

Q9. Who typically attends a reintegration meeting? [select all that apply]

- Student (1)
 - Parent/carer (2)
 - Head of Year (3)
 - SENCO (4)
 - Senior Leader (5)
 - Pastoral Support (6)
-

Q10. Approximately, how many members of staff would attend a student's reintegration meeting?



- 1 (1)
 - 2 (2)
 - 3 (3)
 - more than 3 (4)
-

Q11. What are the strengths of the reintegration meetings conducted at your school?

Q12. What improvements would you make to the reintegration meetings conducted at your school?

Q13. Staff Communication (please indicate your answers using the slider where '0' is 'NEVER' , '5' is 'HALF THE TIME' '10' is 'ALWAYS').

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Following the meeting, are the student's teachers informed about their targets? ()	 A horizontal slider bar with a blue vertical marker positioned at the number 5.
Following the reintegration meeting, are teachers informed how best to support the student? ()	 A horizontal slider bar with a blue vertical marker positioned at the number 5.

Q14. How do you communicate to staff the student targets and support plans that were discussed at the reintegration meeting? (Select all that apply)

- Targets and support plans of students tend not to be shared with staff (1)
 - Email (2)
 - Staff meetings (3)
 - Targeted meeting for staff involved with the student (4)
 - other (please state) (5)
-

Display This Question:

If Q3. Are reintegration meetings conducted as part of the process for reintegrating suspended students... = No






Q3b. Please provide reasons why your school does not conduct reintegration meetings.

End of Block: Reintegration Meetings

Start of Block: The Reintegration Process

Q15. Please indicate your answers using the slider where '0' is 'NEVER' , '5' is 'HALF THE TIME' '10' is 'ALWAYS'.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Where appropriate, is a 'restore and repair' time between the student and teacher(s) set up? ()	
Does a staff member check in with the student after they return to school? ()	
If targets are set for the student, are they reviewed after a set time frame? ()	
Are parents/carers updated on the student's progress? ()	
Do you involve other agencies if the student is not showing signs of improvement following support plans? ()	



Q16. What are the strengths of the **reintegration process** for suspended students at your school?



Q17. What are the main **barriers** you encounter when reintegrating suspended students?

End of Block: The Reintegration Process

Start of Block: EP

Q18. Does your school have an Educational Psychologist (EP) they work with?




- Yes (1)
- Not Sure (2)
- No (3)

Skip To: End of Block If Q18. Does your school have an Educational Psychologist (EP) they work with? = No

Page Break

Q19. The role of the EP (please indicate your answers using the slider where '0' is 'NEVER', '5' is 'HALF THE TIME' '10' is 'ALWAYS').

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Does your link EP attend the reintegration meeting where it is felt the school may need additional support for the student? ()	
Do you involve your link EP if the student is not showing signs of improvement following support plans? ()	
Has the school worked with the link EP to support in reducing exclusions? ()	

End of Block: EP

Start of Block: Strategies

Q20. What are the strategies your school employs in the reintegration process of a suspended student? (Click on that apply)

- Reintegration meetings (1)
 - Allocation of Key adults to support the student. (2)
 - Report Card (3)
 - Pastoral Support Plan (4)
 - Review meetings (5)
 - Update their SEN support plan (6)
 - Review of the school timetable. (7)
 - Form tutor involvement (8)
 - Feedback to key members of staff to communicate how best to support students (9)
 - ELSA (10)
 - Mentoring (11)
 - Alternative curriculum pathways (12)
 - Restorative Approaches (13)
 - Weekly Home communication (14)
 - EP involvement (15)
 - Student check-ins (16)
-

Q21. Please provide any additional strategies that are provided by your school

Q22. What is the key to making these strategies successful?

Q23. What are the main reasons these strategies are not effective?

End of Block: Strategies

Start of Block: Views

Q24. Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
The school is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The parent/carer is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers need training to understand how best to support students who have been suspended. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Schools do not have the resources to support all students who have been suspended. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

GCSE targets mean that schools have no choice but to place all their focus on academic progress. (5)

Getting all staff on board is key to supporting the reintegration of a student. (6)

End of Block: Views

Start of Block: DfE

Q25. The DfE should produce a reintegration process guide that must be followed by all secondary schools

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Not sure (3)
-

Q25b. Please explain your answer

End of Block: DfE

Start of Block: Disciplinary

Q26. Which of the following disciplinary measures are used by the school? (Select all that apply)

- Suspensions (1)
 - Internal exclusions (2)
 - Offsite direction of a student (3)
 - After school Provision (4)
-

Q27. Which is the most used practice?

- Suspension (1)
 - Internal exclusion (2)
 - Offsite direction of a student, e.g. Internal exclusion at another school or at an AP (3)
 - After school Provision (4)
-

Q28. Do you follow the same suspension reintegration process for students who have been Internally excluded?

▼ No (1) ... Not sure (4)

Q29. Do you follow the same suspension reintegration process for students that have been Directed off-site?

▼ No (1) ... Not sure (4)

End of Block: Disciplinary

Start of Block: Thoughts and Reflections

Q30. Do you have any comments about the reintegration process of suspended schools you would like to add?

End of Block: Thoughts and Reflections

Start of Block: Final

Q31. Please provide the name of your school. (This will be deleted once the data is collected)

End of Block: Final

7.1.2 Appendix 1b: EP Questionnaire

EP Reintegration Process

Start of Block: Information and Consent

Questionnaire Information sheet and Consent form:

Dear colleague,

I am inviting you to take part in an exciting project about the reintegration process for suspended students in secondary schools. Currently, there is not a set reintegration process that is provided by the DfE, and therefore, different practices exist across schools. I personally feel it is important to explore:

1. What does the reintegration process for suspended students look like for schools?
2. What good practice has supported the successful reintegration of the suspended students?
3. What barriers and challenges do schools face in the reintegration of suspended students?

Currently, there is limited research regarding the reintegration process of suspended students, what is involved in the process and what staff involved and educational psychologists think about it.

Participating in this research would mean that you are contributing your expertise and knowledge to an under-researched area. This is invaluable because we will gain a better understanding of the reintegration process following suspension, how we can use it to reduce school suspensions and how to support schools and young people. The greater the participation the more informed we are.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please answer openly to provide a representative of your perspectives, experiences, and knowledge on the reintegration process of suspended students. Your answers will be confidential. You may exit the questionnaire at any time by simply closing the window.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time and knowledge.

Many thanks,

Minoushe Grant
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Doctorate in Child, Adolescent and Educational Psychology
UCL: Institute of Education

Data Protection Privacy Notice The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. This information is explained fully in the UCL Research Participant Privacy Notice, which can be accessed here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCL's Data Protection Officer on data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

Consent section for the questionnaire

Please read the information below and tick 'I consent' if you wish to participate in the study:

1. I have read and understood the information sheet about the study.
2. I understand that the school's name and location will not be used in any report or publication.
3. I understand that once my answers have been collected and anonymised, removing the data from the study will not be possible.
4. I understand that the information gathered in the study will form the basis of a research report, and the findings may be used in future reports and presentations.
5. I have read and understood the information above and agree to take part in the study

I consent (1)

I do not consent (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Consent section for the questionnaire Please read the information below and tick 'I consent' if y... = I do not consent

End of Block: Information and Consent

Start of Block: Role

Demographic Information: I am...

▼ a TEP (1) ... a Senior EP (3)

Q1. How many link mainstream secondary schools do you have?

▼ 0 (1) ... over 2 (8)

Skip To: End of Block If Q1. How many link mainstream secondary schools do you have? = 0

Q1b. How many of your link secondary schools have involved you in supporting a student who has been suspended?

- 0 (1)
 - 1 (2)
 - 2 (3)
 - over 2 (4)
-

You will be asked some questions regarding each of your link secondary schools.

Q2a. Please enter the name of one of your Secondary Schools: (This will be removed once all the data is collected)

Q2b. How long have you been their link EP for (years and months)? (E.g., 3 years and 4 months)

Q2c. With this school in mind, please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree (6)	Somewhat disagree (7)	Neither agree nor disagree (8)	Somewhat agree (9)	Strongly agree (10)
My school and I have discussions around exclusion and suspension figures (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school uses me preventatively to reduce school suspensions. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school openly talks to me about suspensions and exclusions (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q2d. The school has utilised my EP skills to support the reintegration of suspended students in the following ways (please select all that apply):

- Direct work with students at an individual level (1)
 - Home school consultation (2)
 - Working with a group of staff to support students who have been struggling (3)
 - Providing guidance on the reintegration process for the school (4)
 - Whole school training on how to support students struggling at school (5)
 - Other: Please Indicate (6)
-

Q2e. What interventions/training have you utilised to support the school's reintegration process?

Attachment Aware School Award (1)

Zones of Regulation (2)

Circle of Adults (3)

PATH (4)

ELSA (5)

Other. Please Indicate (6)

Other. Please Indicate (7)

Other. Please Indicate (8)

None (12)

Q2f. What has been the most useful intervention/training that has supported in the reintegration of suspended students?

Q2g. Please explain your answer

Q2h. Which of the following disciplinary measures are used by the school? (Select all that apply)

- Suspensions (1)
- Internal exclusions (2)
- Offsite direction of a student (3)
- After school Provision (4)

Q2i. Which is the most used practice?

- Suspension (1)
- Internal exclusion (2)
- Offsite direction of a student e.g. Internal exclusion at another school or at an AP (3)
- After school Provision (4)
- Not Sure (5)

Q2j. Do you have another link secondary school?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Q2j. Do you have another link secondary school? = No

Link school 2 Q2a. Please enter the name of your next Secondary School:

Link School 2 Q2b. How long have you been their link EP for (years and months)? (E.g., 3 years and 4 months)

Link School 2 Q2c. With this school in mind, please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree (6)	Somewhat disagree (7)	Neither agree nor disagree (8)	Somewhat agree (9)	Strongly agree (10)
My school and I have discussions around exclusion and suspension figures (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school uses me preventatively to reduce school suspensions. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My school openly talks to me about suspensions and exclusions (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Link School 2 Q2d. The school has utilised my EP skills to support the reintegration of suspended students in the following ways (please select all that apply):

- Direct work with students at an individual level (1)
 - Home school consultation (2)
 - Working with a group of staff to support students who have been struggling (3)
 - Providing guidance on the reintegration process for the school (4)
 - Whole school training on how to support students struggling at school (5)
 - Other (6) _____
-

Link School 2 Q2e. What interventions/training have you utilised to support the school's reintegration process?

Attachment Aware School Award (1)

Zones of Regulation (2)

Circle of Adults (3)

PATH (4)

ELSA (5)

Other: Please Indicate (6)

Other: Please Indicate (7)

Other: Please Indicate (8)

None (12)

Link School 2 Q2f. What has been the most useful intervention/training that has supported in the reintegration process of suspended students?

Link School 2 Q2g. Please explain your answer

Link School 2 Q2h. Which of the following disciplinary measures are used by the school?
(Select all that apply)

- Suspensions (1)
- Internal exclusions (2)
- Offsite direction of a student (3)
- After school Provision (4)

Link School 2 Q2i. Which is the most used practice?

- Suspension (1)
- Internal exclusion (2)
- Offsite direction of a student e.g. Internal exclusion at another school or at an AP (3)
- After school Provision (4)
- Not Sure (5)

Link School 2 Q2j. Do you have another link secondary school?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Q2j. Do you have another link secondary school? = No

End of Block: Role

Start of Block: Views

Q3. Please indicate whether you agree/disagree with the following statements:

Strongly agree (1)

Somewhat agree (2)

Neither agree nor disagree (3)

Somewhat disagree (4)

Strongly disagree (5)

The secondary school is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful. (1)

The parent/carer is responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful. (2)

Teachers need training to understand how best to support students who have been suspended. (3)

Secondary schools do not have the resources to support all students who have been suspended. (4)

GCSE targets mean that schools have no choice but to place all their focus on academic progress. (5)

Getting all secondary staff on board is key to supporting the reintegration of a student. (6)



Q4a. What strengths do secondary schools need to have to be able to support the reintegration of their suspended students?

Q4b. What challenges/barriers do secondary schools face that prevent successful reintegration of suspended students?

Q4c. Rank each item in order of importance, with 1 being the 'most important' item and 10 being the 'least important' item when thinking about successful reintegrations following suspensions at secondary schools.

- _____ School Ethos (1)
- _____ Effective teamwork in school (2)
- _____ Positive Home School relationship (3)
- _____ Forming a strong positive relationship with the student (4)
- _____ Schools understanding and using trauma-informed practice (5)
- _____ Making reasonable adjustments to support students most in need (6)
- _____ Not locating the issues within the student (7)
- _____ Providing all staff with good quality training (8)
- _____ Schools working collaboratively with outside agencies to support the student (9)
- _____ Schools putting in place a support plan that is tailored and reviewed to support the student (10)

End of Block: Views

Start of Block: DfE

Q5a. The DfE should produce a reintegration process guide that must be followed by all secondary schools.

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
 - Not sure (3)
-

Q5b. Please explain your answer

End of Block: DfE

Start of Block: Thoughts and Reflections

Q6. Do you have any comments about the reintegration processes of suspended students at secondary schools?

Q7. How do you think EPs can help to support secondary schools and students with the reintegration process?

End of Block: Thoughts and Reflections

7.2 Appendix 2: Questionnaire Design

7.2.1 Rationale and Question Type for Each Topic in Research Question One.

Questionnaire Topic	Question Type	Rationale
School Staff		
Formal reintegration policy for suspensions	Closed	This was asked to find out whether the school had a formal policy. The option 'Not sure' was included as this information may not be known by all participants.
Reintegration meetings happening in the reintegration process.	Closed	Yes/No response option to find out whether reintegration meetings occurred. A No response had a skip logic to ensure that participants were not asked regarding the meetings.
The importance of the reintegration meeting	Open	Qualitative data was collected to determine what the participants believed to be important about the meetings. Do their beliefs align with DfE guidance and literature?
14 questions involving reintegration meeting practices were asked. For example, Is the suspended student welcomed back during the meeting?	Closed	Participants could rate an action from 0 to 10. This is an easy scoring system with two definite scoring points, where scoring '0' meant it never happened and '10' meant it always happened. Participants have a wider scoring choice to capture differences as 'sometimes can have a very wide conceptualisation.
Ways in which reintegration meetings are conducted.	Closed	Multiple options could be selected to allow an accurate representation of how reintegration meetings were conducted.
Explanation as to why meetings are not always face-to-face.	Open	Follow-up questions allowed for rationale to be given.
Length of reintegration meeting	Open	This was an open question, so participants were not limited to the timings given. The results could also be grouped during data analysis.
Who attends the reintegration meeting	Closed	Options provided with multiple selections allowed to ensure a true reflection of the process is captured.
Number of school staff that attend the meeting.	Closed	To gain an understanding of how many members of staff are usually involved.
School's personal strengths of the reintegration meeting	Open	To gain a perspective on staff participants' opinions of what they thought the strengths of

		their reintegration meetings were. Also, do these strengths align with the literature?
Two questions regarding information sharing following the reintegration meeting.	Closed	Participants could rate an action from 0 to 10. This is an easy scoring system with two definite scoring points, where scoring '0' meant it never happened and '10' meant it always happened. Participants have a wider scoring choice to capture differences, as 'sometimes' or 'always' can have a very wide conceptualisation.
How information is shared following the reintegration meeting	Closed	Options provided with multiple selections allowed. An opportunity is also provided to add their personal options to ensure a true reflection of the process is captured.
Five questions were asked about additional steps taken following the reintegration meeting to support the suspended student.	Closed	Participants could rate an action from 0 to 10. This is an easy scoring system with two definite scoring points, where scoring '0' meant it never happened and '10' meant it always happened. Participants have a wider scoring choice to capture differences, as 'sometimes' or 'always' can have a very wide conceptualisation.
Seeking EP support with reintegration of suspended students.	Closed	To find out whether the school worked with an EP, there was a Yes/No/Not sure response option. A no response had a skip logic to ensure that participants were not asked about EP involvement.
Three questions were asked about whether the EPs that worked with the schools were used for the reintegration process.	Closed	Participants could rate an action from 0 to 10. This is an easy scoring system with two definite scoring points, where scoring '0' meant it never happened and '10' meant it always happened. Participants have a wider scoring choice to capture differences, as 'sometimes' or 'always' can have a very wide conceptualisation.
Selecting strategies used by the school to support the reintegration of their suspended students.	Closed	Options provided with multiple selections allowed to ensure a true reflection of the process is captured.
Providing additional strategies used to support the reintegration of their suspended students.	Open	A follow-up question to provide staff participants with the opportunity to add any other strategies that were not included in the previous question.
EP		
Three questions were asked regarding secondary schools having conversations with EPs about exclusions	Closed	These questions were only asked of EP participants who indicated they were working with secondary schools. They were specific to the secondary school that EPs named they were working with. EPs who had more than one secondary school were asked this question

		more than once but were limited to answering it twice so as not to make the questionnaire too time-consuming for some of them. A five-point Likert scale was utilised here for participant ease.
Selecting how EPs felt they were utilised to support the reintegration process of suspended students.	Closed	Options provided with multiple selections allowed. An opportunity is also provided to add their personal options to ensure a true reflection of the process is captured.
Identifying with reason the most useful intervention EPs felt they used to support the reintegration process of suspended students.	Open	To gain a perspective on EP participants' opinions on what they felt benefited the schools and the reason.

7.2.2 Rationale and Question Type for Each Topic in Research Question Two

Questionnaire Topic	Question Type	Rationale
School Staff		
The key to ensuring strategies employed to support the reintegration of suspended students was successful.	Open	To gain a perspective on staff participants' opinions of what they thought contributed to the success of the strategies they utilised in the process and to explore whether there are additional themes that were not considered or highlighted in the literature.
The strengths of the reintegration process of the school	Open	To gain a perspective on staff participants' opinions of what they thought the strengths of their reintegration process were, and to explore whether there are additional themes that were not considered or highlighted in the literature.
EP		
Strengths needed by schools to ensure a successful reintegration of a suspended student.	Open	Gaining additional perspectives from EPs who work within school systems and what they believe contributes to the successful reintegration of suspended students.
Ranking in order of importance the factors needed to reintegrate a suspended student successfully.	Closed	Ranking factors in order of importance to find out EP perspectives on what they thought were the most important to ensure a successful suspension reintegration process.

7.2.3 Rationale and Question Type for Each Topic in Research Question Three

Questionnaire Topic	Question Type	Rationale
School Staff		
Reasons why strategies employed to support the reintegration of suspended students were ineffective.	Open	Exploring the perspectives of school staff directly involved in the reintegration process to what hindered the strategies they used.
Challenges faced by schools with the reintegration process of suspended students.	Open	Exploring the perspectives of what school staff felt were the barriers they experienced with the reintegration process of suspended students. Also, to explore whether there are additional themes that were not considered or highlighted in the literature.

EP		
Challenges faced by schools with the reintegration process of suspended students.	Open	Exploring the perspectives of what EPs felt were the barriers experienced with the reintegration process of suspended students. Also, to explore whether there are additional themes that were not considered or highlighted in the literature.
How EPs can support secondary schools with the reintegration process of suspended students.	Open	For EPs to provide their perspectives on how they can support schools to address challenges faced to ensure a successful reintegration process for suspended students.
School Staff and EP		
Seven questions about possible challenges schools face that impact the reintegration process of suspended students	Closed	A five-point Likert scale was utilised here for participant ease and to capture opinions on whether they agreed/disagreed with statements regarding the responsibility and impact of the reintegration process of suspended secondary school students.
Opinion on DfE introducing reintegration guidance for the reintegration process of suspended students.	Closed	Current guidance is limited regarding the reintegration process of suspended students. Exploring whether schools and EPs would welcome compulsory guidance to support with the reintegration process. Yes/No/Not sure options provided.
Explaining opinion regarding DfE guidance	Open	To gain a deeper insight into the opinion selected and what would be helpful and supportive and what would not be.

7.3 Appendix 3 Questionnaire Pilot Stage

7.3.1 Appendix 3a: Feedback on Secondary School Staff Questionnaire and Amendments Made

Questions /Overall comments	Phase one reviewers		Phase two reviewers		Phase three reviewers	
Question	Comments from non-secondary school staff reviewers	Actions	Comments from supervisors	Actions	Comments from secondary school staff reviewers	Actions
Q2: What is your position at your school?			Make it more concise. Consider using the term 'Role'.	Changed to 'What is your role in school?' The word 'role' is better as it appears less hierarchical.	Participants suggested that the number of years a staff member worked at the school should be asked as it may impact their answers and how well they know the school.	Added part 'b' to the question: 'How many years have you worked at your school?'
Q3: Do you have a formal process for carrying out a reintegration?			It is not clear whether this is about a meeting or policy. The question needs to be more precise and include the type of exclusion.	The question is regarding whether schools have a policy. The question was changed to 'Do you have a formal reintegration policy for reintegrating students who have received a suspension?'	School staff suggested that I include both fixed-term exclusion and suspension. Schools use the terms interchangeably, but it was suggested that it was initially best to use both words to avoid confusion.	Amended question: 'Do you have a formal reintegration policy for reintegrating students who have received a suspension (fixed term exclusion)?'

				There was uncertainty about whether to use the term suspension or fixed-term exclusion.		
<p>Q8: How long does a reintegration meeting last?</p> <p>Under 5 minutes</p> <p>5-10 minutes</p> <p>11-15 minutes</p> <p>16-20 minutes</p> <p>21-25 minutes</p> <p>26-30 minutes</p> <p>Over 30 minutes</p>	<p>It was suggested that using mathematical inequality symbols (e.g. '>' for greater than) would make options mathematically accurate. However, it was then agreed that displaying the options, as they were originally, was better. It was argued that using symbols, such as '>', may be confusing for some participants.</p>	<p>Leave the question as it is.</p>			<p>Feedback was that having a text box for the participant to explicitly state the time, rather than options to choose from would be better; it was argued that just entering the number of minutes would provide a more accurate answer, rather than leaving the participant to think about which option to tick.</p> <p>It was emphasised that I needed to provide an example, such as inputting '15' means '15 minutes'.</p>	<p>Amended question:</p> <p>'Approximately how long does a reintegration meeting last (in minutes)? For example, if the meetings are approximately 15 minutes, please input 15.'</p>
<p>Q9: In your opinion, what is the importance</p>			<p>Keep it concise. Try to keep the</p>	<p>The questionnaire was amended</p>		<p>In this instance, the wording 'In your</p>

of a reintegration meeting?			questions short, as the participants this is aimed at are busy and have little time to spare.	to take this feedback into account.		opinion' was removed from the question.
Q24: Where appropriate, is repair time between the student and teacher set up?			It was suggested to include 'restore' to clarify the question.	The question was amended to include 'restore.'		The question was then revised as: 'Where appropriate, is repair and restore time between the student and teacher set up?'
Q32: What are the strategies your school employs in the reintegration process of suspended students? (Options were provided in the actual questionnaire.)					One reviewer was not familiar with the term 'ELSA,' which was one of the options in the questionnaire. This reviewer also suggested that I include the option of 'a school counsellor'. Other strategies, such as 'school report', was suggested.	The schools in the London boroughs that the questionnaire was aimed at participants that knew ELSAs. Therefore, this question would only be amended if the questionnaire was extended to secondary schools outside the two boroughs. School report included in options.

Q38: All the above are responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful.	It was suggested that I could remove this question to shorten the questionnaire.	This was initially not taken out of my second pilot to gain more feedback from other reviewers.	This question was then also highlighted by supervisors as redundant.	Based on feedback from both sets of reviewers, this question was finally removed.		
Overall Comments						
Response options.			It was suggested that a number scale be used for options rather than 'Yes,' 'No,' and 'Sometimes.' This will make it easier to read and understand. Possibly using a scale.	This was taken to the school staff reviewers. Would they prefer a scale?	Feedback was given that using a 0 to 10 scale was easier for them to understand and respond quickly.	The questions were amended to using a 0 to 10 scale.
Grouping of questions	Reviewers suggested that questions were grouped under subsections to make it easier for participants to follow.	The questionnaire was divided into sections that included 'reintegration meetings,' 'reintegration process,' and 'EP involvement.'			Staff reviewers suggested that if the questionnaire was going to be online, then certain sections should be skipped without having to answer, 'Not applicable.'	Answering questions 'No' to questions such as 'not conducting reintegration meetings for suspended students' meant that the participants were not asked about 'reintegration meetings.'

Skipping questions			The questionnaire takes around 15 minutes to complete. Because of the time needed to fill in all the questions, it was suggested that text-response questions should not be enforceable, as the questionnaire length could put off some participants if they had to answer every single question.	Text response questions could be skipped should the participant wish to do so.		
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7.3.2 Appendix 3b: Feedback on EP Questionnaire and Amendments Made

Questions /Overall comments	Phase one reviewers		Phase two reviewers		Phase three reviewers	
	Comments from non-EPs	Actions	Comments from supervisors	Actions	Comments from EPs & Trainee EPs	Actions
Q1: Name of link secondary school?					It was suggested that the EP's role should be included, as this would provide the participants' demographics.	The questionnaire was amended to include those questions.

					It was also suggested that the questionnaire establish how long the EP had been involved with their school.	
Q38: All the above are responsible for ensuring the student's reintegration is successful.	It was suggested that I could remove this question to shorten the questionnaire .	This was initially not taken out of my second pilot to gain more feedback from other reviewers .	This question was then also highlighted by supervisors as redundant.	Based on feedback from both sets of reviewers , this question was removed.		
Overall Comments						
Increasing population participation size.					It was suggested that I involve all EPs in the service, as their views regarding systemic issues could also be included. Furthermore, some EPs were involved with secondary schools the previous year but not the current year, and they all understood the secondary school system well.	The questionnaire was amended so that EPs without links to secondary schools could still provide their views regarding reintegration practices.

7.4 Appendix 4: Example of First Round of Coding

First-round coding in three responses. Initial ‘big pictures’ themes/categories created were School System Barriers, Student Level Barriers and Resources and Capacity Limitations.

Categories - STEP 2

- School System Barriers
- Student Level Barriers
- Resources & Capacity

Responses

A behaviour policy that is punitive

Limited understanding of the students' needs

Weak communication between student, family/carer and school

An approach that only includes some people at school, but not all (e.g. the vast majority of the teachers that work with the student have not been involved in the assessment/plan making/review)

Too many demands (e.g. exams, Ofsted1)

Some schools appear to have an "us vs them" approach between staff and pupils, seeking to establish power in order to maintain control. I think this is unhelpful.

Some schools focus on grades rather than serving the needs of their community. They may feel under pressure to move students on who will lower their grade average or who will not meet expectations for increasing their grades compared to their entry point.

Staff mental health and burn out may mean they have less capacity to meet the needs of students with challenging behaviour.

The Teachers may find it harder to know their students and their families compared to primary school, where the Teacher has one class and spends most of the school day with them. The number of students and Teachers makes it harder to have a nurture based approach

I wonder if some secondary schools have a behaviourist approach to behaviour management which undermines some students ability to cope, whereas many primary schools have a relational approach to managing behaviour. I think the shift is hard for some students to adjust to, on top of much higher expectations for their executive functioning skills.

bias: schools will usually form some stereotype thinking towards the suspended students (e.g., they are not teachable, they are not trustworthy) before they are suspended, which make it so difficult for them to work during the reintegration

trust: the trust between the school and the family / student might have been broken down before the suspension, it will be so hard for them to work together during the reintegration.1

7.5 Appendix 5: Creation of Codes

Example of refined coding schemes where codes were created. The second column displays the code for the text. Highlighted text in the second column denotes initial thoughts and questions. These were discussed in peer supervision along with codes and whether they represented the text.

Paragraph	Styles
<p>Limited understanding of the students' needs</p> <p>- Weak communication between student, family/carer and school</p> <p>- An approach that only includes some people at school, but not all (e.g. the vast majority of the teachers that work with the student have not been involved in the assessment/plan making/review)</p> <p>- Too many demands (e.g. exams, Ofsted1)</p>	<p>Understanding of student's needs</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Operating separately/ lack of collaborative working</p>
<p>Some schools appear to have an "us vs them" approach between staff and pupils, seeking to establish power in order to maintain control. I think this is unhelpful.</p> <p>Some schools focus on grades rather than serving the needs of their community. They may feel under pressure to move students on who will lower their grade average or who will not meet expectations for increasing their grades compared to their entry point.</p> <p>Staff mental health and burn out may mean they have less capacity to meet the needs of students with challenging behaviour.</p> <p>The Teachers may find it harder to know their students and their families compared to primary school, where the Teacher has one class and spends most of the school day with them. The number of students and Teachers makes it harder to have a nurture based approach.</p> <p>I wonder if some secondary schools have a behaviourist approach to behaviour management which undermines some students ability to cope, whereas many primary schools have a relational approach to managing behaviour. I think the shift is hard for some students to adjust to, on top of much higher expectations for their executive functioning skills.</p>	<p>Demands and Pressure</p> <p>Behaviour management approaches</p> <p>Demands and Pressure</p> <p>Impact on Staff</p> <p>Would this be?? Student Level??</p> <p>School Structures</p> <p>Behaviour Management approaches</p> <p>Not understanding /supporting student needs</p>
<p>bias: schools will usually form some stereotype thinking towards the suspended students (e.g., they are not teachable, they are not trustworthy) before they are suspended, which make it so difficult for them to work during the reintegration</p> <p>trust: the trust between the school and the family / student might have been broken down before the suspension, it will be so hard for them to work together during the reintegration.1</p>	<p>Bias</p> <p>Relationships</p>

7.6 Appendix 6: Refining Codes

Codes re-examined and refined during peer supervision.

Text	Codes
<p>Limited understanding of the students' needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak communication between student, family/carer and school - An approach that only includes some people at school, but not all (e.g. the vast majority of the teachers that work with the student have not been involved in the assessment/plan making/review) - Too many demands (e.g. exams, Ofsted1) 	<p>Understanding of student's needs</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Operating separately/ lack of collaborative working</p> <p>Demands and Pressure</p>
<p>Some schools appear to have an "us vs them" approach between staff and pupils, seeking to establish power in order to maintain control. I think this is unhelpful.</p> <p>Some schools focus on grades rather than serving the needs of their community. They may feel under pressure to move students on who will lower their grade average or who will not meet expectations for increasing their grades compared to their entry point.</p> <p>Staff mental health and burn out may mean they have less capacity to meet the needs of students with challenging behaviour.</p> <p>The Teachers may find it harder to know their students and their families compared to primary school, where the Teacher has one class and spends most of the school day with them. The number of students and Teachers makes it harder to have a nurture based approach.</p> <p>I wonder if some secondary schools have a behaviourist approach to behaviour management which undermines some students' ability to cope, whereas many primary schools have a relational approach to managing behaviour. I think the shift is hard for some students to adjust to, on top of much higher expectations for their executive functioning skills.</p>	<p>Behaviour management approaches</p> <p>Demands and Pressure</p> <p>Impact on Staff</p> <p>School Structures</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Behaviour Management approaches</p> <p>Not understanding /supporting student needs</p>
<p>bias: schools will usually form some stereotype thinking towards the suspended students (e.g., they are not teachable, they are not trustworthy) before they are suspended, which make it so difficult for them to work during the reintegration</p> <p>trust: the trust between the school and the family / student might have been broken before the suspension, it will be hard for them to</p>	<p>Bias</p> <p>Within Child</p> <p>Relationships</p>

7.7 Appendix 7: An Example of Intercoder Reliability Checks that were Conducted.

This is an example of where the two coders used the code descriptions to code the responses. The number of agreements were recorded, and results were discussed in supervision.

Category	Subcategory	Code (description)	EP Response Example	Coder One	Coder Two	Number of agreements
EP Involvement	Relationships	Building and fostering relationships.	“Empathise with how challenging behaviour can be for school staff.”	2	2	2
	EP Utilisation	Potential for involving EPs.	“Schools tend to draw on social care, health, and other education resources as the work around these pupils is often multi-agency, and EP time is prioritised for statutory work.”	0	0	1
	Reintegration Meetings and Plans	EPs directly working on reintegration plans or attending reintegration meetings.	“Supporting reintegration meetings to identify action plans that respond to the student's needs and strengths.”	2	2	2
Strategic Influences on School Practice	Accountability	Holding schools to account or challenging their practice.	“Challenge Practice”	2	2	2
	Shifting Perspectives	Changing their views/ideas.	“Shifting perspectives of staff.”	2	2	2
	Supporting Understanding	Helping/supporting staff or schools to understand things from a psychological view	“Developing staff understanding around belonging and how behaviour is a form of communication.”	1	2	1

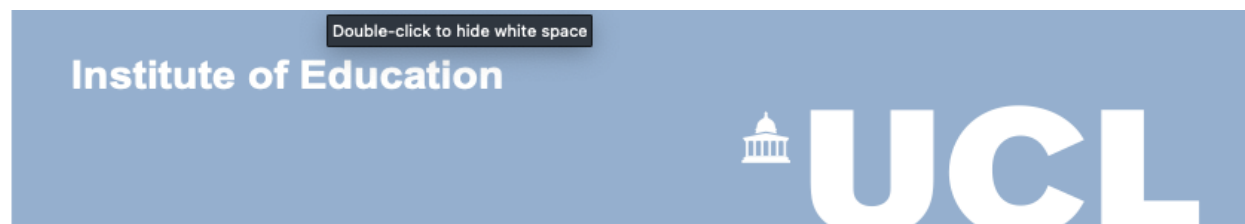
	Collaborative Working	Working together/jointly with stakeholders	“Focus groups with parents of the school - to help each school develop a hyper-local evidence base of 'what helped and hindered' when you secluded/reintegrated our child, from which 'best practice' can be honed.”	1	1	1
	Policy & Processes	Supporting with creating/amending whole school policies and processes	“They should support schools in devising a policy around behaviour management, suspensions, and reintegration.”	1	1	1
	Training	Providing Training	“By providing whole school training regularly to support staff understanding of behaviour as communication...”	3	3	3
	Child Centred	Ensuring that the student is at the heart of the process	“...where the children are at the centre.”	1	1	1
	Advocacy	Ensuring that the student's strengths are recognised and speaking up for them.	“... and also, champion...and strengths of the student.”	0	0	1
Student	Identifying Needs	Identifying the areas where a student may need support or the barriers that are stopping them from progressing	“...through to identifying needs...”	0	0	1
	Student Voice	Providing the child or young person with an opportunity to give their perspective.	“They can also support work around capturing student experiences of the process and thinking.”	2	2	2

Involvement with Students at Risk	Directly working with students at risk of suspension.	"They should be involved with students at risk of suspension."	0	0	1
				Number of Agreements	21
				Coder One Decision	22
				Coder Two Decision	22
				Holsti's Index	0.95

These were six randomly selected responses that intercoder reliability checks were performed on. These responses and their codes were discussed following the coding process.

EP	Response
1	find the right moment to bring up the issue if the school has a lot of suspension and exclusion cases
2	Training, thinking about a holistic plan, shifting perspectives of staff
3	Attachment and Trauma-informed training should include theories on adolescence
4	By providing whole school training regularly to support staff understanding of behaviour as communication and foster greater empathy; to support schools to look into their behaviour policies; if guidance was produced by the DfE, to support schools with the implementation of that guidance.
5	through gaining the student's voice and making sure this is central to the process
6	Challenge practice. Gaining the voice of the child. Developing staff understanding around belonging and how behaviour is a form of communication. Develop home-school relationships. Empathise with how challenging behaviour can be for school staff

7.8 Appendix 8: Ethical Approval and Data Protection Registration



Doctoral Student Ethics Application Form

Anyone conducting research under the auspices of the Institute of Education (staff, students or visitors) where the research involves human participants or the use of data collected from human participants, is required to gain ethical approval before starting. This includes preliminary and pilot studies. Please answer all relevant questions in simple terms that can be understood by a lay person and note that your form may be returned if incomplete.

Registering your study with the UCL Data Protection Officer as part of the UCL Research Ethics Review Process

If you are proposing to collect personal data i.e. data from which a living individual can be identified you **must be registered with the UCL Data Protection Office before you submit your ethics application for review**. To do this, email the complete ethics form to the [UCL Data Protection Office](#). Once your registration number is received, add it to the form* and submit it to your supervisor for approval. If the Data Protection Office advises you to make changes to the way in which you propose to collect and store the data this should be reflected in your ethics application form.

Please note that the completion of the [UCL GDPR online training](#) is mandatory for all PhD students.

Section 1 – Project details

- a. Project title: **What Are the Current Processes for the Reintegration of Students That Have Been Suspended from Secondary Schools Across Two London Boroughs?**
- b. Student name and ID number (e.g. ABC12345678): **Minoushe Grant (19170377)**
- c. ***UCL Data Protection Registration Number: Z6364106/2023/11/42 social research**
 - a. Date Issued: **10.11.2023**
- d. Supervisor/Personal Tutor: **Dr Amelia Roberts/ Dr Jey Monsen**
- e. Department: **Psychology and Human Development**
- f. Course category (Tick one):

PhD	<input type="checkbox"/>
EdD	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>DEdPsy</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- g. **If applicable**, state who the funder is and if funding has been confirmed.
- h. Intended research start date: **20.11.23**
- i. Intended research end date: **20.05.23**
- j. Country fieldwork will be conducted in: **England**
- k. If research to be conducted abroad please check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#) and submit a completed travel risk assessment form (see guidelines). If

Section 10 – Declaration

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge the information in this form is correct and that this is a full description of the ethical issues that may arise in the course of this project.

I have discussed the ethical issues relating to my research with my supervisor.

Yes No

I have attended the appropriate ethics training provided by my course.

Yes No

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge:

The above information is correct and that this is a full description of the ethics issues that may arise in the course of this project.

Name **Minoushe Grant**

Date **15.10.2023**

Please submit your completed ethics forms to your supervisor for review.

Notes and references

Professional code of ethics

You should read and understand relevant ethics guidelines, for example:

[British Psychological Society](#) (2018) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*

Or

[British Educational Research Association](#) (2018) *Ethical Guidelines*

Or

[British Sociological Association](#) (2017) *Statement of Ethical Practice*

Please see the respective websites for these or later versions; direct links to the latest versions are available on the [Institute of Education Research Ethics website](#).

Disclosure and Barring Service checks

If you are planning to carry out research in regulated Education environments such as Schools, or if your research will bring you into contact with children and young people (under the age of 18), you will need to have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) CHECK, before you start. The DBS was previously known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). If you do not already hold a current DBS check, and have not registered with the DBS update service, you will need to obtain one through at IOE.

Ensure that you apply for the DBS check in plenty of time as will take around 4 weeks, though can take longer depending on the circumstances.

Further references

Robson, Colin (2011). *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner researchers* (3rd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.

This text has a helpful section on ethical considerations.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. (2011) *The Ethics of Research with Children and Young People: A Practical Handbook*. London: Sage.

This text has useful suggestions if you are conducting research with children and young people.

Wiles, R. (2013) *What are Qualitative Research Ethics?* Bloomsbury.

A useful and short text covering areas including informed consent, approaches to research ethics including examples of ethical dilemmas.

Departmental Use

If a project raises particularly challenging ethics issues, or a more detailed review would be appropriate, the supervisor must refer the application to the Research Development Administrator via email so that it can be submitted to the IOE Research Ethics Committee for consideration. A departmental research ethics coordinator or representative can advise you to support your review process, or help decide whether an application should be referred to the REC. If unsure please refer to the guidelines explaining when to refer the ethics application to the IOE Research Ethics Committee, posted on the committee's website.

Student name: Minoushe Grant

Student department: [Psychology and Human Development](#)

Course: [DEdPsy](#)


Project Title: [What Are the Current Processes for the Reintegration of Students That Have Been Suspended from Secondary Schools Across Two Outer-London Boroughs?](#)

Reviewer 1

Supervisor/first reviewer name: Amelia Roberts

Do you foresee any ethical difficulties with this research?


No

Supervisor/first reviewer signature: 

Date: 24th Nov 2023

Reviewer 2

Second reviewer name: Jeremy Monsen

Second reviewer signature: 

Date: 30th November 2023

Decision on behalf of reviewers

Approved

Approved subject to the following additional measures

Not approved for the reasons given below

Referred to the REC for review

Points to be noted by other reviewers and in report to REC:



Comments from reviewers for the applicant:




Once it is approved by both reviewers, students should submit their ethics application form to the Centre for Doctoral Education team: IOE.CDE@ucl.ac.uk.

RE: Signed Ethics - Message (HT...)

File Message Help

Share to Teams All Apps Find Zoom

RE: Signed Ethics

 IOE.Doctorate In Educational Psychology
To Grant, Minoushe Mon 04/12/2023 09:47

Start your reply all with: [Thank you for your confirmation.](#) [Great news! Thank you!](#) [Thank you!](#) [Feedback](#)

Dear Minoushe,

I am pleased to inform you that your Ethics Application for your research project on the Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology, has been approved. If you have any further queries, please contact your supervisor directly.

Please note that if your proposed study and methodology changes markedly from what you have outlined in your ethics review application, you may need to complete and submit a new or revised application. Should this possibility arise, please discuss with your supervisor in the first instance before you proceed with a new/revised application.

Many thanks,
Linh

Linh Dong
Programme Administrator
Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DEdPsy)
Centre for Doctoral Education
IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society
Academic Programmes Office
20 Bedford Way, W1CH 0AL

From: Grant, Minoushe <minoushe.grant@ucl.ac.uk>

20231110 Email confirm Z6364106 2023 11 42



Crouch, Spenser on behalf of Finance.Data Protection
To Grant, Minoushe

Reply Reply All Forward

Fri 10/11/2023 10:50

- doctoral-research-ethics-application Minoushe Grant.docx 96 KB
- Map of themes for questionnaires & Interview Schedules .docx 115 KB
- UCL A4 EP information Sheet.docx 53 KB
- UCL A4 HT SLT into letter.docx 47 KB
- UCL Exclusion Officer Info Sheet.docx
- UCL Focus group consent.docx

Hi,

Thank you for your application to register with the Data Protection Office. I am pleased to confirm that this project is now registered under, reference No Z6364106/2023/11/42 social research in line with UCL's Data Protection Policy.

You may quote this reference on your Ethics Application Form, or any other related forms.

You should make arrangements as early as possible for the secure long-term storage of your data, taking into account any specific requirements of your department or funder. UCL staff and PhD students can use the [UCL Research Data Repository](#) while undergraduate and Masters students may want to ask their supervisors about the [Open Education Repository](#). The Research Data Management team can be contacted at lib-researchsupport@ucl.ac.uk.

UCL staff can contact the Records Office records.office@ucl.ac.uk to arrange for the long-term secure storage of their research records.

For data protection enquiries, please contact the data protection team at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

For ethics enquiries, please contact the ethics team at ethics@ucl.ac.uk.

Please remember...

Always use the latest forms from [UCL's DPO website](#) – earlier versions should no longer be submitted.

Regards,

Spenser Crouch
Data Protection & Freedom of Information Administrator & Chief Web Editor
Data Protection Office
Office of General Counsel
University College London
Telephone: 0203 108 8764 (internal 58764)
Email: s.crouch@ucl.ac.uk

Working hours: Please note that my working hours are Monday to Friday 7.30am – 3.30pm. Please use email as the primary form of contact.

If you have a general query relating to data protection at UCL, you may find the [FAQs](#) on the data protection website helpful.



7.9 Appendix 9: Consent and Debrief Forms

Dear Headteacher,

I am contacting you to invite your school to participate in new research about the processes and strategies involved in the reintegration of suspended secondary school students. Exclusions and suspensions of students is a topic that is often debated where there are mixed views surrounding it. However, what is not discussed is the reintegration processes and strategies that are utilised by schools to support the students back to school.

The latest DfE recommends that there should be a strategy for reintegrating suspended students back to school, also for 'managing their future behaviour' and supporting them to settle back into routine. There is no set reintegration process to follow, and this means that practice will differ across schools.

I feel that this is an important area that needs to be explored so that good practice can be shared, and barriers faced by schools can be discussed. I am passionate about working in partnership with schools and educational psychologists to gain a better understanding of how suspended students are reintegrated back to school and how we can utilise best practice to support a successful reintegration following a suspension to also reduce exclusions.

Currently, there appears to be a lack of research that explores how secondary schools support their students following a suspension. By participating in this study, your school will support addressing the current gap in research so that we can better understand the current reintegration processes that schools use.

As a former teacher and senior leader, I understand the current difficulties faced by schools and would like to reassure you that this research will be conducted sensitively and that it acknowledges the current challenges and uncertain times faced by schools. Furthermore, all data from schools and individuals will be confidential and anonymous.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email on [\(EMAIL\)](#)

Yours sincerely,

Minoushe Grant

BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQSL, MA, MSc

Trainee Educational Psychologist

UCL: Institute of Education

Division of Psychology and Human Development

(UCL LOGO)

What Are the Current Processes for the Reintegration of Students That Have Been Suspended from Secondary Schools Across Two London Boroughs?

Dear Colleague,

I would like to invite you to participate in new research about the processes and strategies involved in the reintegration of suspended secondary school students.

Suspensions of students is a topic that is often debated where there are mixed views surrounding it. However, what is not discussed is the reintegration processes and strategies that are utilised by schools to support the students back to school. I am an experienced educational professional working in schools for over 14 years and I am passionate about working collaboratively with school staff to better understand best practices when reintegrating students back to mainstream school following a suspension.

Information for Educational Psychologists

The researcher

My name is Minoushe Grant, and my career has spanned a variety of roles including a Mathematics Teacher, Mathematics and Computer Science coordinator at a PRU, Head of school (Director of Learning), Senior leader with responsibility for KS2 to KS3 transition and Pupil Premium. I am now training to become an Educational Psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at the Institute of Education at UCL. I am

collaborating with colleagues Dr Amelia Roberts, Associate Professor in Psychology and Education and Dr Jey Monsen, a Professional Educational Psychology supervisor, on this research study.

What is this research and why is it important?

- The latest DfE recommends that there should be a strategy for reintegrating suspended students back to school, also for ‘managing their future behaviour’ and supporting them to settle back into routine. There is no set reintegration process to follow, and this means that practice will differ across schools.
- Currently there appears to be a lack of research that explores how secondary schools support their students following a suspension.
- Therefore, it is of great importance that we bridge this current gap in research so that we can gain a better understanding of the current reintegration processes that schools use for suspension.
- This research hopes to achieve this by engaging school staff, Educational Psychologists, and other educational professionals at the local authority to better understand the reintegration process of suspended students.

Why am I being invited to participate?

EPs could offer a great insight into the practices of the reintegration process following a suspension. This will support the development of an evidence base to highlight best practice.

What will happen if I choose to participate?

Phase 1:

- A school staff and EP questionnaire will be sent out via email. The questions will cover the following: reintegration meetings, strategies used to support suspended students returning to school, best practices, barriers faced and EP and staff perspectives.
- I will undertake an independent analysis of anonymised exclusion and suspension figures and do an analysis of the questionnaire data for school staff and EPs. No sensitive personal identifying data will be included in the analysis.

Phase 2:

- I will interview 4-6 members of school staff, other professional(s) at the borough overseeing exclusions and conduct a focus group with a group of EPs who have link

secondary schools. The questions will be around understanding the reintegration process involved in reintegrating students back to their schools.

- The interviews and focus group will be audio recorded and then transcribed. I will then analyse the transcripts to identify themes to answer the research questions about the reintegration process.
- The data collected in this project will be anonymised, so school staff, EPs and other professionals will not be identifiable from the completed research paper.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be outlined in a research project. All participants will be completely anonymous in this research. I will share the general results of this research which will include the EPS and schools once completed. This could be in the form of a presentation at a team meeting, depending on what best suits the service. The anonymous data collected in this research will be held in an encrypted file on a secure server at UCL for 10 years, after this, it will be destroyed.

Do I have to participate?

Participation is entirely optional. I am hoping that, if you decide to take part, you will find it a great experience that will also provide an opportunity to reflect in a safe and confidential place on current practices. There are no negative repercussions for the EPS or individual EPs whether they choose or choose not to participate.

Contact for further Information.

If you have any questions before making any decisions regarding participation, you can contact me via email on ([EMAIL](#))

Yours sincerely,

Minoushe Grant

BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQSL, MA, MSc

UCL Institute of Education

20 Bedford Way

London

WC1H 0AL

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data. This information is explained fully in the UCL Research Participant Privacy Notice, which can be accessed here <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/ucl-general-research-participant-privacy-notice>. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact UCL's Data Protection Officer on data-protection@ucl.ac.uk.

(UCL LOGO)

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Information for School Staff

The researcher

My name is Minoushe Grant, and my career has spanned a variety of roles, including a Mathematics Teacher, Mathematics and Computer Science coordinator at a PRU, Head of School (Director of Learning), Senior leader with responsibility for KS2 to KS3 transition and Pupil Premium. I am now training to become an Educational Psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology at the Institute of Education at UCL. I am collaborating with colleagues Dr Amelia Roberts, Associate Professor in Psychology and Education and Dr Jey Monsen, a Professional Educational Psychology supervisor, on this research study.

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- I will undertake an independent analysis of anonymised exclusion and suspension figures and do an analysis of the questionnaire data for school staff and EPs. No sensitive personal identifying data will be included in the analysis.

Phase 2:

- I will interview 4-6 members of school staff, other professional(s) at the borough overseeing exclusions and conduct a focus group with a group of EPs who have link secondary schools. The questions will be around understanding the reintegration process involved in reintegrating students back to their schools.
- The interviews and focus group will be audio recorded and then transcribed. I will then analyse the transcripts to identify themes to answer the research questions about the reintegration process.
- The data collected in this project will be anonymised, so school staff, EPs and other professionals will not be identifiable from the completed research paper.

What will happen to the results of the research?

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Do I have to participate?

Participation is entirely optional. I am hoping that, if you decide to take part, you will find it a great experience that will also provide an opportunity to reflect in a safe and confidential place on current practices. There are no negative repercussions for the school staff or schools to whether they choose or choose not to participate.

Contact for further Information.

If you have any questions before making any decisions regarding participation, you can contact me via email on [\(EMAIL\)](#)

Yours sincerely,

Minoushe Grant

BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQSL, MA, MSc

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Questionnaire Information sheet for school staff and EPs:

Dear colleague,

I am inviting you to take part in an exciting project about the reintegration process for suspended students in secondary schools. Currently, there is not a set reintegration process that the DfE provides, and therefore, different practices exist across schools. I personally feel it is important to explore:

1. *What the reintegration process for suspended students looks like for schools.*
2. *What good practice has supported a successful reintegration for suspended student.*
3. *What barriers and challenges school face in the reintegration of suspended students.*

Currently, there is limited research about the reintegration process of suspended students, what is involved in the process and what staff involved and educational psychologists think about it.

Participating in this research would mean that you are contributing your expertise and knowledge to an under-researched area. This is invaluable because we will gain a better understanding of the reintegration process following suspension, how we can use it reduce school suspensions and how to support schools and young people. The greater the participation the more informed we are.

The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please answer openly to provide a representative of your perspectives, experiences, and knowledge on the reintegration process of suspended students. Your answers will be confidential. You may exit the questionnaire at any time by simply closing the window.

At the end of the questionnaire, you will be invited to show your interest in an individual interview or focus group to discuss your perspectives regarding the reintegration process of suspended students.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time and knowledge.

Many thanks,

Minoushe Grant

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Doctorate in Child, Adolescent and Educational Psychology

UCL: Institute of Education

Data Protection Privacy Notice

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Questionnaire Debrief

Research title: What Are the Current Processes for the Reintegration of Students That Have Been Suspended from Secondary Schools Across Two London Boroughs?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. The study aims to explore the reintegration process utilised for suspended students in secondary schools. By participating in this research, you have contributed your expertise and knowledge to better understand the reintegration process for suspensions, how we can use it to reduce school exclusions, and how to support schools and young people better.

If you are interested in finding out the results of the research or want to ask a question, please e-mail me: **(EMAIL)**

If you change your mind and would like to withdraw your consent, please e-mail me, and I will remove your answers, provided I have not anonymised the data.

Your support is highly valued.

Thank you for taking the time to participate.

7.10 Appendix 10: Results for Reliability Checks Using Holsti's Reliability Index Reference and Cohen's Kappa

The table below shows each open-text response and the sample size on which the reliability checks that were conducted, along with the results and an example of the coding.

Questionnaire	Question	Responses	Random Sample (30%)	Cohen's Kappa	Holsti's Index
EP	What strenghts do secondary schools need to have to be able to support the reintegration of their suspended students?	19	6	0.71 (p < .001)	0.86
	What challenges/barriers do secondary schools face that prevent sucessful reintegrations of suspended students?	19	6	0.91 (p < .001)	0.96
	The DfE should produce a reintegration process guide that all secondary schools must follow. Please explain your answer.	18	6	0.92 (p < .001)*	0.96
	How do you think EPs can help to support secondary schools and students with the reintegration process?	18	6	0.9 (p < .001)	0.95
School Staff	What is the importance of a reintegration meeting?	13	4	1 (p < .001)	1
	What are the strengths of the reintegration meetings conducted at your school?	9	3	1 (p < .001)	1
	What improvements would you make to the reintegration meetings conducted at your school?	11	3	1(p < .014)	1
	What are the strengths of the reintegration process for suspended students at your school?	9	3	1 (p < .001)	1
	What are the main barriers you encounter when reintegrating suspended students?	11	3	1 (p < .001)	1
	What are the main reasons these strategies are not effective?	7	2	1 (p < .001)	1
	The DfE should produce a reintegration process guide that all secondary schools must follow. Please explain your answer.	8	2	0.92 (p < .001)*	0.96
	* Cohen's Kappa and Holsti's Index were calculated with both sets of participants				

This is an example of coder agreements and a calculation of Cohen’s Kappa using SPSS

Symmetric Measures				
	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement Kappa	1.000	0.000	2.449	0.014
N of Valid Cases	6			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.				
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.				
Category	Subcategory	Coder One	Coder Two	Number of agreements
Home	Parental Engagement	1	1	1
	Justifying Behaviours	0	0	1
Student	Engagement	1	1	1
	Behaviour	1	1	1
School	Capacity	1	1	1
	Collaboration within School	1	1	1

7.11 Appendix 11: Table for Ratings Given for Communicating with Staff Following a Reintegration Meeting

Ratings on Information sharing following school reintegration meetings from the sample of school staff participants (N = 15). Darker shades indicate lower ratings.

School Code	Where appropriate, is a 'restore and repair' time between the student and teacher(s) set up?	Does a staff member check in with the student after they return school?	If targets are set for the student, are they reviewed after a set time frame?	Are parents/carers updated on the student's progress?	Do you involve other agencies if the student is not showing signs of improvement following support plans?	Mean Score by Staff Participant
A	8	10	10	10	10	9.60
B	6	7	6	6	8	6.60
	8	4	3	5	10	6.00
C	7	6	6	5	7	6.20
	10	7	2	3	2	4.80
	10	9	9	10	10	9.60
	10	10	9	10	8	9.40
	8	10	9	10	10	9.40

	10	10	9	10	10	9.80
F	8	10	8	8	10	8.80
K	10	9	7	8	9	8.60
D	8	10	9	8	8	8.60
E	9	5	7	7	9	7.40
H	6	6	6	7	7	6.40
I	8	8	9	8	8	8.20
Mean	8.40	8.07	7.27	7.67	8.40	
Median	8.00	9.00	8.00	8.00	9.00	
Mode	8.00	10.00	9.00	10.00	10.00	
Descriptive Statistics Per Question	Std. Deviation	1.40	2.09	2.34	2.19	2.10
Range	4.00	6.00	8.00	7.00	8.00	
Minimum	6.00	4.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	
Maximum	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	10.00	

7.12 Appendix 12: Table of Ratings Given for EP Involvement in Reintegration.

Ratings on EP involvement from the sample of school staff participants (N = 15). Darker shades indicate lower ratings.

School Code	Does your school have an Educational Psychologist (EP) they work with?	Does your link EP attend the reintegration meeting where it is felt the school may need additional support for the student?	Do you involve your link EP if the student is not showing signs of improvement following support plans?	Has the school worked with the link EP to support in reducing exclusions?	Mean Score by Participant
A	Yes	4	7	7	6.00
B	Yes	2	2	4	2.67
B	Not Sure	9	5	8	7.33
C	Yes	1	6	1	2.67
C	Yes	5	9	9	7.67
C	Yes	3	9	9	7.00
C	Yes	0	10	10	6.67
C	Yes	7	9	9	8.33
F	Yes	1	5	8	4.67
K	Yes	1	8	5	4.67
D	Yes	5	4	7	5.33

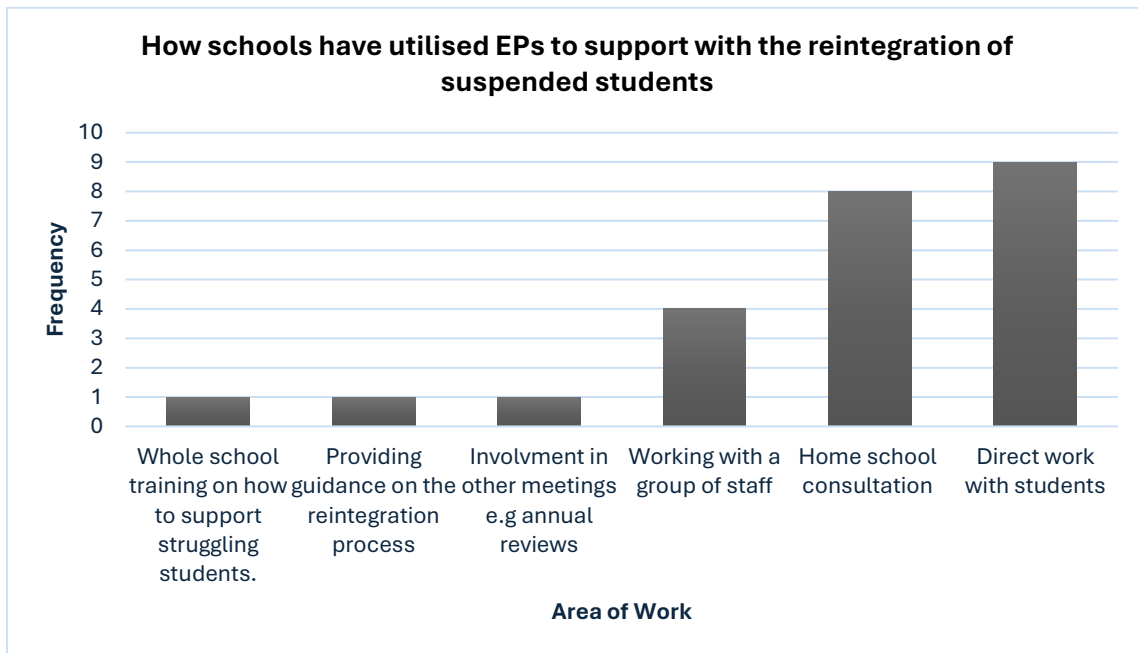
E	Yes	0	1	2	1.00
H	Yes	0	1	2	1.00
I	Yes	1	4	3	2.67
Mean		2.79	5.71	6.00	
Median		1.50	5.50	7.00	
Mode		1.00	9.00	9.00	
Descriptive Statistics Per Question	Std.Deviation	2.83	3.07	3.09	
	Range	9.00	9.00	9.00	
	Minimum	0.00	1.00	1.00	
	Maximum	9.00	10.00	10.00	

7.13 Appendix 13: How EPs Support Schools with the Reintegration Process

Table showing frequencies of how EPs believe they been utilised to support the reintegration process (N = 9).

How EPs feel schools have utilised them to support the suspension reintegration process	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Circle of Adults	1	4.55
Zones of regulation	2	9.09
ELSA training	2	9.09
Neurodiversity Training	2	9.09
Consultation with teachers	3	13.64
Identifying Student needs for schools	3	13.64
Bespoke training for schools	3	13.64
Attachment training	6	27.27
Total	22	100.00

Frequency Graph of How EPs Support Schools with the Reintegration Process (N=9)



7.14 Appendix 14: Content Analysis Results for Strengths of the Reintegration Process Perceived by School Staff Participants

Frequencies from the sample Staff participants regarding their responses relating to the strengths of their reintegration process. (N = 9)

Category	Subcategory	Code Description	Example Response	Frequency (n)
Operational	Target Setting	Schools set targets for the returning student following suspension.	"We set clear targets"	4
	Reintegration Process Happens	Reintegration process occurs consistently.	"Nearly always happens" (School E)	1
	Minimise Disruption	The disruption of learning for the student is minimised.	"We avoid undue delay in returning them to school and learning." (School K)	1
Supporting the Individual	Providing Opportunity to Talk	Students are provided with a chance to voice their opinions.	"Students get the opportunity to voice concerns and worries"	3
	Supporting Student Needs	Support for the needs of students are put in place.	"...adaptations are made where necessary..."	3
	Restorative	Restorative approach.	"This is a restorative process" (School D)	1
	Key Adults	Staff members in place to support students.	"We have dedicated non-teaching student support officers who are able to provide support and get to know students very well" (School H)	1

	Involvement of External Agencies	Other agency involvement. Seeking external support.	"External agencies if appropriate are invited" (School A)	1
Working Collaboratively	Liaise with SEN Team	Communicate with the SEN department for student support.	.. We liaise with SEN" (School K)	1
	Home Involvement	Home is supportive. Home is onboard/engaged.	"Parents always involved" (School A)	1
Having a Positive Impact	Students Respond Well	Positive response from the students.	"students usually respond well." (School E)	1
	Low Reoffending	Reintegration process has a positive impact on student behaviour.	"Very few re-offenders" (School F)	1
Total				19

7.15 Appendix 15: Content Analysis Results Regarding Introducing DfE Reintegration Policy for Suspensions

Frequency of responses from the sample EP and Staff participants regarding the DfE producing a reintegration suspension guidance that secondary schools must follow (N = 26).

Categories	Codes	Example Response	Frequency of Code
Accountability	Making schools accountable for their practices.	"...this would allow greater accountability." (EP participant)	7
Lack of Confidence	Not having confidence or trust in the DfE /Government to produce helpful guidance.	" Based on this, I don't trust them to do anything to the benefit of children, families, or schools at the moment." (EP participant) "The DfE are removed from the reality of school life and stress. Government targets do not help improve things. They just create another measuring stick. " (School Staff participant)	6

Research /Evidence based	Guidance needs to be based on research and evidence.	"Once this guide is the product of extensive consultation...and informed by research." (<i>EP participant</i>)	5
Helpful/Beneficial	This would be helpful to schools and staff to have a process to follow.	"Schools would benefit from a guidance." (<i>EP participant</i>)	5
Flexibility	The guidance needs to be flexible allowing for school differences /Student.	"...but having the flexibility to make their process work for their setting is vital." (<i>School Staff Participant</i>)	4
May Worsen Matters	The guidance may be counterproductive or make matters worse.	...however, if it was not appropriate then this could be a disaster!!" (<i>School Staff participant</i>) "... depending on the content as there is a risk of the guidance making things worse." (<i>EP participant</i>)	4
Stakeholder Involvement	Those that are involved in the process will need to be involved /have a say in the guidance.	" If produced, it should follow a consultation process similar to other DfE guidance which relevant educational professionals can comment on, to ensure the guidance is trauma/attachment / neurodiversity informed." (<i>EP participant</i>)	3
Involve Psychologists	Responses involving the DfE seeking / not seeking advice from psychologists.	"We work with schools and are qualified child psychologists, yet the DfE tends to bypass us." (<i>EP participant</i>)	3
Consistency	Having a set guidance will mean there is consistency across schools.	"Yes, To ensure consistency across all schools..." (<i>School Staff Participant</i>)	3
Individualised	Consider the individual needs of the suspended student.	"The reintegration process needs to respond to each situation, bearing in mind risk and protective factors for the students, their families/carers and schools." (<i>EP participant</i>)	2
Provide Resources/Support	The guidance would need to include resources and support that schools can access.	"...there need to be additional plans in place for how to support schools to implement the steps outlined, i.e., resources for schools to identify what their biggest barriers would be to implementation and how to overcome these." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1

Prioritise	It will ensure that schools prioritise the reintegration of suspended students.	"Yes, It would potentially force secondary schools to prioritise reintegration processes and demonstrate to secondary schools that the government places value on the reintegration of suspended students." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
Fit for Purpose	It may not be fit for purpose.	" I worry that their guidance would not be fit for purpose..." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
Undermining	It may undermine EPs.	"It may undermine our ability to support schools." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
Empowerment	It may be empowering for schools.	"Yes, I think empowering and supporting schools..." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
Financial Inequities	It cannot address the financial disadvantages that are experienced by some schools.	"Government guidance can't address the fact that some secondaries have more resources (due to varied financial contexts) than others." (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
EP Involvement	Guarantees EP involvement.	"EPs should be involved from 2nd fixed period exclusion onward, if they've not been already. " (<i>EP participant</i>)	1
Unachievable	Following the guidance may be unachievable or very difficult for some schools.	"This may make the process harder to achieve, and some school may not be able to tailor to the needs of all students..." (<i>School Staff Participant</i>)	1
Total			50

7.16 Appendix 16: Content Analysis Results for How EPs Can Support Secondary Schools with the Reintegration Process of Suspended Students

Frequency of responses from the sample EP participants on how they can support secondary schools with the reintegration process (N = 18).

Category	Subcategory	Code (description)	EP Response Example	Frequency of Code (n)
EP Involvement	Relationships	Building and fostering relationships.	“Empathise with how challenging behaviour can be for school staff.”	2
	EP Utilisation	Potential for involving EPs.	“Schools tend to draw on social care, health, and other education resources as the work around these pupils is often multi-agency, and EP time is prioritised for statutory work.”	5
	Reintegration Meetings and Plans	EPs directly working on reintegration plans or attending reintegration meetings.	“Supporting reintegration meetings to identify action plans that respond to the student's needs and strengths.”	6
				13
Strategic Influences on School Practice	Accountability	Holding schools to account or challenging their practice.	“Challenge Practice”	2
	Shifting Perspectives	Changing their views/ideas.	“Shifting perspectives of staff.”	2
	Supporting Understanding	Helping/supporting staff or schools to understand things from a psychological view	“Developing staff understanding around belonging and how behaviour is a form of communication”	5

	Collaborative Working	Working together/jointly with stakeholders	“Focus groups with parents of the school - to help each school develop a hyper-local evidence base of 'what helped and hindered' when you secluded/reintegrated our child, from which 'best practice' can be honed.”	8
	Policy & Processes	Supporting with creating/amending whole school policies and processes	“They should support schools in devising a policy around behaviour management, suspensions, and reintegration.”	8
	Training	Providing Training	“By providing whole school training regularly to support staff understanding of behaviour as communication...”	9
				34
	Child Centred	Ensuring that the student is at the heart of the process	“...where the children are at the centre.”	3
	Direct Work with Students at Risk	Directly working with students at risk of suspension.	“They should be involved with students at risk of suspension.”	3
Student	Advocacy	Ensuring that the student's strengths are recognised and speaking up for them.	“... and also, champion...and strengths of the student.”	4
	Identifying Needs	Identifying the areas where a student may need support or the barriers that are stopping them from progressing	“...through to identifying needs...”	4

Student Voice	Providing the child or young person with an opportunity to give their perspective.	“They can also support work around capturing student experiences of the process and thinking.”	5
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