

Research Briefing N^o 1

Evaluation of the Department for Education School Exclusion Trial

The Department for Education is running a three-year school exclusion trial, which started in autumn 2011 and continues until July 2014. The trial sees schools taking on responsibility for placing permanently excluded pupils in alternative provision and funding the placements from money devolved from.

Key words: school exclusion;
alternative provision

Key findings



There was evidence of change in some trial schools prior to the commencement of the trial. These related to: policies and processes; employing new staff in specialised roles; allocating budgets for alternative provision (AP); providing additional training for existing staff; and changing the types of interventions offered. There was also qualitative evidence from Local Authorities (LAs) that:

- partnership working between schools had increased and processes had been made more rigorous;
- some schools were directly commissioning alternative provision AP;
- some pupil referral units (PRUs) had closed and the role and offer of others had changed to meet the needs of schools more closely;
- there had been an increase in the use of 'dual roll' where students remained on the school roll but were also registered with an AP provider;
- schools were taking increasing responsibility for pupils at risk of exclusion;
- schools were preparing to offer a broader curriculum to meet the needs of all of their pupils;
- some secondary schools were working in partnership with primary schools on transition issues to support pupils at risk of permanent exclusion.

What we did

The evaluation is of a Department for Education (DfE) school exclusion trial running for three years, which currently involves around 180 participating schools in 11 volunteer LAs. The trial sees schools taking on responsibility for placing permanently excluded pupils in AP, funding the placements from money devolved from LAs; and gives flexibility for funding earlier intervention to reduce the need for exclusion in the first place. The final evaluation report is due in spring 2015. The evaluation is assessing the issues arising from the implementation of the trial and the impact it has on pupils, schools, LAs and AP providers. The evaluation to date has focused on collecting base-line data against which changes, as a result of the trial, can be evaluated.

How we did it

A mixed methods, longitudinal (over three years 2012-2015) and comparative (trial and comparison schools) design was adopted. The quantitative elements included: a lead teacher questionnaire completed by trial and comparison schools; a pupil profile form (PPF) completed by trial and comparison schools; and an LA questionnaire completed by each LA. The national pupil database was used to model the national profile of permanently excluded pupils; enable a comparison of the characteristics of the pupils at risk of permanent exclusion in trial and comparison schools and the national profile; and provide additional information about pupils designated as at risk of permanent exclusion. Telephone interviews were undertaken with lead LA officials and in depth case study visits are being undertaken with six LAs.

Further information

The first interim report and the DfE research brief are available at:

[Evaluation of the school exclusion trial: responsibility for alternative provision for permanently excluded children - first interim report](#)

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