

People Scrutiny Commission

19th February 2024



Report of: Reena Bhogal-Welsh, Director for Education and Skills

Title: The Inclusion Hub and Permanent exclusions

Officer Presenting Report: Mark Kennedy

Recommendation:

For the People Scrutiny Commission to note the report.

The significant issues in the report are:

- The Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) Hub is changing its name to The Inclusion Hub.
- The ALP Hub had become synonymous with provision of ALP and managing children at the point of permanent exclusion.
- The Inclusion Hub will focus on Early Intervention to ensure that Children remain as long as possible in their mainstream schools.
- The number of permanent exclusions has been low in recent years however a large number of children have moved out of their school settings through Bristol Inclusion Panel (BIP)
- The operation of BIP has been reviewed to remove the provision to move children out of their schools without statutory process.
- The review of BIP has resulted in an increase in permanent exclusions but a reduction in the movement of children.

1. Summary

The ALP Hub will now be known as the Inclusion Hub. For several years, the ALP Hub has worked with families and schools to provide advice, support and guidance on alternative Learning Provision, and alternatives to permanent exclusion. The ALP Hub alongside Bristol Secondary schools established Bristol Inclusion Panel (BIP) in 2017. BIP was established as a forum to discuss alternatives for children who were at the point of permanent exclusion. However, BIP had become a vehicle through which a large number of children were moved between schools and into full-time ALP. This, whilst reducing the number of permanent exclusions, increased the movement of children.

The Inclusion hub has removed the option to move children without thorough process and has the specific aim of keeping children in their mainstream schools.

2. Context

The Inclusion hub (formerly ALP Hub)

The team formerly known as the ALP hub will now be the ***Inclusion Hub***.

Why the change?

Well, we think that advice around Alternative Learning Provision (ALP) is just a part of what we can offer as a local authority. As you know, as part of the *Belonging Strategy* we are fully committed to supporting the Inclusion agenda for children across our city. Evidence shows that certain minority ethnic and disadvantaged children are disproportionately excluded or suspended from our schools. For too long we have focused on the crisis end of this issue in finding alternatives to permanent exclusion once a child reaches that threshold. We believe that targeted **early intervention** will reduce the levels of suspension and exclusion for these groups and all children who face challenges at school.

We will therefore shift our focus to supporting schools to address the needs of children as soon as challenges arise. We think that a focus on ***Inclusion*** rather than Exclusion is the right long-term direction for us and have identified several strategies to support you to intervene earlier in a child's journey through school. A focus on Early Intervention will allow us to more effectively allocate resource to impact the maximum number of children and families who need our support.

We also acknowledge that there are children at crisis point who need support and that focus on ***early intervention*** will take time to embed. We will still be available to support but consider that for too long we have been engaged at the firefighting end of the crisis continuum. We know that outcomes are better for those who stay in their schools and therefore want to work together to keep children in their local school wherever possible.

What are we going to do?

We have been listening to you about what is needed, and believe we have a tiered approach that will meet the needs of all schools.

Tier 1 – School Based – support to ensure that the school is demonstrating a fully graduated response.

Tier 2 – Triage and Treat – provision and support to ensure that any extra support is targeted and effective.

Tier 3 – Turnaround Provision – Short term placements off-site to address specific identified needs.

Tier 4 – Long term Provision – A more thorough investigation into the needs of a child in an AP setting.

What are we offering?

There are several ways that you can access help and support from the team through the usual communication routes but also:

- Daily drop-in sessions from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. to discuss inclusion with the team.
- Surgery slots to discuss individual cases with a multi-agency group of professionals.

As part of our new commissioning framework, and because of the feedback you have given, we will also offer resource including:

- Access to Educational Psychology, SALT, OT, and Autism support.
- In-school mentoring and tutoring.
- Trauma and mental health support and training.
- Parent support.
- Professional advice, guidance, and supervision.

What about Exclusion and Suspension?

It remains the ultimate sanction for a Headteacher to suspend or permanently exclude a child from their school. We understand that both suspensions and exclusions will happen, but we are committed to supporting you so that, wherever possible children do not reach this threshold.

Both suspension and exclusion are supported by robust and effective legal process that allow the school, child, and families to understand the reasons for the removal of a child from their school. We believe that this process protects all stakeholders and should be the route through which a child is taken if their place at the school is at risk.

As detailed in the most recent suspension and exclusion guidance from the DfE, schools can use off-site direction for time-limited focused intervention and ultimately can consider a Managed Move for a permanent transfer to another setting. We are happy to discuss how this might most effectively be used to avoid suspension or exclusion.

Bristol Inclusion Panel (BIP) and Permanent Exclusions

A review of the Bristol Inclusion Panel (BIP) has changed the way in which children are being moved from school to school and into full-time Alternative Learning Provision. In 2022-23, 218 children were moved from schools and not allowed to return to their registered setting through BIP. These were children who were defined as ‘at risk of permanent exclusion’ by their schools and voted by the Panel of secondary schools to be removed from their current school with a guarantee that they would not return. In the first year of BIP in 2017 a total of 311 referrals were seen by the panel and numbers have remained consistently high. In the last years of full operation of BIP in 2020-2022, a total of 557 children were moved out of their mainstream settings.

The views of parents and carers were not fully considered in this process and removed the statutory right to appeal.

The current format of BIFAP requires schools to attend a multi-professional surgery to present any referrals, where the graduated response is challenged, and alternatives to moving the child are

sought. This approach has seen a reduction in the number of children at risk of permanent exclusion moved through panel from 210 in 2021-22 to 127 in 2022-23.

The surgery structure that currently exists has resulted in very few referrals to Full-time ALP, and this year only 4 children have been through this process. It is perhaps best to refer to the number of children that have been permanently moved out of their local schools this year. This number is currently 78. (For reference 210 were moved through PEX and BIFAP in 2022-23) We are therefore projecting a significant reduction in the movement of children out of their mainstream setting this year.

The number of permanent exclusions has however increased over recent years, partly due to the removal of the ‘easy’ route to remove children from roll through BIP. We have consulted with both the primary and secondary sector and are poised to launch the types of supportive interventions that schools need, to focus on Inclusion and Belonging as opposed to the focus of exclusion and crisis management. Where children are excluded, we are using our Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) to understand the specific needs of children before re-introducing them to the most appropriate setting, with the supportive measures need to ensure success in place.

Our vision to focus on, support, and develop Inclusive practice will result in more children staying in their schools, and less reliance on full-time ALP. By reducing the use of ALP by 20 places in this academic year, we will be able to support over 400 children through early intervention work.

Permanent Exclusion Analysis

There have been national increases in permanent exclusion rates across the country this year. Permanent exclusion has risen by:

Secondary Schools +48%

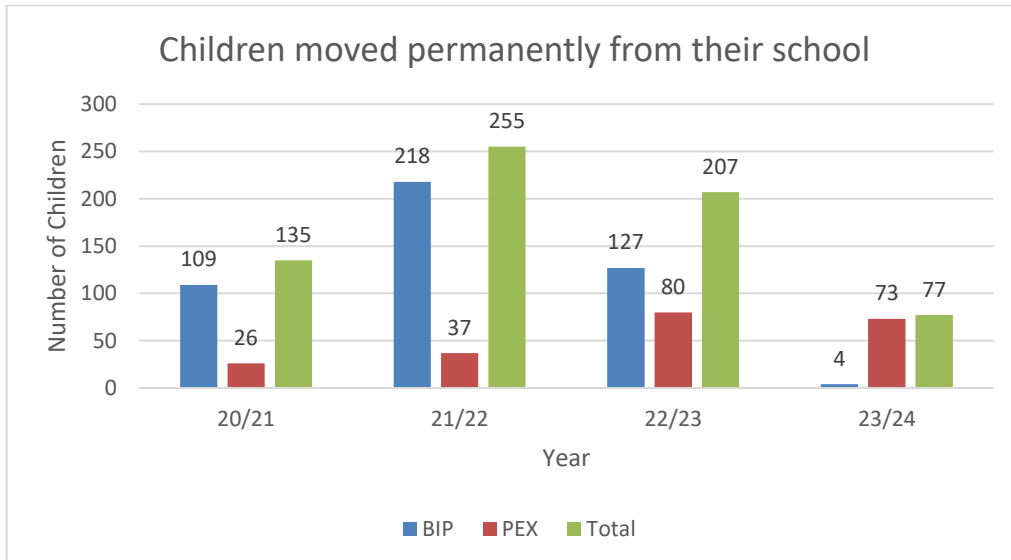
Primary Schools +67%

Special Schools +96%

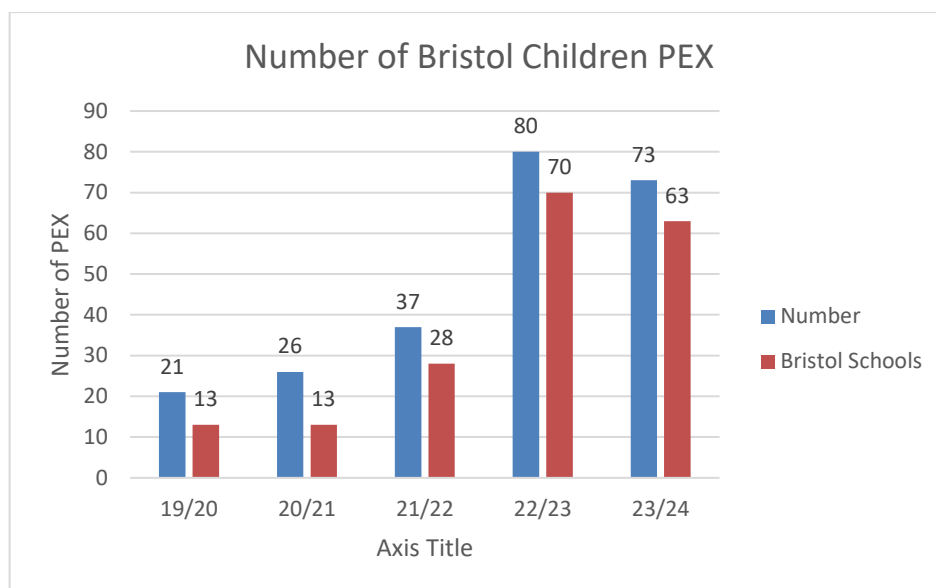
For Bristol it is useful to consider the number of permanent exclusions alongside the total number of children who were moved out of their schools through BIP.

Year	BIP referrals	PEX Total	Primary	Secondary	Special	Post-16
2020-21 (Covid)	109	26	4	22	1	0
2021-22	218	37	8	29	4	4
2022-23	127	80	11	69	3	0
2023-24 (to date)	4	73	5	68	1	1

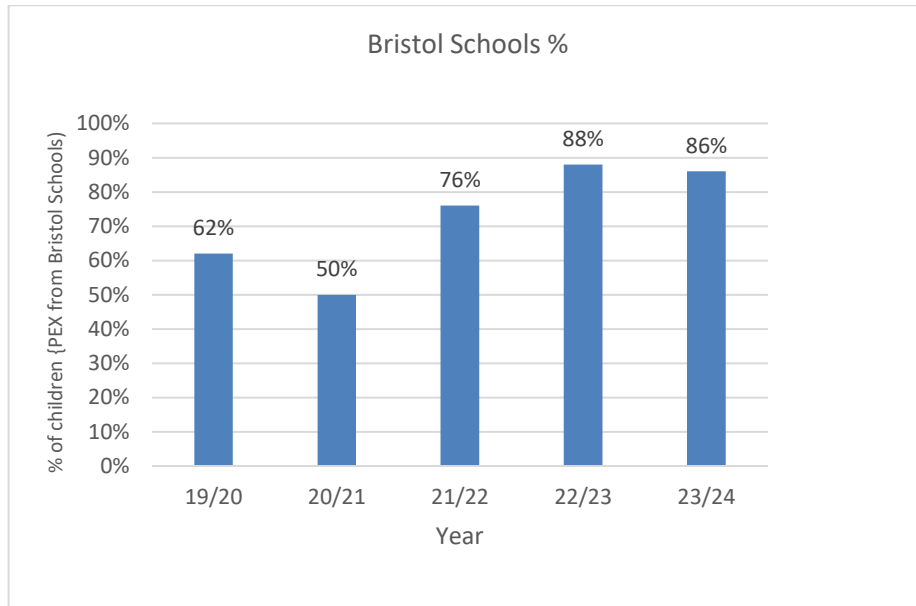
- It is also useful to note that two Bristol secondary Schools have accounted for 24 of the 69 permanent exclusions in secondary in 2022-23, which equates to 35% of PEX from 9% of the secondary school population.



- Although the number of permanent exclusions has seen a steady rise since 2020, the number of children who have been permanently moved out of their schools has shown started to decrease over the last two years.
- We will continue to support schools with inclusive practice and early intervention to address challenges at an earlier stage and reduce the need for suspension or exclusion.



- Since the inception of BIP, the number of Bristol Children permanently excluded from Bristol Schools remained low.
- There was an increase in 2021-22 academic year as schools returned to normal after the COVID lockdowns.
- The significant increase in exclusions from Bristol Schools has taken place since the Safeguarding review into the operation of BIP and the 44 recommendations were implemented.
- The number of Bristol Children excluded from schools outside of Bristol has remained fairly constant in number the schools from which children are excluded.



Rates of Permanent exclusion

- As the numbers of Permanent exclusion were artificially low for a number of years, the comparison of Permanent Exclusion rates to national data appeared to be very positive. Bristol had a very low PEX rate for a number of years, and to this end, BIP was a very successful project.
- Since the review and subsequent changes to BIP there are some trends that require some further investigation and strategic consideration.

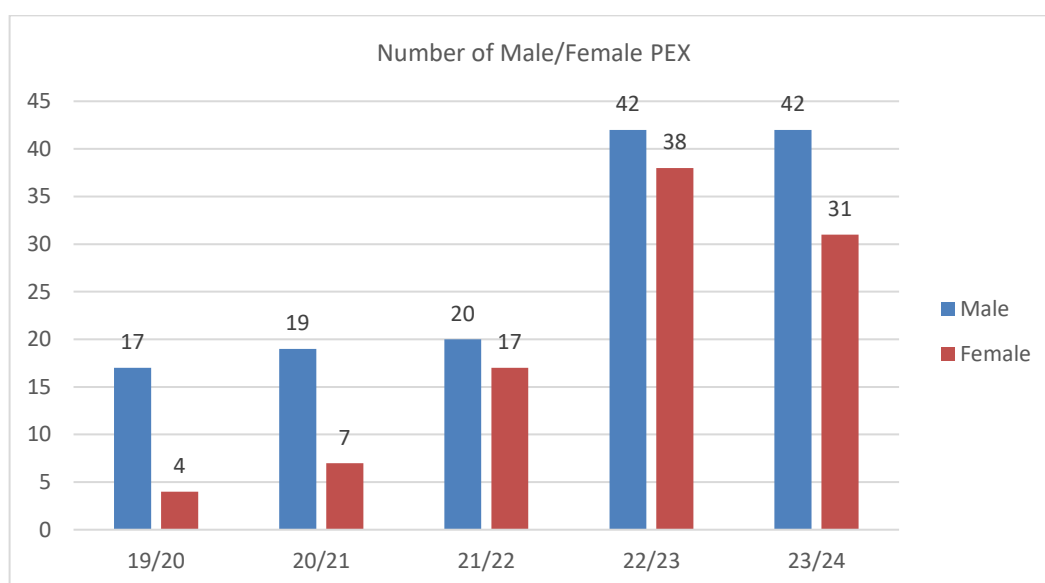


- Since 2021, there has been a more accurate analysis of the exclusion rates for all groups of children in the city.
- The Permanent Exclusion Rate for White British children has remained at a rate comparable to the national data at around 0.04 permanent exclusions per 10,000 children.
- The PEX rates for ethnic minorities is significantly higher than for white British children, and while the numbers of children permanently excluded are higher for white British children, there is a significant difference in exclusion rates.

- The rate of PEX for the group identified (Black Caribbean, White and Black Caribbean, Gypsy Roma, and Traveller heritage) group is currently at 0.75. The national figure for this cohort is 0.11.
- The cohort size for this group of ethnicities 3119, and the number of permanent exclusions so far this year is 12.

Boys and girls

- There has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of girls being permanently excluded from schools.
- Schools have also anecdotally reported an increase in peer-on-peer abuse, particularly in girls.



The data for each of the groups identified and further breakdowns are below:

	2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24 (Terms 1-3)		
	No	Brist ol Rate	Natio nal Rate	No	Brist ol Rate	Natio nal Rate	No	Brist ol Rate	Natio nal Rate	No	Brist ol Rate	Natio nal Rate	No	Brist ol Rate	Natio nal Rate
Number	21			26			37			80			73		
EHC	0	0.00	0.10	0	0.00	0.08	0	0.00	0.05	2	0.07	0.05	6	0.08	0.07
CiC	0			0			0			0			1		
Male	17			19			20			42			42		
Female	4			7			17			38			31		
Primary	6			4			8			11			5		
Secondary	15			22			19			69			68		
Special	1			1			4			3			2		
Bristol Schools	13			13			28			70			63		

Bristol Schools %	62 %			50 %			76 %			88 %			86 %		
WBritish	12	0.02	0.04	11	0.01	0.04	17	0.01	0.02	53	0.01	0.03	46	0.02*	0.04
BC/MWBC/GR /Trav	1	0.03	0.14	6	0.05	0.16	10	0.32	0.10	6	0.19	0.12	12	0.75*	0.11
Other Ethnicities	8	0.04		9	0.04		10	0.05		21	0.10		15	0.14*	

Year Group	No	+ / -	No	+ / -	No	+ / -	No	+ / -	No	+ / -	
1				0		0		1	1	1	0
2	1		0	-1		0		1	1		-1
3	2		1	-1		1			-2		1
4	2		0	-2		2		5	3		1
5	1		2	1		3		1	-2		1
6			1	1		1		3	2		3
7	4		1	-3		2		11	9		5
8			3	3		6		15	9		9
9	5		8	3		6		13	7		17
10	3		9	6		10		21	11		19
11	3		1	-2		1		9	8		15
11+				0		4		0	-4		1
	21		26			37		80			73

3. Policy

The inclusion hub is working with the aims of the Belonging Strategy at the core of its vision. We are determined to keep children in their most local, appropriate education setting, and wherever possible, in their local mainstream school.

4. Consultation

a) Internal

The plan for the Inclusion Hub has been widely shared with teams across the local authority.

b) External

Bristol Inclusion Panel Steering Group
 Bristol Association of Secondary Headteachers (BASHP)
 Primary Heads Association of Bristol (PHAB)

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

- 5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.
- 5b) There are specific groups of children who experience significantly more exclusion and suspension from schools. By working with schools and ALP settings we are now gathering evidence and data to inform strategic decision making about how we target early intervention and support to vulnerable groups.

Appendices:

None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None