GOVERNMENT’S EXCLUSION POLICY – WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

Mark Stockdale

DfES Improving Behaviour and Attendance Programme
Government’s policy on exclusion from school

“The Government is investing in a wide-ranging programme of measures to improve standards of behaviour and to develop and encourage use of alternatives to exclusion. But exclusion must continue to be one of the sanctions for serious misbehaviour available to schools. And, when a head excludes for good reasons, that decision should not be overturned. We have therefore reformed the legislation governing exclusion appeal panels to strike a better balance between the interests of the individual pupil and those of the school community as a whole”

Exclusions within the Improving Behaviour and Attendance Programme

Universal elements

• KS3 Behaviour & Attendance strategy
• education provisions of A-S Behaviour Act
• national truancy sweep campaigns
• anti-bullying charter

Targeted elements

• Behaviour Improvement Programme
• intervention in LEAs with significantly high truancy rates
We are committed to working with LEAs and schools to reduce exclusions

- Damages pupils’ attainment
- Excluded pupils are more likely to get involved in crime
- High cost of alternative provision
- Difficulties in reintegrating excluded pupils
- Why do some schools in similar circumstances have much higher exclusions rates than others?
- But exclusion remains a necessary part of tool kit
Principles to underpin our exclusions policy

- Schools should be encouraged and enabled to take collective responsibility for preventing exclusions as far as possible
- Permanently excluded pupils should be reintegrated as soon as possible into an appropriate institution
- Excluded pupils should be shared more equally
- Need broad range of good quality alternative provision for excluded pupils – and those at risk of exclusion
- Funding arrangements need to support closer co-operation between schools – and between schools and LEAs
Local context of exclusions

- Leadership – by elected members, LEA, head teachers and governors
- Working towards Children’s Services – opportunity for multi-agency working
- Funding
- Local circumstances
- Perceived tension between standards and inclusion
What helps to reduce exclusions?

- Leadership
- LEA wide and whole-school behaviour strategies
- Multi-agency working
- Statistical analysis and data sharing
- Support and challenge for head teachers
- Preventive programmes – including use of LSUs and Learning Mentors
- Strategies to address likelihood of Black boys being excluded from school

Good practice case studies on DfES Exclusions website at www.dfes.gov.uk/exclusions/case
Latest figures on permanent exclusions (2002/03)

- 9,290 permanent exclusions
- 3% decrease on 2001/02 (9,535)
  - more exclusions in 67 LEAs
  - less exclusions in 75 LEAs
  - same level of exclusions in 8 LEAs
- Ethnic breakdown difficult to compare with earlier years because of changes to ethnic codes
Exclusion rates by ethnic group (2002/03)
Reasons for exclusions and data on fixed period exclusions

• DfES started to collect data from summer term 2003
• We plan to publish some information in July – but only national headlines
• Data reliability issues – because it is a new data collection
• How many fixed period exclusions? What is the most common length? How many days are lost each year? How do they relate to permanent exclusions?
• What are the most common reasons for fixed period and permanent exclusions?
Unofficial exclusions

- What do we mean by unofficial exclusions?
- Why do they happen?
- How prevalent are they?
- What is DfES doing about unofficial exclusions?
- Three strand approach:
  - tighter guidance
  - clearer messages
  - exploring best practice with LEAs and Ofsted
What next?

- Continuing to work with high excluding LEAs / schools …
- And promoting good practice from low excluding LEAs / schools
- Is there an optimum or natural level of exclusion?
- Is zero exclusion possible?