

Tackling School Exclusions: Good Practice

Research Project Brief

One of the challenges facing policy makers and school leaders in England is the growing number of exclusions and off-rolling in schools. National figures from the Department for Education show that 7,905 pupils were permanently excluded from schools in England and about 410,800 pupils had a fixed term exclusion (DfE, 2019). The empirical data also indicates that Black Caribbean, Gypsy/Roma pupils, Special Educational Needs (SEN) and free school meals children represent the most excluded group of pupils in British schools.

However, despite long-standing concerns that Black children continue to be at greater risk of exclusion from school, there has been little research into what works in tackling school exclusions in schools. The research report *“Tackling School Exclusions: Good Practice”* examines what works in tackling pupil exclusion by highlighting successful inclusive practice in a number of inner city schools, that have bucked the national trend by rarely, if ever, excluding pupils. These schools, which often serve highly disadvantaged areas, are successful in supporting pupils at risk of exclusion.

The methodological approach of the research comprised of case studies of selected schools. The case studies were supported by a qualitative study of the school strategies used to tackle school exclusions. A structured questionnaire was used to gather evidence on what can be done to tackle school exclusions, as well as classroom observations. As part of the research, a variety of members of school staff and parents were interviewed in order to get a range of perspectives on the main practices in schools. These included headteachers and deputy headteachers; class teachers; English as an additional language teachers and special educational needs coordinators; teaching assistants and learning support teachers; family support workers, parents, governors and pupils.

The key findings of the research identify some significant themes which were evident in each of the case study schools which made them successful in preventing the exclusion of pupils. Key features and success factors included:

- A strong leadership teams
- Shared vision, ethos and values
- Effective inclusion strategy and practice
- Innovative curriculum
- Effective teaching and learning
- Diverse workforce
- Excellent care and guidance of pupils
- Targeted intervention and support
- Close links with parents and community



These good practices were almost universal and included a powerful ethos and strong core values, clear routines, consistently administered, a culture of high expectations and a focus on building excellent, supportive relationships where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive. There were also strong links with the community and a clear commitment to equal opportunities.

This research celebrates those schools that have shown that it is possible to successfully include pupils, whatever the challenges, and provides evidence and practical tips to ensure we can meet the challenge of tackling school exclusions. Schools and policy makers will want to learn from what has proven to work.

Notes for editors

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