



Review of Alternative Provision

June 2018

Contents

Para.		Page
1	Summary of Findings	3
2	Summary of Proposals	3
3	Introduction	5
4	National Context	5
The Evidence		
5	School Exclusions in Medway – Secondary	5
6	School Exclusions in Medway – Primary	9
7	School Exclusions in Medway – Special Schools and AP	10
8	School Exclusions in Medway – other	10
9	Local Contextual Factors	11
10	School Exclusions in Medway – summary of findings	13
11	Secondary AP in Medway – Capacity and Quality-Assurance	14
12	AP in Medway - Primary	17
13	Outreach	18
14	The Local Authority	19
15	Fair Access	22
16	CAMHS and Health	25
17	Elective Home Education	26
18	Culture and Relationships	27
Ways Forward		
19	Objectives	
20	Funding and Planning	29
Proposals		
21	1. Shared core principles of inclusion	30
22	2. Sharing good practice	30
23	3. CPD	30
24	4. Peer-led quality assurance	31
25	5. Challenge high excluding schools	31
26	6. Outreach	31
27	7. Sharing resources	31
28	8. Transition	32
29	9. Number of commissioned secondary AP places	32
30	10. Reintegration	32
31	11. Integrated AP service	33
32	12. QA framework for independent AP	33
33	13. Secondary fair access panel	34
34	14. Secondary fair access protocol	34
35	15. Primary fair access protocol	34
36	16. Available early help support	34
37	17. School Support Group	34
38	18. CAMHS	34
39	19. LA strategy	34
40	20. Elective home education	35

Appendices

A	Review of AP – Terms of Reference	36
B	Home Education Bill	38
C	Comparative Exclusions Data, 2015/2016	40
D	ISOS: Strengthening approaches to inclusion in Medway	41
E	SSG Guidance	45
F	Effective Leadership - Inclusion	46
G	An example of one primary school's internal support arrangements	47

1. Summary of Findings

- 1.1. Important reviews of AP and exclusions are taking place in parliament and the DfE.
- 1.2. Rates of exclusion in Medway are exceptionally high and cannot fully be explained by levels of deprivation or the existence of selective schools in the community.
- 1.3. Of most concern are fixed-term exclusions from primary schools, which were the highest in England in 2015-2016, and permanent exclusions in secondary schools, which had the 10th highest rate in England in the same year, the most recent for which national statistics are available.
- 1.4. In both sectors, numbers of children receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion are significantly high.
- 1.5. There is variability in Medway: eight primary schools account for half of all fixed-term exclusions and five secondary schools made two thirds of all permanent exclusions.
- 1.6. Schools feel that unaddressed SEND needs and insufficient agency support are root causes.
- 1.7. There is unanimous agreement in the LA and in school leadership that exclusion rates need to be reduced and that this should be a key priority.
- 1.8. There are capacity issues in AP, such that, in 2016-2017, the LA was forced to place more than half of all permanently excluded children in independent AP. There are three reasons for the capacity issue:
 - 1.8.1. The number of commissioned AP places is low in comparison to most LAs;
 - 1.8.2. Exclusion rates are very high;
 - 1.8.3. There is very little reintegration from AP.
- 1.9. The only AP for the primary sector is small, serves a local region and is restricted to KS1.
- 1.10. Preventative outreach work all comes from SEND schools and is not meeting demand.
- 1.11. There are structural issues within the local authority, most notably an absence of a clear lead person for exclusion and AP and disjointed lines of reporting among senior officers.
- 1.12. The LA does not have a partnership profile in fair access.
- 1.13. There is a lack of clarity in the LA's coordination of early help.
- 1.14. The SSG is not as effective as it might be.
- 1.15. The recent inspection of SEND in Medway has made critical observations of exclusion rates.

2. **Summary of Proposals** – this review makes 20 proposals which are listed in shortened form overleaf. These should be read in detail in pages 30 to 35.

Exclusions

- 1: Develop a set of **shared core principles of inclusion**
- 2: It should be recognised that there is much **good practice in Medway** and that more could be done to share and exploit it.
- 3: Use **CPD** to raise awareness of shared principles, improve behaviour-management skills, raise levels of engagement in children at risk and grow adults' understanding of underlying causes of challenging behaviour.
- 4: Develop a framework for **peer-led quality assurance of inclusive practice** in schools.
- 5: The LA should challenge individual **schools with very high exclusion rates**
- 6: improve **outreach** aimed specifically at reducing exclusion
- 7: **Sharing resources.**
- 8: Standardise and improve arrangements for **primary-secondary transition**

Alternative Provision

- 9: The local authority should consider raising the **number of commissioned secondary AP places** to around 120
- 10: more **reintegration**
- 11: a restructure of all non-independent AP in Medway, establishing an all-through **integrated AP service** on a single site
- 12: investigate existing **quality assurance frameworks for independent AP** providers

Fair Access

- 13: the **secondary Fair Access panel** should consider either meeting more frequently or giving its chair the power to issue chair's action decisions between meetings
- 14: the secondary Fair Access Protocol should be reframed such that the local authority and headteachers of AP schools are recognised as equal partners
- 15: it is recommended that a **primary fair access protocol** be drafted

Early Help

- 16: the LA is advised to develop **clear information about available support**
- 17: The **School Support Group** could be made more effective
- 18: the LA needs to work jointly with CAMHS on the development of a mutually achievable plan for improvement
- 19: The **Local Authority** should improve access to early help, plan for the reduction of exclusions alongside work to formulate its response to the inspection of SEND; consider its own line-management structures, workload and leadership positions; and Identify a lead officer for school exclusions.

EHE

- 20: quick and thorough **adaptation to new EHE statutory requirements.**

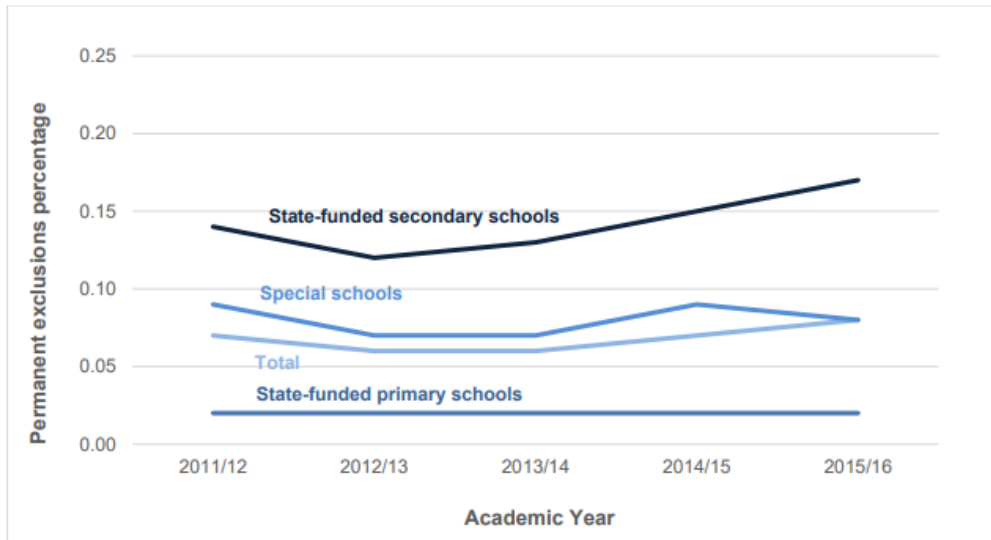
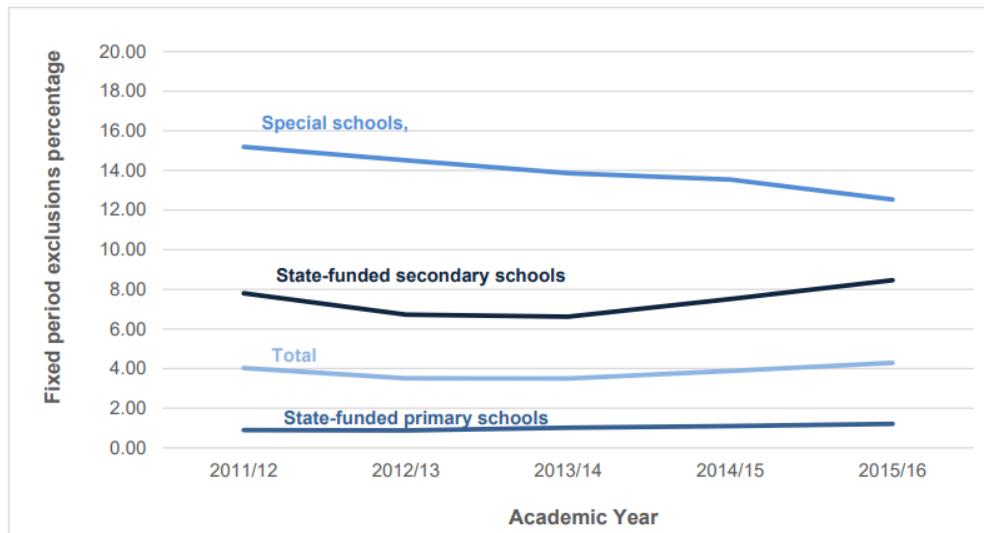
3. Introduction

- 3.1. This review was commissioned by the local authority in Medway and began in February 2018.
- 3.2. Terms of Reference (ToR) for this review were circulated to schools and can be seen in appendix A. The ToR includes two core purposes of the review:
 - 3.2.1. To review whether the local authority can support schools to retain more children and young people within mainstream schools who have additional needs or behavioural difficulties who are at risk of exclusion or placement breakdown.
 - 3.2.2. The review is required to come back with creative recommendations around trialling new ways of supporting children and young people in mainstream schools.
- 3.3. Since the release of the ToR, the local authority has requested that Elective Home Education be included in this review.
- 3.4. Consultation meetings have been held with the following stakeholders:
 - The headteachers of four secondary and seven primary schools;
 - The headteachers of three alternative provision (AP) schools;
 - The headteacher of one special school;
 - Local authority officers in Inclusion, SEN, School Improvement and Admissions;
 - The secondary Fair Access Panel (observed);
 - The Review of AP reference group;
 - A round-table meeting on inclusion, facilitated by ISOS and attended by the Director of Children and Adults Services, the Regional Schools Commissioner, local authority officers and about 20 school leaders.
- 3.5. Data has been supplied by the local authority's Inclusion and Admissions teams.
- 3.6. Some schools and local authority officers have supplied relevant documentation.
- 3.7. A questionnaire was sent to all mainstream headteachers. Responses were received from 37 primary and 7 secondary schools.

4. National Context

- 4.1. The DfE do not release school exclusion statistics until at least 14 months after the end of the school year covered by them. This means that 2015-2016 is the most recent dataset available¹. As the illustrations on the next page show, there has been an upward trend in both fixed-term and permanent exclusion rates in primary and secondary schools in England since 2012/13. This is most noticeable in permanent exclusions from secondary schools which grew by 40% in the three-year period.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-exclusions>

Figure 1: Annual number and rate of permanent exclusions from 2006/07 to 2015/16**Figure 2: Annual number and rate of fixed period exclusions from 2006/07 to 2015/16**

- 4.2. In October 2017, the Institute for Public Policy Research published *Making the Difference*, a report on school exclusion which examines characteristics of the children affected, reasons behind the growth in their numbers, the long-term social costs of exclusion and the quality of AP; it also proposes a leadership development programme.
- 4.3. Seemingly prompted by this report, the DfE and Parliament have been paying close attention to exclusions and AP in the last seven months.
- 4.3.1. The Education Select Committee began its Alternative Provision Inquiry in September 2017². So far there have been 5 hearings and 92 written submissions.
- 4.3.2. The DfE has commissioned two research projects:
- IFF Research is reviewing AP settings, consulting with practitioners, children and families; and
 - ISOS is carrying out a market analysis, focusing mostly on local authorities.

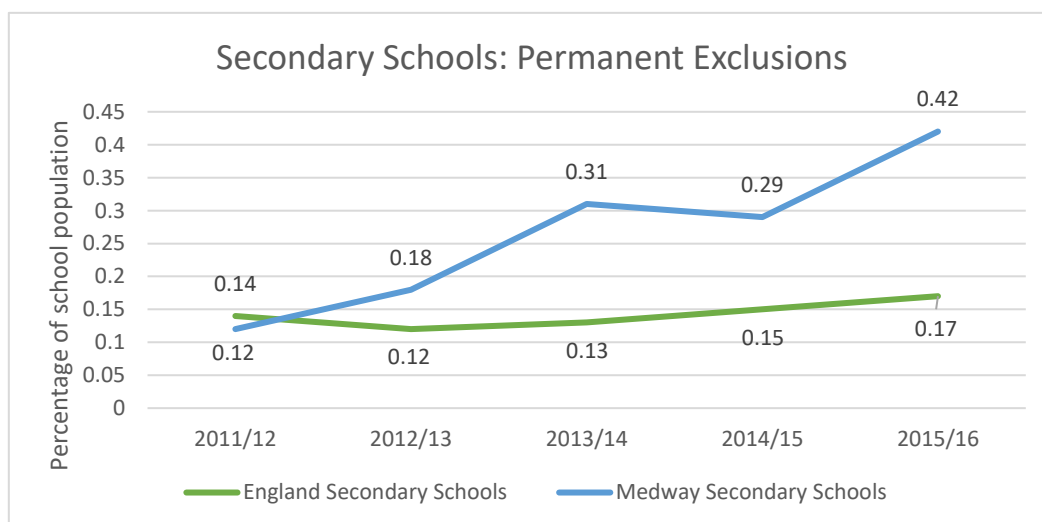
² <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/education-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/inquiry/>

- 4.3.3. The government has appointed Edward Timpson to conduct a review of school Exclusions³. The consultation period has closed and a report is expected in the autumn.
- 4.3.4. On 16th March 2018, the DfE published *Creating opportunity for all: our vision for alternative provision*⁴.
- 4.3.5. Other organisations are engaging in debate and work on exclusions and AP. The RSA⁵, for example, is looking at how schools' accountability systems and cuts to support services impact on exclusion.
- 4.4. The Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Bill, "to make provision for local authorities to monitor the educational, physical and emotional development of children receiving elective home education (EHE)", is very close to completion in parliament. The full wording of the Bill, which is short, is in appendix B.
- 4.5. With such a high level of political interest in exclusions and AP, it is reasonable to expect that new statute will soon be formulated and enacted, as is already happening with EHE.

The Evidence

5. School Exclusions in Medway - Secondary

- 5.1. Rates of exclusion in Medway are very high. This is especially true of permanent exclusions in the secondary sector and fixed-term exclusions from primary schools.



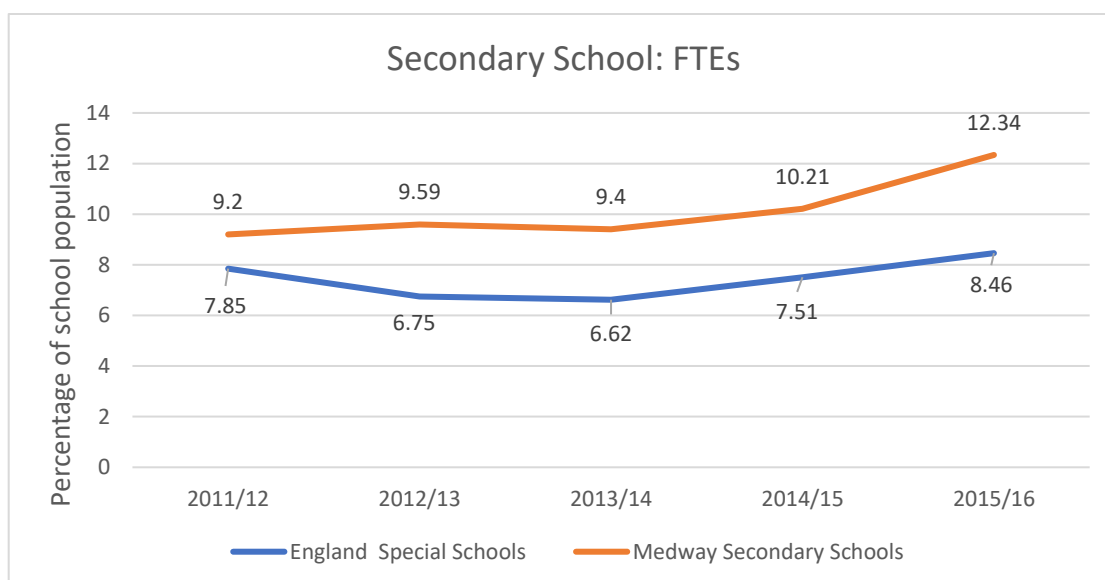
- 5.2. In 2015/16, the rate of permanent exclusion from Medway secondary schools was the 10th highest in England. This rate grew by 133% in the three years following 2012/13, compared to a 40% growth nationally.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-exclusions-review-terms-of-reference>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-opportunity-for-all-our-vision-for-alternative-provision>

⁵ <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2018/05/pinball-kids>

- 5.3. According to data provided by the LA, the secondary permanent exclusion rate fell in 2016/17 to approximately 0.32%, a significant improvement but still higher than 2014/15.
- 5.4. Medway's given reasons for permanent exclusion differ significantly from national figures in two ways:
- 5.4.1. In 2016/17, Medway cited physical assault against an adult or child in 31% of cases while the national figure was 23.2%
- 5.4.2. Persistent disruptive behaviour was cited in 32% of Medway's permanent exclusions compared with 36.2% nationally.
- 5.5. Five secondary schools, all selective, did not exclude at all in 2016/17.
- 5.6. The high rate of permanent exclusion is skewed by especially high rates in five schools which, together, made 66% of all permanent exclusions in Medway's mainstream secondary schools in 2016/17.



- 5.7. Fixed-term exclusion rates from Medway's secondary schools are also significantly higher than national averages but not to the extent that permanent exclusions are.
- 5.8. Since 2013/14, DfE statistics have included numbers of children that have received more than one FTE. The percentage of Medway secondary school children to have been excluded more than once was significantly higher than the national rate in all three years:

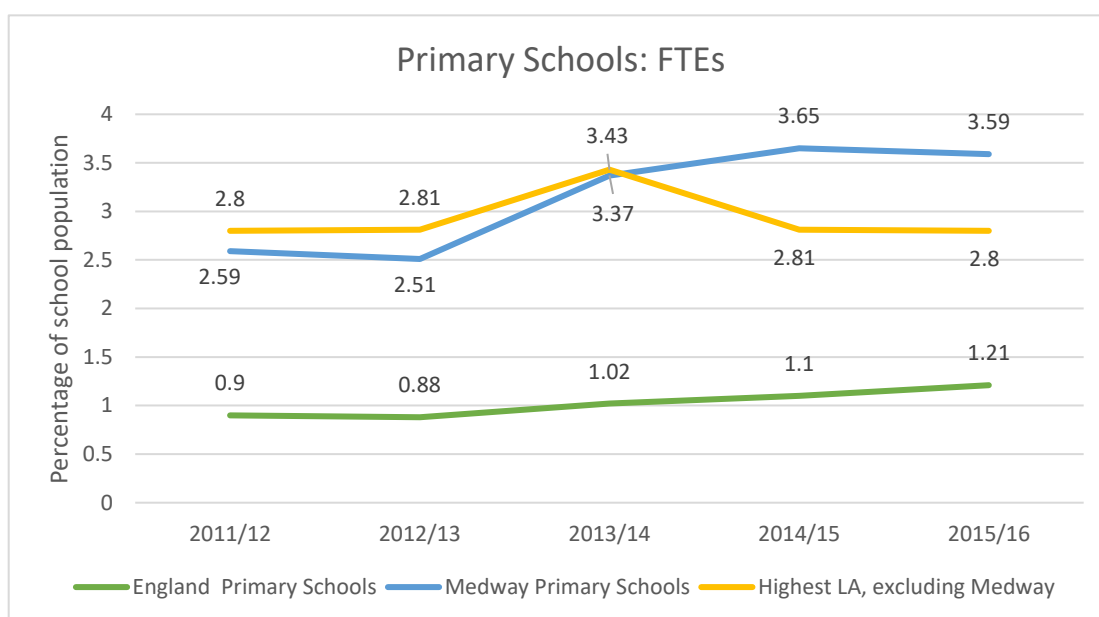
2+ FTEs	England	Medway
2013/14	3.64%	4.26%
2014/15	3.92%	4.57%
2015/16	4.26%	5.17%

- 5.9. In 2016/17, 1201 secondary FTEs involved children who had been excluded at least once before. This is a rate of approximately 6.42%, a significant further increase on the previous three years.

5.10. The five secondary schools with the highest rates of permanent exclusion accounted for 51.6% of FTEs in Medway in 2016/17⁶. 76% of the FTEs in these schools involved children not being excluded for the first time.

6. School Exclusions in Medway - Primary

6.1. While their permanent exclusions are broadly in line with national rates, Medway's primary schools have had the highest rate⁷ of fixed-term exclusion, by a large margin, in all of England over the five-year period. In 2015/16 the figure was 3.59%; were Medway to have been discounted, the highest rate in the country would have been 2.80%⁸. The national rate was 1.21%.



6.2. Data supplied by the LA show that the primary FTE rate grew again last year, from 901 FTEs in 2015/16 to 978 in 2016/17, giving a new rate of approximately 3.90%.

6.3. The percentage of Medway primary school children to have been excluded more than once was more than double the national rate in all three years:

2+ FTEs	England	Medway
2013/14	0.49%	1.10%
2014/15	0.52%	1.19%
2015/16	0.56%	1.20%

6.4. In 2016/17, according to LA data, the number of children excluded not for the first time jumped to 456 which would give a rate of approximately 1.8%.

⁶ Mainstream schools only.

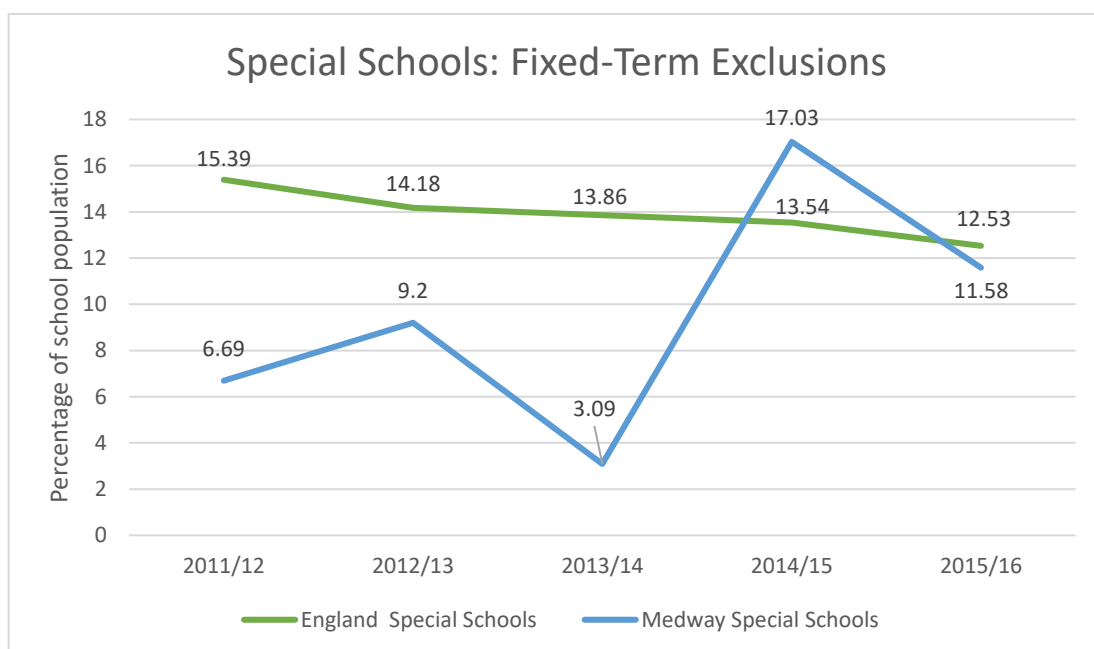
⁷ The number of fixed period exclusions for each school type expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) in January 2016.

⁸ City of London

- 6.5. 21 primary schools in Medway did not exclude at all in 2016/17.
- 6.6. The high rate of exclusion in Medway primary schools is skewed by a small number of schools. In 2016/17, just eight primary schools accounted for 50.5% of all FTEs from mainstream primary schools in Medway.
- 6.7. In these eight schools, 70% of the exclusions were of children not being excluded for the first time.

7. School Exclusions in Medway – Special Schools and AP

- 7.1. Special schools in Medway did not permanently exclude at all in the five-year period and repeated this in 2016/17. However, their fixed-term exclusion rate, having been well below the national rate, rose significantly after 2013/14. The reason for the erratic pattern here has not been investigated.



- 7.2. In 2016/17, three Medway special schools gave 44 FTEs. This is exactly half of the number in the year before, a major improvement. 29 (66%) of the FTEs in 2016/17 were of children who had been excluded before.
- 7.3. The alternative provision schools did not permanently exclude in 2016/17. One of them, however, made 185 FTEs which, given their size, is very high indeed.

8. School Exclusions in Medway - other

- 8.1. Appendix C is an extract from the DfE School Exclusion Statistics, 2015/16. Here, the reader can compare Medway's figures with five regions and three comparable local authorities: Tower Hamlets, which has the most deprived children in England; Bury, which has similar crime figures; and Bexley, which has a similar size and demographic and, like Medway, has selective schools. For each of the rates discussed above, the highest figure is displayed in

bold red font.

8.2. In a meeting of the reference group for this review, in April 2018, the following figures for 2017/18 were quoted⁹:

8.2.1. “The levels of fixed term exclusions (FTE) are rising and exceed last year

8.2.2. Primary schools have excluded 16% more than last year and secondary schools 14%. The number of exclusions in special schools is over 2.25 times last year’s.

8.2.3. Nationally (as at the latest published figures, 2015-16) the proportion of SEN EHCP/Statemented pupils receiving an FTE is 6.3%. This is 32% less than in Medway and the proportion of SEN support children with at least 1 FTE is 5.9%, this is 43.8% less than in Medway.”

9. Local Contextual Factors

9.1. Typically, one would expect see higher levels of exclusion in areas of higher deprivation. Of the 326 local authorities in England, the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) ranked Medway’s children as the 82nd most deprived in the country.

9.2. It has been suggested that this conceals the fact that Medway includes some areas that are very deprived. Of the 200 listed Medway postcodes, none were in the most deprived 10% but 90 were in the second most deprived decile. However, when ranked on proportion of LSOAs¹⁰ in the most deprived decile, Medway ranks 120th.

9.3. There is no evidence here that Medway’s high levels of exclusion are related to deprivation in the community. However, there are undoubtedly some challenged areas, notably Central Chatham, Gillingham North, Strood North and Luton & Wayfield.

9.4. There are primary schools which serve one or more of these four areas where exclusion rates are very low or even non-existent.

9.5. Four of the five secondary schools with the highest rates of permanent exclusion serve one or more of these areas. But this is countered by schools with low rates despite being in other challenged localities.

9.6. One third of Medway’s 18 secondary schools are selective grammar schools and this means that secondary children with challenging behaviour are more concentrated in the 11 non-selective schools and one UTC.

9.7. In 2011, 93.7% of Medway’s population were white; 89.6% were white British¹¹. The 2011 census found that Medway had become slightly more ethnically diverse since the previous one in 2001 and that trend has probably continued. But it is still the case that Medway’s

⁹ Minutes of the Review of AP Reference Group, 18 April 2018

¹⁰ Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs): Proportion of a larger area’s LSOAs that fall in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs nationally

¹¹ 2011 Census Report, Medway Council

population remains predominantly white.

- 9.8. The government's *Ethnicity Facts and Figures* website¹² includes the following statement: "White boys in non-selective schools in highly selective areas were less likely to make progress than any other group in any other type of school". There is no equivalent analysis of exclusions in such areas but, given the strong correlation between academic achievement and challenging behaviour, it is safe to assume that the existence of grammar schools in Medway, where the vast majority of children are white, presents additional challenge to the non-selective schools. However, the London Borough of Bexley, which also has a number of selective schools and a similar ethnic profile¹³, has much lower rates than Medway (see appendix C)¹⁴.
- 9.9. In December 2017, Medway's effectiveness in implementing SEND reforms was inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC)¹⁵. They found 'significant areas of weakness' and determined that a 'Written Statement of Action' must be prepared. Some of these "areas of weakness" are pertinent to this review. On the subject of exclusion, the report notes:
- 9.9.1. "Although improving¹⁶, rates of permanent and fixed-term exclusion are still notably higher for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in Medway than for similar pupils nationally. Some schools have excluded pupils with SEN at increasingly high rates in recent years. Leaders in these schools have not done enough to improve the situation over time."
- 9.9.2. "Some schools have highly effective systems to identify and support pupils with SEN. However, not all mainstream primary schools identify and meet pupils' SEN early enough. This means that pupils do not always get the support they need from the beginning. As a result, some parents believe that the EHC process is the only way to ensure that their children's needs are met. The recent spike in requests for children to be assessed for an EHC plan signals that this is a growing concern."
- 9.9.3. "Although there is some effective work to ensure timely sharing of information at transition points, this aspect of practice needs further attention".
- 9.9.4. "Some mainstream schools are not effectively meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities. This is particularly evident in the high level of permanent and fixed-term exclusions of children who have SEN but do not have an EHC plan. Some headteachers have not recognised their responsibility to utilise effective alternative provision to support pupils at risk of exclusion who are struggling to cope in mainstream lessons."
- 9.9.5. "Although outcomes are improving, significant groups of pupils are not consistently having their needs identified and met well enough to ensure that

¹² <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training>

¹³ Bexley is slightly more diverse: 82% of its population in 2011 was white (<http://www.ukcensusdata.com/bexley-e09000004#sthash.jVKPfg8.dpbs>).

¹⁴ The only exception to this is the rate of permanent exclusion from primary schools. But these are very small numbers and therefore not statistically significant.

¹⁵ <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2755109/urn/80522.pdf>

¹⁶ This contradicts evidence submitted to the AP Review reference group: see para 6.2

they achieve good outcomes.”

- 9.9.6. “The level of fixed-term and permanent exclusion is high. Effective challenge and support to some schools, initiated by the local authority, have led to a notable reduction in the number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities experiencing exclusion. However, some schools have proved hard to engage with and are not doing enough to improve outcomes for pupils at risk of exclusion.”

10. School Exclusions in Medway – summary of findings

- 10.1. This report will make recommendations aimed at a much-needed reduction in exclusion rates in Medway. It should be emphasised, and taken as read throughout, that it is not intended to propose alternative ways in which to remove children from schools but, by improving inclusive practice and joined-up work, to help children to improve their behaviour.
- 10.2. Levels of exclusion in Medway are higher than they need to be, and they are mostly worsening. This is especially true of FTEs in the primary and AP sectors and permanent exclusion from the secondary schools.
- 10.3. The 43 headteachers who responded to the questionnaire unanimously agreed that “reducing this rate should be a priority across Medway”. Asked whether they agreed with the DfE’s description of excluded children as “vulnerable”, all primary headteachers agreed but, of the secondary heads who responded, most agreed only partially.
- 10.4. Levels of deprivation and the existence of selective schools do not explain why exclusions are as high as they are.
- 10.5. It is generally agreed by educationists that exclusion alone does not modify behaviour. This belief is supported by the high levels of recidivism in Medway.
- 10.6. Exclusion levels are high despite claims by headteachers, including those of some of the higher-excluding schools, that they employ a wide range of preventative strategies and interventions.
- 10.7. Many headteachers submitted impressive lists of interventions and other preventative measures they apply in their schools. Many of these, like internal exclusions, detentions and the like are alternative sanctions to exclusion. Others are more interventional; examples include parenting courses, counselling, creative therapies, sensory circuits and more. Still more have broader reach, such as in the secondary school that has established an alternative curriculum for its more vulnerable children. And, in at least two primary schools, whole inclusion units have been established; in one case though, the headteacher worries that future budgetary constraints could threaten its continuation.
- 10.8. An interesting feature of three low- or non-excluding primary schools, visited as part of this review, was that they had redesigned their taught curricula with engagement and, therefore, inclusion in mind. One referred to this as a values-based curriculum.

- 10.9. It could be inferred that the high rate of children being excluded repeatedly in primary schools must have a causal effect on high rates of permanent exclusion in secondary schools. But FTEs continue to be issued at a high rate in secondary schools too; at a much higher rate, in fact, than in the primary sector albeit that this is generally true nationally.
- 10.10. It is safe to say that too many children are leaving year 6 with unmodified challenging behaviour and that this disadvantages secondary schools. But it is equally safe to say that, for many of these children, their behaviour is not being improved in the secondary sector either.
- 10.11. There is variability between schools with a minority being responsible for most of the exclusions. At least one of these has not been willing to participate in efforts to address this. Many primary schools exclude rarely or not at all and some of these serve more challenging neighbourhoods. There are relatively low-excluding secondary schools which serve more deprived areas.
- 10.12. It has been pointed out that children from at least one of the low- or non- excluding primary schools are not able to sustain good behaviour after transfer to secondary school, but this has not been quantified in any way.
- 10.13. Compared with national averages, Medway's children are more likely to be excluded for physical assault and less likely for persistent disruptive behaviour.

11. Secondary Alternative Provision in Medway – Capacity and Quality-Assurance

- 11.1. There are two publicly funded AP schools in Medway, The Rowans Academy and Will Adams. One serves key stages 3 and 4, the other key stage 4 only. Between them they have 102 commissioned places which are funded according to the place-funding and top-up model introduced nationally in 2013.
- 11.2. 102 commissioned AP places equates to one place per 183 secondary school children. This is a relatively low allocation. In Bexley for example, the ratio is one AP place per 161. In most inner London boroughs, the ratio is smaller still¹⁷.
- 11.3. There are a number of independent AP schools in the area. In 2016/17, Medway children were placed in five of these: Gillingham FC, Manorway Academy, Octopus, Love2Learn and NACRO. A sixth, Wilmington Academy, has been used in 2017/18. One of these, Octopus, closed last year and another, Love2Learn, is closing in summer 2018.
- 11.4. One of the independent providers, Gillingham FC school, has just expanded its number of places from 15 to 50. It is too early to say whether this will be viable (in a business sense) for the school but it does not appear to have been done as part of any LA-led strategic building of capacity in the sector. Having said that, it has to be understood that, being a private school, the school does not receive place funding and it takes referrals from other LAs.

¹⁷ Only information obtained from an earlier FOI request to London boroughs is available to this review.

- 11.5. When a child is permanently excluded, it is the LA's responsibility to find an education placement for them. In 2016/17, permanently excluded secondary school children were placed as follows:

Destination	Number Pupils
Independent AP	27
Medway AP	24
Mainstream School	4
Unknown	3
EHE	1
Total	59

- 11.6. More children were placed in independent AP than in the two Medway AP schools. This is highly unusual and confirms that capacity is a concern in Medway.
- 11.7. The two Medway providers are well run and their outcomes are good. They have been rated 'good' and 'outstanding' in their most recent Ofsted inspections.
- 11.8. It is worth noting here that Ofsted inspects AP under the same framework as for maintained schools. The framework is mostly focused on teaching, learning and progress and so often overlooks large parts of the work of AP practitioners such as reintegration, outreach and multi-agency work¹⁸. Independent AP schools are inspected under the independent schools' framework which, many feel, is even less applicable to AP.
- 11.9. Of the six independent providers, three (The GFC School, Manorway Academy and Wilmington Academy) are registered and are inspected by Ofsted. Two were judged 'requires improvement' and the other 'good' in their most recent inspections. No evidence of the other three being quality assured was found.
- 11.10. Local authority officers in Medway have expressed concern that they are sometimes having to commission places in AP settings which are not adequately quality-assured.
- 11.11. An illustration of the potential negative outcomes of this was provided in April 2018. At a multi-agency strategy meeting to discuss the safeguarding and gang involvement of children at risk, a child was under consideration, "where the AP provision (Manor way and Love2learn) that Medway has commissioned hasn't attended the meeting, hasn't sent a report, hasn't responded to emails and requests to attend Core Group meetings by Social Care".
- 11.12. A feature of AP in Medway which, with high levels of permanent exclusion, is also a direct cause of the capacity issue, is the rarity with which children are being reintegrated into mainstream schools. For most children, AP schools are supposed to be for the short-term. Indeed, new regulations in 2010 referred to them as 'Short Stay Schools'.
- 11.13. Statutory guidance makes it clear that schools cannot refuse admission to a child because of their behaviour except where they have been permanently excluded by two other schools.
- 11.14. Given, then, that AP should be short-term and that behaviour is not to be cited as a reason to keep a child out of school, clearly more children in Medway should be being

¹⁸ An exception to this was in the last inspection of Bradfields Academy where outreach was looked at by inspectors.

reintegrated. (It is noted that at the time of writing, one child at an AP school is being prepared for return to mainstream. This child had not been permanently excluded.)

- 11.15. The only children usually expected to remain in AP until the end of their statutory schooling are those arriving in it the second half of year 10. While there will be exceptions, it is commonly agreed that, because syllabuses and option choices are unlikely to match, reintegration can be too difficult for both the child and the receiving school. It is otherwise commonly assumed that all younger children should either be in mainstream or special schools, with AP being only a short-term interim placement.
- 11.16. In most local authorities a large part of the Fair Access Panel's time is taken up with allocating school places for students returning to the mainstream from AP. This is not the case in Medway, where, with only a few exceptions, a permanently excluded child seems to be expected to remain outside mainstream education until the end of year 11. There are currently children in year 11 at a Medway AP school who have been there since they were excluded in year 7 or year 8.
- 11.17. One of the Medway AP schools told this review that on the rare occasion that they reintegrate a child, it is done by direct negotiation with the receiving school, not through the fair access panel.
- 11.18. Not all the children in AP are there because they were permanently excluded. This review has been made aware of five key stage 3 children currently in AP who were referred via a telephone call from the LA. Two of these, both in year 7, are in AP at the request of their secondary school headteachers. It is reported that they had both missed large amounts of schooling in years 5 and 6 without being formally excluded and with their underlying needs unaddressed. They gained admission to secondary school through normal transition arrangements.
- 11.19. It is reported by the LA that it is very rare for children in AP to be referred for SEN statutory assessment. This would support the view that, in the specialist AP environment, a child's needs can be met while, in mainstream, additional support would be required. It could also mean that there are children in AP who would be better served by being in a special school.
- 11.20. There is an unusual arrangement in Medway commonly referred to as the Will Adams Agreement. Under this, children in the second half of year 10 or in year 11, who are hard to place (having, say, just moved into the area) attend a mainstream school full-time but are single registered at the Will Adams AP school. It is strictly not for children at risk of exclusion. Because this means that the mainstream school will not have these children's results recorded against them, this could be seen as 'gaming'. But it is said to be kept within statute by the fact that Will Adams staff do maintain a relationship with them and monitor their progress. And, by keeping them in mainstream education, it cannot be said to disadvantage the young people themselves. The scheme has reportedly been validated by the DfE and Ofsted.
- 11.21. A commonly agreed measure of success in AP is the level of resilience shown by children after they have left it. MidKent College has provided data, covering the past four years, on the retention rates of children from The Rowans and Will Adams who went on to further education there. These figures worsened from 2014/15 to 2016/17 (63% - 57% - 50%) but so far in 2017/18 the rate stands at 80%. Of particular interest here is the observation

made by the college that “retention is worse the longer a child had stayed in AP”. This would support the need to reintegrate children more than is currently the case.

- 11.22. MidKent college and the AP schools are currently working jointly to improve the FE retention rate for future leavers. The Rowans has made a bid to the DfE’s AP innovation fund which includes a proposal to fund a post to be based at MidKent College. The Rowans is also running an innovative programme with the college which has Y12 leavers returning for two days per week on work experience placements.
- 11.23. In summary, high levels of exclusion, the rarity of reintegration and the low agreed number of commissioned places mean that there is not enough space in the two Medway AP schools to accommodate even half of permanently excluded children. This forces the LA to commission placements in settings which are either less than ‘good’ or are not quality assured by Ofsted or anyone else.

12. Alternative Provision in Medway – Primary

- 12.1. There is currently no primary AP school in Medway. The Rowans Academy has applied to open a primary AP free school, The Beeches, and permission for this has been granted by the DfE. The LA had initially agreed to commission 36 places there. The DfE reportedly would have agreed to more.
- 12.2. Although there is no AP school, the LA does fund the Nurture Group at All Faiths primary school and will do so until August 2018, after which it will continue to operate through service level agreements with referring schools. This has 8 AP places for key stage 1 children who stay for up to 18 months. Demand for places is very high and All Faiths operate a needs-led waiting list.
- 12.3. Until recently, the All Faiths Nurture Group has served only schools in the Strood and Hoo consortium but is now available to more. All Faiths would like to expand the offer, but this will require the outlay of capital that is not currently available.
- 12.4. The local authority has so far not consented to the establishment of The Beeches for two reasons:
- 12.4.1. • It feels there is a risk that the existence of a primary AP facility could encourage more permanent exclusions; and
 - 12.4.2. • Given the rarity of reintegration in key stage 3, there is the risk that very young children will remain in AP for too long, if not indefinitely.
- 12.5. Of the 37 primary headteachers that responded to the survey for this review, 92% agreed that The Beeches should be established with 40% of those in support agreeing that there are associated risks.

12.6. In the past six years, primary children have been permanently excluded as follows

2011/12	0 children
2012/13	6 children
2013/14	9 children
2014/15	5 children
2015/16	3 children
2016/17	5 children

Only one primary child had been permanently excluded up to 21st March in 2017/18.

- 12.7. Currently, when a child is permanently excluded, the local authority's only option is to persuade another school to admit them. This has not always been possible; there was a report of a boy who was out of school for two years while a place was being sought for him.
- 12.8. If a child needs intensive off-site intervention, only the All Faiths Nurture Group is an option in key stage 1; there is nothing in key stage 2.

13. Outreach

- 13.1. Another feature of Medway's AP schools is that they do little if any outreach work. In other local authority areas, where there is regular reintegration work, AP schools and PRUs will normally support newly reintegrated students to settle in their schools.
- 13.2. There are also many AP schools (where one would expect to find relevant expertise) which run outreach aimed at the prevention of exclusion, either directly with individual cases or through training and advice to schools. Such outreach services are either centrally funded or purchased through service level agreements.
- 13.3. There used to be a SEMH/behaviour outreach service operating from Chalklands, a unit attached to a primary school in Medway. This function, and the team running it, was later transferred to the special school, Bradfields Academy. There are two other outreach services: one, for ASD, is operated by the Marlborough Centre and the other, provided by Rivermead School, supports children with medical needs, including mental health difficulties. These services are centrally funded.
- 13.4. Bradfields Academy also retains a pre-existing outreach team whose service is primarily to support SEND needs of all children, not just those with EHC plans. The Bradfields Outreach team has five members. This year to date (8th May) they have worked with 273 children in 48 primary and 8 secondary schools. 61 of the children were referred for specific behavioural reasons. In addition, they offered 45 training sessions to school staff.
- 13.5. The behaviour outreach team is not able to meet demand which is very high. They prioritise cases according to a child's needs and have a record of success in preventing the exclusion of those they have supported.
- 13.6. Asked about outreach, 65% of primary headteachers who responded said they receive external support to prevent exclusion and almost all found it to *effective or quite effective*. However, some went on to say that this support was provided by the School Support

Group, which is more advice and guidance than outreach.

14. The Local Authority (LA)

- 14.1. The LA is clearly keen to see a significant reduction in exclusion rates and to play its part in bringing that about. This is evidenced in the first instance by the fact that it commissioned this review. All officers spoken with as part of this review expressed the same sentiment.
- 14.2. In November 2017, the Regional Schools Director (RSC) for the South East and South London and Medway's Director of Children's Services wrote jointly to all Medway headteachers "to enlist your support to tackle high rates of exclusion in Medway". Despite the letter's direct appeal for ideas on how this could be changed, only 11 schools responded in writing.
- 14.3. There is one long-standing LA-led initiative aimed at reducing exclusion. The Schools Support Group (SSG) is run by the LA's Inclusion team and has been operating for 8 or more years. It is attended by some LA teams, special schools that provide outreach and one AP school. Further details of the SSG are in appendix E. The LA's AASSA¹⁹ and SEN services have said they cannot or will not attend.
- 14.4. The SSG operates as a panel to which cases of children at risk of exclusion are brought by schools to whom advice on preventative intervention and signposting are given. The inclusion team report considerable variability between schools in their understanding of inclusive practice. A regular attender of the SSG feels that most cases are brought by schools when it is too late to effectively support their inclusion. There is a worry that some schools will bring a case in order to "rubber stamp an exclusion", i.e. to give an intended exclusion more credibility by demonstrating that support had been sought.
- 14.5. Some schools, on the other hand, perceive the SSG's main function to be to pressure them into not excluding a child and find this sort of challenge unhelpful. Some schools have complained that advice given at SSG, especially on internal interventions that might be applied, has been too obvious and already thought of.
- 14.6. The LA has set up three further initiatives which aim to reduce exclusion:
 - As a response to their letter mentioned above, the RSC and the Director attended a round-table meeting organised by the School Challenge & Improvement team. Some LA officers and school leaders also attended. This was facilitated by ISOS which has released a summary (appendix D)²⁰.
 - *Effective Leadership – Inclusion* is a project resulting from a successful bid to the DfE, again by the School Challenge & Improvement Team. Its aim is "to equip school leaders with the skills to grow inclusive cultures". This involves 20 primary schools. It has seven areas of focus which can be seen in appendix F. One high-excluding primary school was unwilling to participate in this.

¹⁹ Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies

²⁰ To avoid duplication, many of the recommendations made at this event will be adopted in this review

- Having successfully bid for £50k from the Arts Council, the LA has launched an initiative in partnership with Royal Opera House Bridge with the aim, in primary-secondary transition, of improving liaison between professionals and experiences for children at risk of exclusion.
- 14.7. Formal evaluations of the impact of these initiatives, if they exist, have not been available to this review. In some cases, there will not have been enough time to evaluate.
- 14.8. The LA's Business and Intelligence team hold very comprehensive and well organised data on exclusions.
- 14.9. The LA put in a bid to the Big Lottery Fund for resources to create a 'challenging behaviour team'. The bid was unsuccessful, but it is still hoped that this might happen in the future.
- 14.10. The December 2017 inspection of SEND by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) concluded that "regular changes in senior leadership, interim appointments and vacancies [in the LA] have contributed to disjointed communication and initiatives not being seen through". Many stakeholders have, as part of this review, drawn attention to changes in personnel at the LA and have expressed the view that, for some years, the LA has not presented a coherent, coordinated or strategic approach to tackling exclusion and the use of AP.
- 14.11. A good example of "initiatives not being seen through" would be a previous review of AP in Medway carried out in June 2015. This had seven recommendations and it is doubtful whether any of them have been followed up.
- 14.12. It is only fair to add that this comment from the SEND report was followed with, "several key leaders have taken up post relatively recently. They are keen to learn from past mistakes and aware of the most urgent issues that need to be resolved." Conversations with senior officers held as part of this review would support that view but school leaders are less confident.
- 14.13. Asked, *to what extent is the LA able "to successfully support, enable and, in some cases, persuade schools to take decisions which are for the collective good"*, 60% of headteachers said that this was variable and the rest said that the LA was unable to do this, whether because of financial constraint or lack of organisation or both.
- 14.14. There are some issues with structures and communications within the local authority. There has not been an opportunity in this review to look at this in great depth but, when considering the LA's role in school exclusion and AP, many (including some LA officers) agree with Ofsted and the CQC that there is "disjointed communication" both between the LA and schools and between teams within the LA. Examples include:
- 14.14.1. There is no Director or Deputy Director with a specific remit for education. The Director and Deputy Director both have responsibility for children's and adult services.
- 14.14.2. The Schools Challenge and Improvement and Admissions teams report directly to the Director of Children's Services. Other relevant teams (Inclusion, SEN,

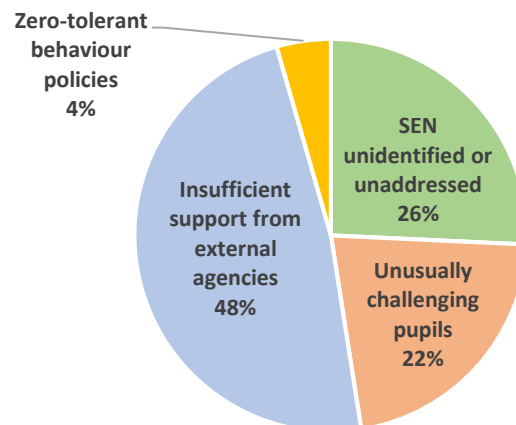
Children’s Social Care and the Virtual School) report to the Deputy Director.

14.14.3. Without prompting, a number of people, inside and outside the LA, have said that the remit of the Head of Early Help and Targeted Services is too large.

14.14.4. There is little or no evidence of LA teams working together in a coordinated way to achieve goals in school exclusions and AP, nor is there an obvious seat of leadership for this. This review was commissioned from the LA’s leadership team with the Head of Early Help and Targeted Services as the point of contact; the round-table discussion was planned by the Schools Challenge and Improvement team. Outreach is coordinated by the SEN department. More than once, a senior officer has admitted to being unaware of initiatives being made by another.

14.15. Asked what they thought were the main reasons for Medway’s high rates of exclusion, headteachers in both sectors answered as follows:

Main Reasons for High Exclusion Rates



14.16. With the exception of CAMHS, which is discussed below, the external agency support being cited is all provided by the LA. Headteachers are particularly exercised by the quality of service from SEN and Children’s Social Care. It is universally accepted that, like all local authorities in the UK, Medway has less resources than in the past, but it is also thought that, as one headteacher put it, there is “a lack of a coordinated response to student issues and poor coordination between schools and the LA”.

14.17. The LA has not been inactive though. The following have been cited: LGA reviews, peer reviews and an HMI Prisons pilot.

14.18. Children’s Social Care in Medway was judged *requires improvement* by Ofsted in November 2015 having been judged *inadequate* in 2013. There has been no later inspection.

14.19. As already said, Medway’s SEND service has been inspected and found to need improvement. SEN obviously has a very close relationship with behaviour and exclusion and it has featured in this review in several ways:

- 14.19.1. In most AP schools all children are considered to be SEN-K simply by virtue of their being there.
- 14.19.2. Secondary headteachers feel strongly that SEN which has been unrecognised or unaddressed in primary schools is a major influence on their exclusion figures.
- 14.19.3. AP schools are not applying for statutory assessment.
- 14.19.4. Too many children with SEN are being excluded.
- 14.20. Another issue in SEN, one that is perhaps outside the remit of this review, is that of block funding to primary schools. Headteachers are very exercised about this with many feeling that the distribution of this money is unfair. To quote one, “schools with some of the highest amounts of SEN block funding ... are also the schools with the highest exclusion rates”. On raising this with the LA, their response was that this is Element 2 funding which is calculated by the ESFA, not by the authority. Assuming that is the case, it is still important to note that headteachers see this as an unfairness coming from the LA.
- 14.21. The “top-up” mechanism by which schools can apply for additional funding to support individual children is well regarded by schools.
- 14.22. Schools feel strongly that, while the LA is ready to criticise their exclusion rates, it does not make enough effort to learn about strategies being employed by them or to recognise positive change when it happens in their schools. Nor, they feel, does the LA provide adequate agency support to individual children which might help to prevent exclusion.
- 14.23. But it is also the case that schools will often take no account of the fact that the LA has limited resources and cannot possibly meet all their demands. Nor are schools easily willing to accept that the LA actually does want to work with them to improve inclusion in Medway.

15. Fair Access

- 15.1. Medway has a Fair Access Protocol (FAP) for the secondary sector but none for the primary sector. 73% of primary headteachers who responded to the questionnaire agree that there ought to be a protocol for their sector. This view is shared by the Head of Admissions in the LA.
- 15.2. The existence of a primary FAP would obviate the need for a LA officer to try to persuade other schools to admit a child as described in 10.7.
- 15.3. Should primary AP be established, a primary FAP would arguably be essential as would a fair access panel.
- 15.4. The secondary FAP was last updated in July 2017. It is fit for purpose and in line with statutory guidance. While its stated aims refer to the needs of children, the protocol goes on to emphasise fairness to schools at least as much as meeting the needs of children. For example, para 4.4 refers to “young people ... that could contribute towards a limiting

judgement on a school”.

- 15.5. The fair access panel is made up of all headteachers of non-selective schools in Medway and is chaired by the same headteacher who chairs the Medway Secondary Headteachers Association. Meetings are held monthly which, it could be argued, might work against the need for children to be placed “quickly” as stated in statutory guidance unless there is a facility for chair’s action to be taken between meetings.
- 15.6. Fair access in Medway is seen very much as the business of school leaders and describes the LA as having no more than an administrative role²¹. This is not usually the case. An important piece of action research²² says about this: “Local authorities retain important responsibilities to manage Fair Access Protocols for the benefit of hard to place children and ensure the provision of full-time education for pupils excluded from school. This is therefore an area in which the local authority’s ability to successfully support, enable and, in some cases, persuade schools to take decisions which are for the collective good is of paramount importance”.
- 15.7. Statutory guidance is not explicit about the role of local authorities in fair access but does present some indications in these extracts from the School Admissions Code²³:
- 15.7.1. “In agreeing a protocol, the local authority must ensure that no school - including those with available places - is asked to take a disproportionate number of children who have been excluded from other schools, or who have challenging behaviour. The protocol must include how the local authority will use provision to ensure that the needs of pupils who are not ready for mainstream schooling are met.”
- 15.7.2. “Where a governing body does not wish to admit a child with challenging behaviour outside the normal admissions round, even though places are available, it must refer the case to the local authority for action under the Fair Access Protocol.”
- 15.8. Statutory guidance makes it clear that schools must agree, participate in and abide by the terms of their local FAP. But the above quotes suggest that the LA still retains some authority in the area and ought reasonably to be treated as an equal partner in its terms of reference.
- 15.9. A fair access panel meeting was observed as part of this review. It was well chaired and effective. Headteachers were well prepared and informed of the cases put before them.
- 15.10. All children requiring a mainstream school place were allocated to one in the observed meeting and this is in line with a comment made by the LA’s Head of Admissions that “the current panel always makes a decision”. There was a willingness on the part of relevant headteachers to admit these children in all but the most understandably exceptional cases.
- 15.11. On at least one occasion a headteacher stated that a “child is not ready for mainstream”. The issue of readiness for reintegration will be discussed below, including the need for an

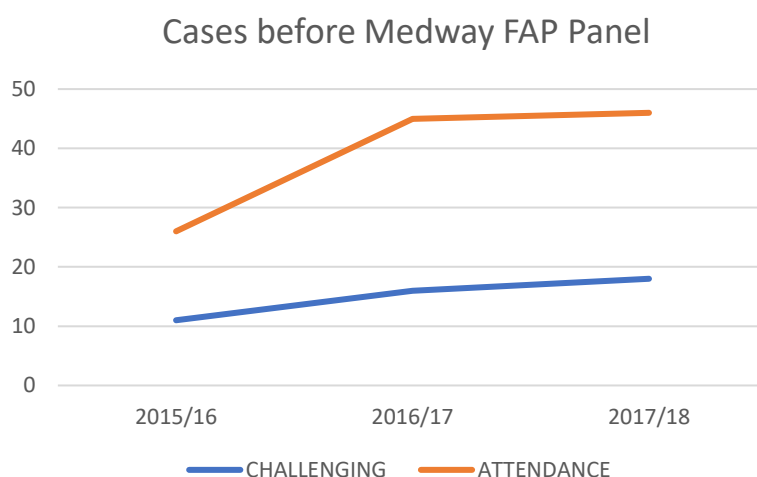
²¹ Medway Fair Access Protocol, para 6.3: “Council officers ... will administer the fair access arrangements including panel meetings. Representatives of [the LA] will attend meetings to provide professional advice and guidance but will not be permitted to vote on cases”.

²² [Action research into the evolving role of the local authority in education](#), DfE/ISOS, 2014

²³ [School Admissions Code](#), DfE, 2014

objective, jointly arrived-at assessment of readiness.

- 15.12. The Medway protocol categorises all but two of the criteria under which a child is referred to the panel as “having challenging behaviour”. The two exceptions are “those with attendance ... of less than 70%” (described as “not having challenging behaviour”) and those returning from EHE who, presumably, might be either.
- 15.13. Managed moves between schools are not covered by the Medway FAP. They are negotiated directly between headteachers who have agreed to inform the LA when they take place. Sometimes, the LA is asked to provide some support to children on a managed move.
- 15.14. A dataset provided by the LA Admissions team gives numbers of cases under each of these categories in the past three years. The data covers 2017/18 up to the end of March; in the graph below, the 2017/18 figures used are a linear extrapolation of them.



- 15.15. This shows (i) that numbers of cases are growing and (ii) that those with low attendance outnumber those with challenging behaviour and are approximately 72% of the total.
- 15.16. Children under consideration at FAP panel meetings are identified by the LA. Many will have failed to gain a school place through the normal in-year admissions process. In some cases, the LA will have identified that the child meets at least one of the compulsory criteria listed in statutory guidance. Others who do not meet any of the compulsory criteria can still be referred to the Medway FAP panel. The Medway FAP explicitly allows such a referral in paragraph 3.2.
- 15.17. Other cases include:
- 15.17.1. Those returning from elective home education: the sensible default here is for the child to return to the school from which they withdrew into EHE.
- 15.17.2. Children relocating to Medway from other LA areas and who meet the FAP criteria: some of these are coming from an AP school or PRU. In such cases, a Medway school is asked to be the named school into which the child will be admitted after having spent time in AP and having been judged ready for

reintegration.

- 15.18. As stated earlier in this report, cases of previously permanently excluded children being put forward for reintegration are very rarely brought to the FAP panel if ever.

16. CAMHS and Health

- 16.1. It will be known that there is national concern about the efficacy of CAMHS in the face of growing mental ill-health in children. But there seems little doubt that in Medway over the past few years it has been even worse than elsewhere.
- 16.2. CAMHS in Medway and Kent have recently transferred to the North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT). Prior to this transfer the service was not valued by schools and during the transfer period it was felt to be even worse.
- 16.3. The following was posted on the NELFT website on 1st September 2017: "On Friday 1 September NELFT will commence delivery of services that will enable children and young people across Kent and Medway who need specialist mental healthcare to access more joined-up services We will be working together with commissioners and partners across Kent and Medway to deliver the vision for improved emotional, wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people." Eight months later, this review was being told by school leaders and LA officers that there had been no discernible improvement in the quality of service and that CAMHS remains in an interim state of transfer.
- 16.4. School leaders are enormously frustrated by the length of time a child must wait for a first appointment, by the numbers of declined referrals and by the lack of follow-up to missed appointments. One headteacher reported that a child had been waiting 18 months for their first appointment.
- 16.5. Another issue heard more than once is illustrated by this comment from a primary headteacher: "We have a child with extreme challenging behaviour who we have managed in school for 3 years. CAMHS have stated that his needs are beyond their help" which seems counter-intuitive to say the least.
- 16.6. Headteachers have also been frustrated that CAMHS will not work with ASD.
- 16.7. There are schools that have tried to circumvent these problems by recruiting their own therapeutic counsellors or by referring to the third sector. An example of the lengths to which some schools will go can be seen in appendix G. A number of other examples could have been chosen.
- 16.8. It has also been commented that it has very difficult to secure assistance from NHS staff where physiological health is a concern.

17. Elective Home Education

- 17.1. Over the past three years in Medway, the numbers of children in EHE²⁴ have been relatively static but the number of withdrawals into EHE has been falling:

School Year	No. in EHE	No. of withdrawals
2014/15	454	247
2015/16	449	231
2016/17	454	172

This is probably explained by the age profile of children in EHE. In April 2018, 37% of them were in KS4. This would indicate that Medway is in a strong relative position nationally where concern about growth in these numbers is high.

- 17.2. The number of children in EHE was 385 in April 2018 which shows that the declining numbers of withdrawals is impacting on total numbers.
- 17.3. Data on reasons for withdrawal into EHE are not currently held but it is reported that at least half are for positive ideological reasons. Of the remainder the most common reasons are:
- 17.3.1. bullying at school (this is growing)
 - 17.3.2. not getting a place at a preferred school
 - 17.3.3. various social and medical needs.
- 17.4. Among the concerns being discussed nationally is the suspicion that there are families being persuaded by schools to withdraw their children into EHE. There is no solid evidence of this taking place in Medway but there are anecdotal reports of such practice ranging from parents being advised that EHE is an option they might want to consider, through their being told that if they do not withdraw their child there will be a permanent exclusion, to the suspicion that one school actually wrote the withdrawal letter to the LA for the parent.
- 17.5. The LA Inclusion team employ a teacher who advises EHE families and monitors children's progress.
- 17.6. 61 (16%) of the children in EHE are in families that refuse to engage with the LA. Most of these are families in EHE for ideological reasons.
- 17.7. As said above, there is a Bill going through parliament which will soon lead to changes to the law on EHE. The full text of the Bill is in appendix B. The essential differences it will make are that the LA will be obliged to "assess the the educational development of children receiving elective home education in their area" and parents will be obliged to register their children with the LA. It can be inferred that the families who refuse to engage with the LA will be obliged to do so in the future.

²⁴ Data supplied by the LA Inclusion team

18. Culture and Relationships

- 18.1. There is not an anti-inclusion culture in Medway. The local authority clearly wants to see less school exclusion and is willing to play its part in supporting that. School leaders almost unanimously agree that reducing exclusion should be a high and urgent priority.
- 18.2. As well as the impact of very high exclusion rates on the progress and welfare of large numbers of children, it is also recognised by schools and LA officers that there is negative impact on the education community's reputation and that undue pressure is being put upon capacity in AP and on the high needs funding block (HNFB).
- 18.3. Headteachers assert that they exclude reluctantly and only after they have tried preventative measures. But, while schools are not anti-inclusion, there is, in many, a despondent belief that high exclusion rates are an inevitability.
- 18.4. There is also a tendency for headteachers to express the view that a permanently excluded child is, to quote one, "beyond mainstream provision" and to label them as an AP child. This implies that there is not enough confidence in the ability of AP schools to modify children's behaviour and prepare them for reintegration. It could be asserted that schools are, as it were, wanting AP to do their inclusion work for them.
- 18.5. Most schools, including many with high exclusion rates, are applying inclusive interventions and strategies and, in some, this has resulted in fewer exclusions²⁵. In schools where intervention is not effective one would hope to see a self-evaluative process in place such that this could change in the future.
- 18.6. There is a degree of antipathy between schools and the LA. Much of this has its roots in the past, probably dating back to the period in which the LA encouraged schools to convert to academy status and, whether intended or not, appeared to give the impression that it no longer wanted to work with schools. Another outcome of this 'mass-academisation' was that schools were driven into relative isolation, looking for partners with whom to form MATs and losing any LA-coordinated strategies and support that might have existed until then.
- 18.7. The subsequent churn within the LA²⁶ and "initiatives not being seen through" further weakened schools' confidence in the LA. The following quote from a headteacher is a good summary of feelings held in schools: "All of us try our very hardest to keep children in our schools but when we have exhausted all of our strategies, spent thousands on commissioning outside help (due to nothing being available in Medway) and approached Medway for help then we have no alternative but to exclude permanently or for a fixed period."
- 18.8. The depth of resignation felt by schools has unsurprisingly led to many of them not trusting even some positive messages or initiatives. The fact that only 11 schools replied to the RSC and the Director attests to this. Another example is given by the Bradfields outreach team who recently delivered behaviour management training to NQTs in a group of schools;

²⁵ There are exceptions to this. It is reported, for example, that there is one primary school which employs a SENCO for just half a day a week.

²⁶ See para 12.10

none of the six NQTs at one school attended.

- 18.9. There is some tension between the primary and secondary sectors especially around the issue of transition. On the one hand, secondary schools complain about additional needs being unmet in feeder schools and relevant information not being transferred. But, on the other, a primary school has reported being unable to persuade a secondary school to send staff to be briefed on children with challenging behaviour, despite making many attempts.
- 18.10. There has also been little communication between the two sectors, but this is beginning to change. The chairs of the respective headteachers associations (MELA and MSHA) now sit on each other's bodies and report back to their own. A benefit of this is more joined-up work being planned for transition with all secondary schools holding taster days on the same date and the development of a common transfer form.

Ways Forward

19. Objectives

19.1. The key objectives underpinning the proposals below are:

- To engender collective school leadership and mutual responsibility for inclusion
- To improve outcomes for children by reducing exclusions of all types to levels in line with similar local authority areas
- To address capacity issues in the alternative provision sector
- To ensure confidence in independent alternative provision
- To ensure quick and effective access to early help support for children and families
- To improve relationships and communication within and between primary schools, secondary schools and the local authority

19.2. In the text that follows, “the partnership” refers to all members of Medway’s education professionals and those in related services, including

- 19.2.1. schools of all types;
- 19.2.2. alternative provision, publicly funded and independent;
- 19.2.3. children’s services at the local authority;
- 19.2.4. CAMHS and other related agencies.

20. Funding and Planning

20.1. It is recognised that many recommendations will require additional funding. This review recommends that funds are identified and put aside on an **Invest-to-Save** basis.

20.2. The High Needs Funding Block ended the last financial year with a surplus which could perhaps be exploited for this purpose.

20.3. To demonstrate purpose and to plan expenditure a costed action plan covering three to five years is recommended.

20.4. It is recommended that the local authority identify a senior officer with overall responsibility for reducing levels of exclusion.

20.5. Within the local authority, it is recommended that, in action-planning for reduced exclusion levels, any structural or systemic changes be made alongside changes being planned and made after the Ofsted inspection of SEND.

Working Together to reduce exclusion rates

21. **Proposal 1:** Develop a set of **shared core principles of inclusion**, or an inclusion charter, in Medway, ensuring that there is an explicitly-articulated core moral purpose around strengthening inclusion and reducing exclusions in Medway.
- 21.1. In practical terms, a representative group would need to lead on the development of these principles and act as a steering group for the implementation of any agreed strategies. The Review of AP reference group could form its basis with the addition of relevant service leads.
- 21.2. The principles could state:
- 21.2.1. Acknowledgement that exclusion rates are too high and that reducing them is an imperative that needs to be shared by all partners;
- 21.2.2. That positive change will require a shared vision that all children, especially the more vulnerable, are the collective responsibility of all members of the partnership;
- 21.2.3. That all partners will work together to achieve change in an open and supportive manner, applying friendly challenge within a no-blame ethos;
- 21.2.4. Acceptance that excluded children, and those at risk, are in a vulnerable state;
- 21.2.5. Determination that the earliest possible intervention will be applied in order to prevent exclusion;
- 21.2.6. That, by default, all children up to year 10 should be in mainstream or special schools and that alternative provision is only for the short term;
- 21.2.7. A belief in the possibility of behaviour modification, faith in AP schools' ability to achieve it and, consequently, a default position that a child that has been permanently excluded just once should be on a reintegration plan.
- 21.3. The principles would be drawn up by a group of partnership representatives covering the sectors in 17.2. Once agreed they would be signed and adopted by all headteachers, service leads and relevant LA officers.
- 21.4. The principles should be reviewed and signed on a regular basis, perhaps annually.
22. **Proposal 2:** It should be recognised that there is much **good practice in Medway** and that more could be done to share and exploit it.
- 22.1. Schools Challenge and Improvement team to identify primary schools that serve challenging areas and whose FTE rates are very low and secondary schools where permanent exclusion rates have fallen in recent years.
- 22.2. Look for common features and strategies which are proven to have had positive impact.
- 22.3. Audit and disseminate these through discussion groups and CPD.
- 22.4. Encourage and facilitate these 'successful' schools to share their practice with others.
23. **Proposal 3:** Use **CPD** to raise awareness of shared principles, improve behaviour-management skills, raise levels of engagement in children at risk and grow adults' understanding of underlying causes of challenging behaviour.
- 23.1. Centrally planned and delivered training for NQTs.

- 23.2. Coordinated whole-school INSET themes.
 - 23.3. Exploit the expert knowledge held in AP and some mainstream and special schools.
 - 23.4. Address higher incidences of assault in Medway by training key staff in restorative justice-based practices in all schools.
24. **Proposal 4:** Develop a framework for **peer-led quality assurance of inclusive practice** in schools.
- 24.1. This could involve a small team (including, say, a peer headteacher and a LA officer) visiting a school and evaluating its inclusive strategies and practice.
 - 24.2. Identified weaknesses to be fed back to the schools and strengths to be disseminated.
 - 24.3. Judgements to be based on sound impact evaluation.
 - 24.4. It would be advisable if, at least to begin with, this is on an opt-in basis.
 - 24.5. There are auditing tools already available, such as the CSIE's Index for Inclusion²⁷, but it might be that the Medway partnership would prefer to develop its own.
25. **Proposal 5:** The LA should
- 25.1. challenge individual **schools with very high exclusion rates** at a very senior level, ideally involving a meeting of the Director, the RSC and the school's headteacher or principal and, if applicable, executive headteacher.
 - 25.1.1. These meetings should be as supportive in nature as possible and result in a quantified action plan.
 - 25.1.2. The LA should then work closely with the school in a joint effort to improve inclusion.
 - 25.1.3. Schools should be asked for details of preventative strategies they employ **with evidence of impact**
 - 25.2. Similarly, the LA should work closely with low-excluding schools and analyse and disseminate successful strategies.
26. **Proposal 6:** improve **outreach** aimed specifically at reducing exclusion and either by addressing the needs of individual children, by advising schools on policy and practice and by delivering behaviour-related CPD.
- 26.1. Give clarity to the existing purposes of SEN outreach already provided by Bradfields, Marlborough and Rivermead.
 - 26.2. Enable specific behaviour-related outreach to be provided by specialists in AP schools.
 - 26.3. Consider whether this is to be enabled through funding arrangements for AP or via service level agreements.
27. **Proposal 7: Sharing resources.** There is a broad range of preventative work happening in most Medway schools. Many of these involve the recruitment of specialists, such as therapists, either directly or through service level agreements with other agencies.
- 27.1. It is recommended that groups of schools, supported by the LA, investigate means by which they can take advantage of collective recruiting and economies of scale to make such

²⁷ <http://www.csie.org.uk/resources/inclusion-index-explained.shtml>

resources more affordable.

28. **Proposal 8:** Standardise and improve arrangements for **primary-secondary transition**.

- 28.1. It is recognised here that progress is already being made. A 'common transfer form' for the transfer of information on a child has been agreed and will begin to be used in 2019. Secondary schools have agreed to hold 'taster days' simultaneously.
- 28.2. There is also the Royal Opera House Bridge project (see 12.6) which is underway.
- 28.3. Further efforts could be made to maximise the chances that vulnerable children will cope with secondary school. Some primary headteachers have suggested that towards the end of the summer term, when year 6 children have completed their tests and year 11 children have left school, then year 6 children could experience more time in their new secondary schools and more preparation for transition.
- 28.4. Secondary schools should ensure that detailed information on incoming children's needs is being provided.
- 28.5. The LA should pass information on all vulnerable year 6 children that they are aware of onto secondary schools and play a coordinating role in the transfer of information from primary schools.

Capacity and Quality in Alternative provision

29. **Proposal 9:** The local authority should consider raising the **number of commissioned secondary AP places** to around 120, bringing Medway into line with other LAs.

- 29.1. In the short term this would reduce the need to spot-purchase AP places in the independent sector.
- 29.2. This should only be agreed on condition that all additional places, at the very least, are demonstrably used for children with a reintegration plan or on a respite placement.

30. **Proposal 10:** to increase capacity in publicly funded AP and to improve the prospects of permanently excluded children, more **reintegration** should take place.

- 30.1. By default, a child permanently excluded just once should be on a reintegration plan which includes an identified receiving school and a planned reintegration date.
- 30.2. Except in the cases of children in year 11 and the latter stages of year 10 and children permanently excluded twice or more, all other children in AP should either be allocated to a receiving school or engaged in statutory assessment.
- 30.3. The child's 'readiness' for reintegration should be an objective judgement made jointly by the receiving school and the AP school they attend, taking account of the views of parents and other agencies.
- 30.4. The Fair Access Panel, advised by AP schools and the LA, should decide on the receiving school allocation, thus ensuring fairness to schools.
- 30.5. The panel should also monitor the progress of children towards reintegration and hold schools to account where appropriate.

31. **Proposal 11:** It is recommended that, rather than enable the establishment of a separately registered **primary AP school**, the local authority should look at a restructure of all non-independent AP in Medway, establishing an all-through **integrated AP service** on a single site.
- 31.1. This service would provide:
- 31.1.1. Short-stay provision for permanently excluded primary school children and secondary children in key stage 3;
 - 31.1.2. Time-limited behaviour modification (respite) places for referred primary school children and secondary children in key stage 3;
 - 31.1.3. Educational placements, full-time until the end of year 11, for students in key stage 4 for whom reintegration would not be appropriate;
 - 31.1.4. Outreach services to schools to include:
 - Preventative work with referred individual children;
 - Reintegration support for children returning to the mainstream, including in FE;
 - Expert training to school staff (see Proposal 3);
 - Advice and guidance to school leaders on policy and practice.
- 31.2. In addition to the 120 commissioned places for secondary school children, more places should be defined for the primary sector.
- 31.3. All primary children and secondary children aged up to the end of year nine should be on a reintegration plan with either:
- 31.3.1. a new receiving school identified early in the process of referral, or
 - 31.3.2. in the case of respite places, a time-limited plan for the child's return to their home school, or
 - 31.3.3. a statutory SEN assessment underway.
- 31.4. Consideration will need to be given to funding arrangements. Place funding and top-ups are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. Other sources could be an agreed top-slice arrangement, service level agreements with schools, seed funding from the LA or a combination of these.
32. **Proposal 12:** the local authority, as the commissioner of AP, is advised to investigate existing **quality assurance frameworks for independent AP** providers.
- 32.1. In some areas, small groups of neighbouring local authorities have combined to produce frameworks under which independent providers are inspected and assessed for educational quality, safeguarding arrangements, financial viability etc.
- 32.2. Providers that do not meet the defined standards do not appear in a locally published directory of approved providers and would not be commissioned by the LA. Other commissioners such as schools are advised not to refer to unlisted providers.
- 32.3. In some areas, even registered publicly funded AP schools are inspected under the same framework because it is felt that Ofsted's framework is insufficient to quality assure from a commissioner's point of view.

Fair Access

33. **Proposal 13:** In order to meet the requirement of statutory guidance that *“The purpose of Fair Access Protocols is to ensure that ... unplaced children, especially the most vulnerable, are found and offered a place quickly, so that the amount of time any child is out of school is kept to the minimum”*, the **secondary Fair Access panel** should consider either meeting more frequently or giving its chair the power to issue chair’s action decisions between meetings.
34. **Proposal 14:** the secondary Fair Access Protocol should be reframed such that the local authority and headteachers of AP schools are recognised as equal partners, each with significant and relevant responsibilities to fulfil.
35. **Proposal 15:** it is recommended that a **primary fair access protocol** be drafted which defines the movements of children into and out of AP and that a primary fair access panel be constituted to oversee its implementation.

Access to Early Help

36. **Proposal 16:** the LA is advised to develop **clear information about available support**, ensuring that:
- 36.1. there is a clear, practical and accessible guide to what support for inclusion is available, and when and how it can be accessed. This should then be tested and developed to fill any identified gaps.
 - 36.2. there is a widely-known central point-of-contact that schools can go to get some quick advice or signposting to further support.
37. **Proposal 17:** The **School Support Group** could be made more effective if:
- 37.1. the LA were to insist that all relevant internal agencies attend all sessions. These should include the AASSA, SEND (or at least an educational psychologist) and Children’s Social Care. Ideally, CAMHS too should attend.
 - 37.2. it were empowered to make de facto referrals to support agencies.
 - 37.3. schools were required to bring cases before the risk of exclusion has intensified to the point that any intervention that SSG can suggest is already too late.
38. **Proposal 18:** the LA needs to robustly speak for the entire education community, expressing their frustration at **CAMHS** response times and other accessibility issues and to work jointly with CAMHS on the development of a mutually achievable plan for improvement. Such a project might make a good case for additional funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group.
39. **Proposal 19:** The **Local Authority** should
- 39.1. consider strategies for improved access to early help and the reduction of exclusions into consideration alongside work to formulate its response to the inspection of SEND.

39.2. with communications and strategic planning in mind, consider line-management structures, workload and leadership positions which would maximise effective change.

39.3. Identify a lead officer for school exclusions.

Elective Home Education

40. **Proposal 20:** With a change of law about to be enacted by parliament, there would be little point in making detailed recommendations other than to advise a quick and thorough **adaptation to new statutory requirements**.

40.1. The new legislation is likely to add to the workload of the LA's inclusion team. The LA should look at **capacity issues** in the team.

40.2. As has already been acknowledged, the LA should record **more detailed data** on children in EHE, including the reason for withdrawal, e.g. not securing a place in the parents' desired school.

Appendix A

Review of Alternative provision

Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Review

- To review whether the local authority can support schools to retain more children and young people within mainstream schools who have additional needs or behavioural difficulties who are at risk of exclusion or placement breakdown.
- The review is required to come back with creative recommendations around trialling new ways of supporting children and young people in mainstream schools.

Purpose of the Reference Group

- To clarify which children can manage in mainstream provision with support and what sort of support is required to address the range of need. Best practice examples to be identified.
- It is expected that clear definitions will be identified for alternative provision, with criteria and pathways identified for relevant children and young people.
- The recommendations from the review should include proposals around intensive packages of support that can be offered when a school is considering excluding.
- It is proposed that the focus is on primary and secondary including alternative provision with specific consideration of transition from primary to secondary
- The review to consider the totality of the alternative provision available for alternative provision with recommendations for both efficiencies and ways of retaining children in mainstream schools with emphasis being placed on inclusion and reducing the associated costs.
- This is to include alternative provision for SEND children.
- The review is to develop a clear view of sufficiency and what we need to plan for over next five years in terms of alternative provision, including what can be delivered differently.
- Methodology to include stakeholder engagement and working with an identified reference group including parents.
- Identify target children who can be brought back into Medway.

Proposed Membership of Reference Group

Councillor Andrew Mackness
Ann Domeney
Andrew Willetts
Wendy Vincent

Chair
Deputy Director of Children and Adult Services
Head of Early Help and Targeted Services
Head of Integrated Disability Services

Paul Jackson	Headteacher	The Thomas Aveling School
Mandy Gage	Principal	Victory Academy
Alex Moir	Headteacher	Parkwood Infant and Junior School
Karen White	Headteacher	Delce Junior School
Gavin Evans	Headteacher	Hill Top Primary School
Maria Sweetlove	Principal	Bradfields Academy
Davinder Jandhu	Headteacher	Luton Junior School
Tina Lovey	Headteacher	Rivermead School
Karen Bennett	Headteacher	The Will Adams Centre
Lisa Scott	Head of School	The GFC School
Caron Johnson	Headteacher	The Rowans

The review is to take place during January 2018 – March 2018 over 20 days including the formation of a report. It is preferable that the reviewer has experience at a senior level of alternative provision.

Frequency of meetings

An initial meeting will take place at the beginning of the review and a final meeting at the end of the review, once work has been completed.

Accountability/Governance

The work of the reference group will see regular updates reported to the Children and Young People's Board.

Appendix B

Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Bill (HL Bill 98)

A

BILL

[AS AMENDED IN COMMITTEE]

TO

Make provision for local authorities to assess the educational development of children receiving elective home education; and for connected purposes.

BE IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-

1 Duty of local authorities to assess children receiving elective home education

- (1) The Education Act 1996 is amended as follows.
- (2) After section 436A (duty to make arrangements to identify children not receiving education), insert—

“436B Duty of local authorities to assess children receiving elective home education

- (1) Local authorities have a duty to assess the educational development of children receiving elective home education in their area.
- (2) Local authorities have a duty to provide advice and information to a parent of a child receiving elective home education if that parent requests such advice or information in relation to their obligations under this section.
- (3) A parent of a child receiving elective home education must register the child as such with their local authority.
- (4) Local authorities must assess annually each child receiving elective home education in their area (hereafter referred to as “the assessment”).
- (5) The assessment set out in subsection (4) must assess the educational development of each child.
- (6) The assessment may include—
 - (a) a visit to the child's home;
 - (b) an interview with the child;
 - (c) seeing the child's work; and
 - (d) an interview with the child's parent.
- (7) A parent of a child receiving elective home education must provide information relevant to the assessment to their local authority when requested.
- (8) The Secretary of State must by regulations made by statutory instrument specify—
 - (a) the arrangements for parents to register a child with their local authority under subsection (3); and
 - (b) the methodology of the assessment.

- (9) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.
- (10) In this section “elective home education” refers to education given to a child at home following a decision by their parent to educate them outside the school system.”

2 Guidance relating to elective home education

- (1) The Secretary of State must update the guidance for elective home education for local authorities and parents to account for section 436B of the Education Act 1996 by the end of the period of one year, beginning with the day on which this Act comes into force.
- (2) In updating the guidance in subsection (1), the Secretary of State must have regard to—
 - (a) the expectation that elective home education must include provision of supervised instruction in reading, writing and numeracy, which takes into account the child’s age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs and disabilities, and
 - (b) the views of children and parents who elect home education.
- (3) The Secretary of State may carry out a public consultation to inform the guidance set out in subsection (1).

3 Interpretation

In this Act—

“elective home education” refers to education given to a child at home following a decision by their parent to educate them outside the school system; and

“local authority” means—

- (a) in relation to England, the council of a district, county or London borough, the Common Council of the City of London and the Council of the Isles of Scilly;
- (b) in relation to Wales, the council of a county or county borough.

4 Extent, commencement and short title

- (1) This Act extends to England and Wales only.
- (2) This Act comes into force at the end of the period of two months, beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.
- (3) This Act may be cited as the Home Education (Duty of Local Authorities) Act 2018.

Appendix C

Table 15

Permanent and fixed period exclusions by type of school
State-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools2015/16
England* For each rate, the highest value is in **red**

	Number of permanent exclusions	Permanent exclusion rate (1)	Number of fixed period exclusions	Fixed period exclusion rate (2)	Number of pupil enrolments with one or more fixed period exclusion	One or more fixed period exclusion rate (3)
State-funded primary schools						
ENGLAND (4)	1,145	0.02	55,740	1.21	25,765	0.56
SOUTH EAST (4)	150	0.02	10,040	1.41	4,405	0.62
OUTER LONDON (4)	60	0.01	3,920	0.81	2,020	0.41
INNER LONDON (4)	45	0.02	2,345	0.91	1,275	0.49
LONDON (4)	105	0.01	6,265	0.84	3,290	0.44
Medway	3	0.01	901	3.59	301	1.20
Tower Hamlets	x	x	98	0.38	42	0.16
Bury	5	0.03	71	0.40	48	0.27
Bexley	8	0.04	313	1.38	133	0.59
State-funded secondary schools						
ENGLAND (4)	5,445	0.17	270,135	8.46	135,925	4.26
SOUTH EAST (4)	590	0.12	36,740	7.34	18,755	3.75
OUTER LONDON (4)	505	0.15	21,015	6.38	13,255	4.02
INNER LONDON (4)	300	0.19	12,785	7.84	8,130	4.99
LONDON (4)	805	0.16	33,800	6.87	21,385	4.34
Medway	78	0.42	2,306	12.34	966	5.17
Tower Hamlets	8	0.05	1,055	6.29	668	3.98
Bury	50	0.46	996	9.14	522	4.79
Bexley	31	0.15	1,501	7.33	759	3.71
Special schools						
ENGLAND (4)	90	0.08	13,485	12.53	5,440	5.05
SOUTH EAST (4)	20	0.09	3,270	16.87	1,235	6.36
OUTER LONDON (4)	5	0.07	1,250	13.35	410	4.35
INNER LONDON (4)	5	0.14	680	13.32	295	5.77
LONDON (4)	15	0.10	1,930	13.34	700	4.85
Medway	0	0.00	88	11.58	33	4.34
Tower Hamlets	0	0.00	74	15.78	38	8.10
Bury	0	0.00	x	x	x	x
Bexley	0	0.00	191	40.90	72	15.42

(1) The number of permanent exclusions for each school type expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) in January 2016.

(2) The number of fixed period exclusions for each school type expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) in January 2016.

(3) The number of pupil enrolments receiving one or more fixed period exclusion for each school type expressed as a percentage of the number (headcount) of pupils (including sole or dual main registrations and boarding pupils) in January 2016.

Appendix D



Schools Commissioners Group



Strengthening approaches to inclusion in Medway

Summary of the roundtable discussion with local leaders

Isos Partnership

27 April 2018



Introduction (1/2)

- **Education leaders from across the Medway Education system came together on Friday 27 April for a workshop to look at approaches to strengthening inclusion in Medway.** The workshop was co-hosted by the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's & Adult Services, and was attended by leaders from primary schools, secondary schools, local alternative provision (AP) providers, as well as local authority (LA) officers.
- **The workshop followed on from a joint letter sent to school leaders in Medway from the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's & Adult Services last November.** The letter invited school leaders to be part of a collective discussion about the causes of high rates of exclusions in Medway and what might be done to strengthen inclusion and reduce rates of exclusions. School leaders who responded to this letter and those representing the different areas of the local education system were invited to the workshop on 27 April.
- **The workshop sought to collate what was being done well and what education leaders could do together to reduce high rates of exclusions and strengthen inclusive practice in Medway.** In the discussions leading up to the workshop, it was evident that there was a strong desire to do things differently and to address this challenge in a spirit of partnership. As such, the workshop was planned to foster discussions that were forward-looking, solutions-focused and rooted in collaboration – not to go over old ground, apportion blame or air criticism.
- **To foster this spirit of collaboration and mutuality, and to enable school and LA leaders to be active participants in the discussion, Isos Partnership was invited to facilitate the workshop.** Isos worked with LA officers, colleagues from the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner, and other local leaders to plan the workshop, and then to facilitate the discussions themselves. This short pack has been produced as a summary of the key points that were agreed during the workshop.



2

Introduction (2/2)

- **The workshop had three main aims.** They were to:
 - ❖ consider current approaches to supporting inclusion in Medway – both what is working well and challenges/barriers;
 - ❖ generate and develop practical solutions about what can be done at school and system level to strengthen approaches to inclusion; and
 - ❖ foster approaches rooted in collaboration and partnership working across the local area.
- **The workshop was divided into two main areas of discussion:**
 1. **the current picture** – capturing what is working well to support inclusion and where colleagues saw key challenges to strengthening inclusive practice, at the level of both schools and the local system; and
 2. **potential solutions** – exploring what would be needed to build on current good practice, tackle the challenges colleagues identified, and strengthen inclusion and reduce rates of exclusion in Medway.
- This summary pack sets out the key points colleagues raised during the workshop discussions under these two themes. It concludes with some suggestions for immediate practical next steps as well as areas that would benefit from further detailed work by local leaders.
- We were delighted to be invited to facilitate these workshops and hope that what came out of the discussions provides a useful foundation for taking forward this important work in Medway.



3

The current picture: School level

What is working well?		What are the challenges?
Colleagues considered that, amongst some schools in Medway, there was a strong sense of common moral purpose and a commitment to inclusion.	... but ...	Some colleagues also argued that this was not articulated in the form of some core, common principles and shared explicitly by all schools in Medway.
Colleagues noted – and indeed described specific examples of – good practice that exists in Medway schools, including expert staff and a range of services to support students.	... but ...	Colleagues also noted that the scope to invest in and sustain such expertise and support options was under severe strain due to pressures on school budgets.
Colleagues pointed to some specific instances where schools had been supported to improve by strengthening whole-school practices, which had resulted in reductions in rates of exclusions.	... but ...	Colleagues also noted that there were challenges in accessing additional, early support from education, health and care services. The difficulty accessing early help and preventative support across these three areas was a central theme in our discussions.
Some colleagues described effective school-to-school support and peer networks, built on well-established relationships in the local area, which provided a valuable source of advice and expertise in meeting pupils' needs.	... but ...	Some colleagues also spoke about feeling isolated, not knowing where to go for advice and support. Several colleagues also emphasised the need for clearer information about available support pathways, what could be accessed when and how.



From the discussion, there came an overall sense that there are pockets of good inclusive practice in Medway (as well as some gaps), but that these were not joined up in the form of a system-wide approach to strengthening inclusion in the local area.

5

The current picture: System level

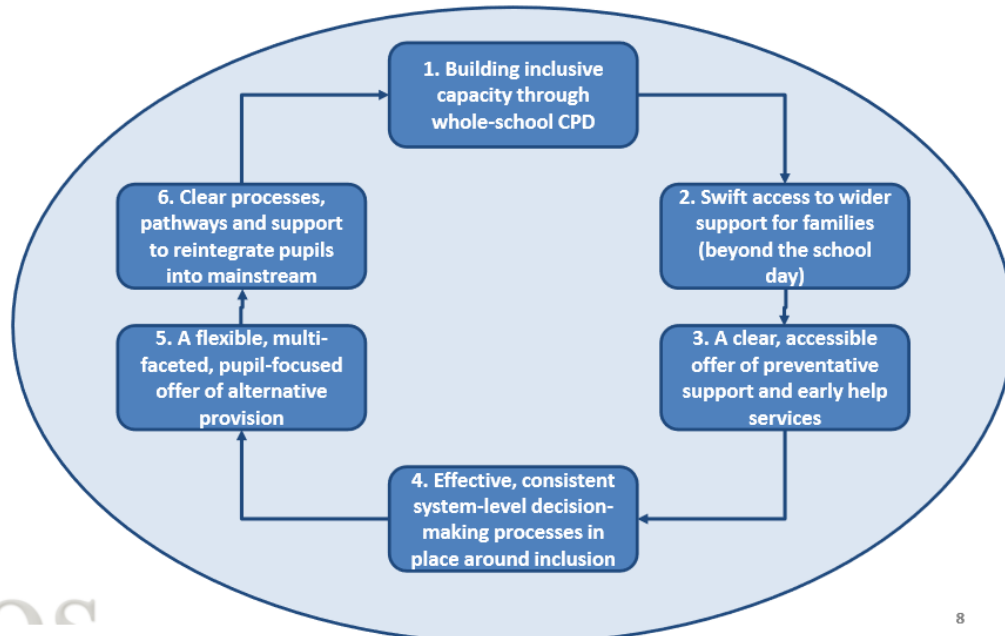
What is working well?	What are the challenges?
Colleagues highlighted some positive examples of work around the primary-secondary transition, as well as an encouraging transition project in which several Medway schools were involved.	Other colleagues noted, however, that such approaches were not consistently applied. They argued that there was the need for agreed, system-wide transition procedures that were applied consistently across all schools.
Colleagues commented positively on some aspects of inclusion support available in the local system – particularly the work of the inclusion team (noting their positive relationships with schools) and local commissioned outreach support (from Bradfields).	Colleagues also recognised that the capacity to support was stretched. There were also strong messages about the need for greater clarity about what support was available, and the need for greater preventative, early help support.
Some colleagues spoke about effective processes in place to support the placement of pupils – fair access arrangements at secondary level, and the school support group (SSG), which colleagues saw as a offering consistent decision-making framework.	Colleagues also noted that there was not the equivalent decision-making panel for primary schools, and that there needed to be greater representation from other services (SEN, early help, children’s social care) on the SSG.
Several colleagues highlighted the fact that local AP in Medway was of a high quality – the two main local providers are judged outstanding and good respectively by Ofsted.	Colleagues noted that AP is largely full of children who have been excluded, without established mechanisms for reintegration. This means there is little capacity for preventative or turnaround work, which colleagues felt was needed.



6

Potential solutions: A system-wide approach

Colleagues described a series of six areas that could help to strengthen inclusive approaches across Medway. Taken together, these could form the basis of a system-wide approach to early support, to pupils receiving high-quality support and provision when they need it, and to supporting effective reintegration of pupils into mainstream settings.



8

Potential solutions: A system-wide approach

1. Building inclusive capacity through whole-school CPD

The argument here was that there needed to be some core principles and consistent approaches to inclusion across Medway schools. Building strategies and techniques for supporting inclusion into a programme of peer review and the local offer of CPD were suggested as two ways in which this might be accomplished.

2. Swift access to wider support for families (beyond the school day)

Supporting families, and parents specifically, outside the school day to complement work that was taking place in schools was also seen as a much-needed form of support. Developing the skills of parents to support their children and reinforce schools' work through a robust, "hands-on" early help offer was seen as a priority.

3. A clear, accessible offer of preventative support and early help services

As described earlier, the need for greater clarity about available support (pathways for accessing support, what was available and when and how it could be accessed) and developing a strong offer of preventative services (which could work with schools before permanent exclusion became a risk) were central themes in the discussion.

4. Effective, consistent system-level decision-making processes in place around inclusion

These included (a) strengthening and making consistent primary-secondary transition processes, (b) tightening processes governing elective home education (to keep children in mainstream education where appropriate), and (c) improving representation from other agencies on SSG and other decision-making panels.

5. A flexible, multi-faceted, pupil-focused offer of alternative provision

Ensuring that local AP is able to offer both longer-term placements for pupils with complex needs, but also bespoke, time-specific, turnaround and preventative placements. Colleagues noted that this will require capacity to be created by reducing exclusions and developing effective mechanisms for reintegrating excluded pupils.

6. Clear processes, pathways and support to reintegrate pupils into mainstream

Building on the preceding point, colleagues noted that there needed to be clear expectations that pupils placed in AP, including those who had been excluded, would be reintegrated into a mainstream school. Robust, consistent processes, transition-planning and the right offer of support would be needed to strengthen this area.

9

Potential "quick wins" and longer-term actions

Potential "quick wins" might include some of the following actions ...

- **Develop some "core principles" of inclusion in Medway** – ensuring that there is an explicitly-articulated core moral purpose around strengthening inclusion and reducing exclusions in Medway, with a specific emphasis on preventative work, decision-making around placements in AP, and reintegration of pupils into mainstream.
- **Develop clear information about available support** – ensure there is a clear, practical and accessible guide to what support for inclusion is available, when and how it can be accessed. Test and develop this to fill any identified gaps.
- **Develop advice surgeries and peer networks** – building on existing networks, ensure that there is a widely-known central point-of-contact that schools can go to get some quick advice or signposting to further support.
- **Strengthen core processes** – involve school leaders in developing and testing new processes around transition, pupil placements (primary especially) and reintegration into mainstream settings. Ensure representation from key agencies on SSG.

Actions to explore in the medium and longer terms could include ...

- **Develop a strong offer of early help** – colleagues noted that, over time, the aim must be to shift the balance of support, services and provision away from reacting to instances of pupils having been excluded and towards early, preventative support. School leaders said what they lacked was access to practical advice and in-school support to work with individual pupils and build inclusive capacity, as well as being able to access additional support from other agencies – children's services and health services – where required. It will be necessary to explore how some capacity could be created to start to redress this balance initially, and how to shift the balance over time.
- **Fostering collective school leadership and mutual responsibility for inclusion** – colleagues noted a number of instances where schools, working collaboratively and in partnership with the LA, could take on a greater collective leadership role for this agenda. This could be in shaping core principles, designing support services, peer review networks, chairing decision-making panels and shaping local services and provision.

11

Appendix E

SCHOOL SUPPORT GROUP (SSG) – GUIDANCE, September 2017

The School Support Group (SSG) is a multi-agency forum facilitated by the Local Authority to discuss the needs of individual students and young people who are vulnerable and/or at risk of negative outcomes and exclusion. Representatives from relevant support agencies are available for the SSG every Tuesday from 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm to provide support and advice on options available to the school for each individual.

The group will include members of:

- School Challenge and Improvement Team
- Rivermead Outreach
- Bradfields Specialist Support Services
- Marlborough Outreach Team (MOT)
- Early Help & Target Support Service
- Will Adams
- Chalklands Outreach
- Inclusion Team

Other professionals may be invited to attend if appropriate to the needs of the young person or whether they are involved with the family.

If you wish to use the SSG, **the following procedures should be followed:** -

- The Head teacher / referrer should contact the parents/carers and the young person concerned to inform them that the young person is being referred to an SSG meeting.
- The SSG is a 'support group' for schools so ideally secondary students and primary pupils are referred at the earliest opportunity to enable strategies implemented to have the greatest prospect of success.
- The referrer should email Susan Weeden, susan.weeden@medway.gov.uk; /with the details of who they are referring and reasons why and Susan will reply with the offer of the next available slot appointment.
- **All areas of the new referral form must be completed** and also the **Evaluation Report** and returned a week before the allocated slot.
- The referrer or a senior member of staff who knows the student will be asked to present the case to the SSG with all the relevant information.
- Some cases will be asked to be returned to the SSG for a Review. Dates for reviews of cases can be given at the time of the group meeting.
- The notes of the meeting will be sent to those who attended the meeting or who have sent their apologies, via a password protected email and will need to be stored in a secure place following Kent and Medway Information sharing protocol.
- After approximately 6 weeks from the SSG meeting, a **Review Recommendations and Actions** form will be sent out by email for the school to evaluate progress of the recommendations and actions. These forms **must** be returned to enable the SSG to monitor the effectiveness of the group and the progress of students who have been discussed.
- Other agencies that have recommendations and actions will be asked to provide their updates via email.

Schools and referring agencies are required to bring the following to the SSG meeting (this can be sent in advance if preferred):-

- The person attending the SSG must be someone who can make decisions and progress the young person's situation and who completed the SSG Referral form.
- The young persons attendance sheet
- Documentation on interventions and strategies that have already been tried
- Evidence of any external advice / support sought
- *Sometimes there are as many as 3-4 bookings in one afternoon, beginning at 1.30 p.m. This allows a maximum of 45 minutes per meeting and allowing 30 minutes for a review. It is usually kept to a maximum of 3-4 bookings, as this is a manageable number for a weekly meeting. The SSG is held weekly during Term time only.*

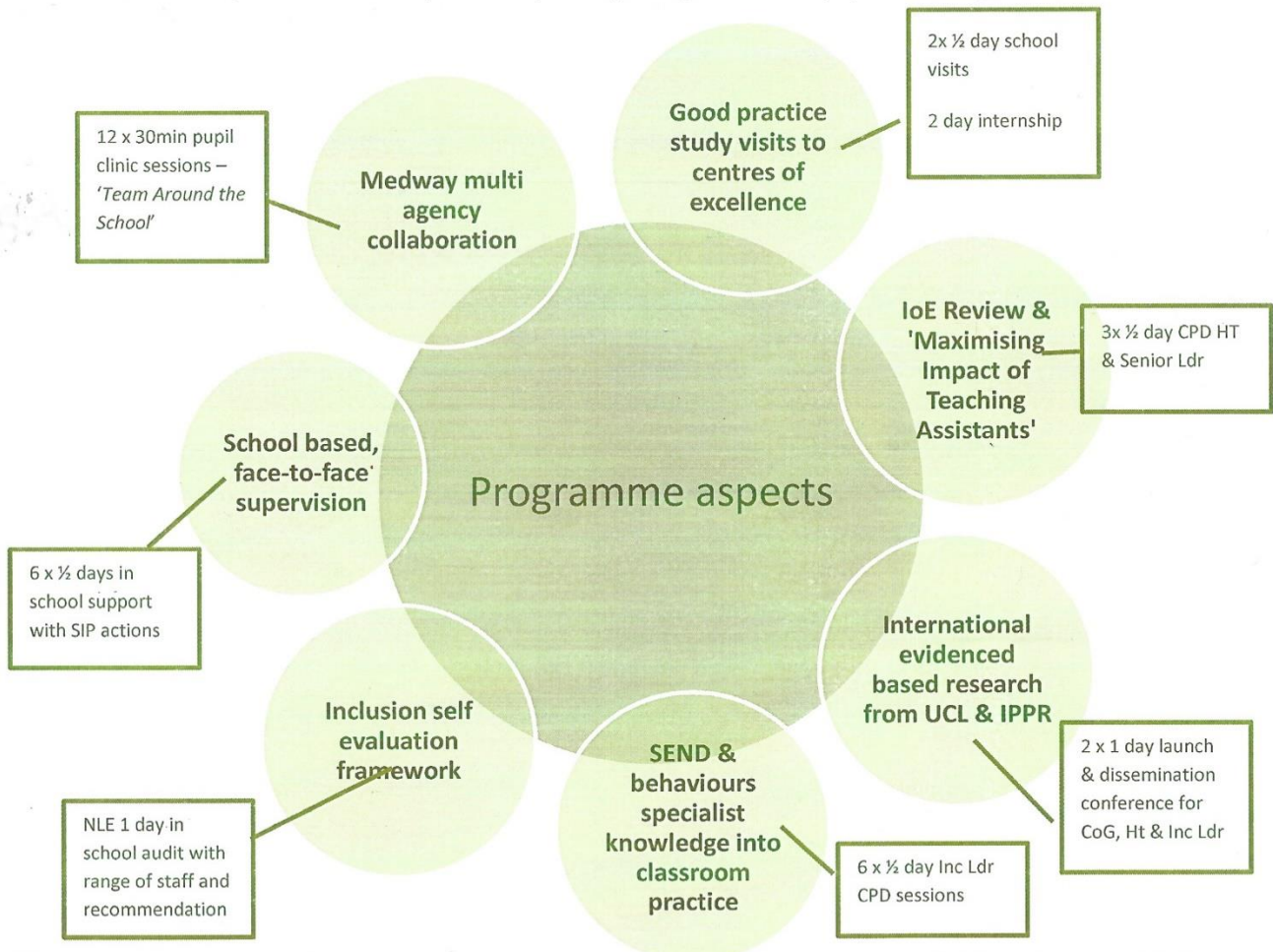
Appendix F

Effective Leadership – Inclusion

“One principal stands out. Those that work in these schools aim never to give up on a child.”
(HMCI 2009 Excelling Through Inclusion)

Enabling every child to achieve their very best at primary school is the sincere desire of every headteacher; achieving that goal for some individual pupils presents complex challenges that often need innovative, creative and resilient leadership.

The thrust of this comprehensive programme, over four terms, is to equip school leaders with the skills to grow inclusive cultures, effectively modelling and promoting an inclusion, supporting classroom practitioners and particularly championing vulnerable pupils enabling them to thrive.



The aim is to enable effective leaders of inclusion who are:

Lead professionals and significant role models within the inclusive communities they serve. Living the values and ambitions of high performing schools and determining vulnerable pupil outcomes directly. They are lead professionals, commanding respect and followers through their integrity because they are versatile in communicating the vision and relentless in their pursuit of inclusion.

Decisive and impact on the quality of inclusive classroom provision. Modelling good practice and securing an inclusive climate. They overcome barriers; advancing equity and championing inclusion.

Designers of the curriculum and facilitate high quality professional development. They evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the inclusion provision, drive improvement and are successful in securing additional resources.

Ambitious for their own development and empower all staff to excel, building capacity and sustainability within the locality.

Further information from: kevin.smart@medway.gov.uk or rebecca.smith@medway.gov.uk

Appendix G

An example of one primary school's internal support arrangements.

Our school is in a very deprived catchment area and I employ additional staff outside the classroom to support not only the children but also their families.

I also employ a full time trained Speech and Language therapist and Speech and language specialist TA.

I have a member of staff who holds a Dyslexia assessor qualification. I have supported staff with study leave to enable them to gain these qualifications.

I have a family liaison Officer who runs social skills programmes and 14 Early Help assessments. She also offers 1:1 support to our needy children. I have an EAL mentor who supports not only our EAL children with their acquisition of English but also their families. She also runs a Young Interpreters club where children from abroad support newcomers with their language skills.

Because of the high needs of social emotional difficulty children, I have introduced Thrive to my school and paid for five people to be trained as Thrive practitioners. We now have a small Thrive room operating and would like to extend this. Thrive heals the emotional gaps in a child's life and we have had a great deal of success with the programme. The cost of the training £8225 and we pay an annual cost of £1117.

Due to the very more complex needs of children now coming into mainstream we have recently developed a sensory room. This has cost us £4300. We are still measuring the impact of this but have already seen its calming effect and exploration of sensory development with our younger pupils.