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## Press release

### **New PACA report reveals extent of over-exclusion of special needs pupils across Milton Keynes Secondary Schools**

Schools' attitudes to exclusion have been revealed in a new report from PACA. The extent of over-exclusion of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) has been documented in new school league tables based on data obtained in a Freedom of Information request. The report also draws on our database of case studies from families in Milton Keynes.

The report looks at the experience of 3 groups over a 5-year period: those without any SEND, those on "SEN Support" and those with an EHCP\* (for whom schools receive extra financial support from the council). We looked at the rates of Fixed Term Exclusions (FTE), the length of FTE and the number of permanent exclusions. Pupils with SEND are vulnerable to being removed from familiar routines and settings, especially those with an EHCP. Schools are supposed to take this into account when deciding the length of exclusion. We also looked at exclusions of over 5 days, for which schools have to arrange education at another site, which is particularly difficult to cope with for pupils with SEND and especially so for those with an EHCP.

#### **Findings**

##### *Pupils with no SEND*

- 100-fold difference in Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) rates between the highest-excluding school (Herbert Leon) and the lowest-excluding school.

##### *Pupils on SEN Support*

- School positions in the league tables were similar to their positions for pupils with no SEND.
- 5 times more likely to be excluded than those with no SEND (FTE and permanent exclusions).
- On average excluded for 5 times more days in total than children with no SEND.

##### *Pupils with an EHCP*

- Over-excluded by some schools. Top of the league table was Ousedale: EHCP children were 10 times more likely to be excluded than those with no SEND.
- Excluded for longer by some schools. Top of the league table was Ousedale: EHCP children were excluded for 13 times more days in total.
- At Ousedale (top of the table again), EHCP children were 20x more likely to be given an FTE of over 5 days.

#### **Comment**

Children with SEND are well-known to be disproportionately excluded from school. While schools are allowed to exclude pupils with special needs, the Equality Act effectively requires them to show that they have met the child's needs in an anticipatory manner. Otherwise, to punish a child and withdraw their education, for reasons that flow from their SEND and without having met their needs (in a way that could have prevented the exclusion), would be to discriminate against them.

The question is, if schools are providing adequate support, why are rates of exclusion so disproportionately high for pupils with SEND? And why are some schools excluding those vulnerable children for so much longer than other pupils?



Susan Akhtar, Chair of PACA MK, said, “Parents tell us they understand that ensuring safety in schools is paramount, but that meetings pupils’ needs would be more effective than punishing them. Our report shows that schools in MK take very different approaches to tackling this problem”.

**Key excerpt from the report**

League Table: Number of excluded days (per 100 pupils per year)

	<u>no SEN</u>	<u>SEN Support</u>	<u>EHCP</u>
↑ x100 ↓	High excluders	High excluders	High excluders
	Stantonbury 27.4	Stantonbury 110.5	Ousedale 109.1
	Medium excluders	Herbert Leon 85.2	Medium excluders
	Herbert Leon 19.7	Kents Hill Park 83.6	Radcliffe 70.1
	Radcliffe 17.2	Medium excluders	Walton High 56.6
	Walton High 12.8	Walton High 60.3	Lord Grey 46.4
	Lord Grey 12.6	Radcliffe 59.2	St Paul's 44.1
	Ousedale 8.5	St Paul's 43.6	Herbert Leon 34.0
	St Paul's 7.4	Lord Grey 33.8	Stantonbury 26.8
	Kents Hill Park 4.3	Ousedale 31.0	Low excluders
	Low excluders	Low excluders	Oakgrove 4.0
	Shenley 1.1	Denbigh 5.9	Shenley x
	Oakgrove 0.7	Oakgrove 4.5	Denbigh 0
	MK Academy 0.23	Shenley 3.2	Hazeley 0
	Denbigh 0.11	Hazeley 2.1*	Kents Hill Park 0
	Hazeley 0.09*	MK Academy 1.4	MK Academy 0

- \* These figures are based on low numbers of actual exclusions (< 5 in total over 5 years).
- x Figures suppressed according to DfE guidance as there were 1 or 2 actual exclusions only.

**Editors’ Notes**

\* EHCP: Education, Health and Care Plan (replaced the former Statement of Special Educational Needs)

PACA MK is the Parents and Carers Alliance, Milton Keynes. We are an independent voice, influencing change by representing what matters to SEND families. The group is open to parents and carers of children and young people aged 0—25 years old, with disabilities or additional needs, who live in the borough of Milton Keynes. PACA MK is organised by a committee of volunteer parents and carers and has a steering group which meets regularly.

We are part of a nationwide network of local parent carer forums and we share our experiences with decision-makers to bring about real change to develop local services and to make lives better for our families. PACA MK works in collaboration with service providers in health, education, social care and leisure services in Milton Keynes. Our aim is to fully include parents and carers in the development and improvement of local services.

<https://pacamk.org/>