



Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State

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Dear colleague,

In March last year, I announced that I had asked the former Children's Minister, Edward Timpson CBE, to lead an external review of school exclusion. The review sought to explore how head teachers use exclusion in practice, to investigate the drivers of variations in exclusion rates, and to undertake further analysis to help establish why some groups of pupils are more likely to be excluded than others.

I am now pleased to draw your attention to the review, and the government response, which have now been published. Copies have been placed in the library of the House, and both documents are available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/school-exclusions-review-call-for-evidence>

The review is extensive and thorough, which reflects the large volume of detailed evidence Edward Timpson has gathered from schools, local authorities, parents, carers and children, as well as the findings of new analysis of exclusion data.

As the review notes, exclusion rates have risen over recent years, but they are lower than they were a decade ago, and permanent exclusion remains a rare event. I agree with Edward Timpson that there is no 'right' level of exclusion to be aimed for. Nonetheless, the review speaks of variation in exclusion rates and practice beyond the natural variation that arises from varying local contexts.

When factors about their background are taken into account, financially disadvantaged children, children with certain types of special educational need (SEN), and Children in Need are more likely to be excluded than other children. Overall, when children from ethnic minorities are compared with White British children there is no substantial difference in exclusion rates. Edward Timpson has also found that when other factors about their background are taken into account, children from some groups (such as Black Caribbean children) are more likely to be excluded than White British children, while children from some other groups (such as Indian children) are less likely.

Every child deserves an excellent education. This is true regardless of their background, their ethnicity, the area they live in, any special educational needs they may have, and whether they are in mainstream school, special school or alternative provision (AP).

In order to deliver this, teachers need to be able to teach – and pupils to learn – in a safe and orderly environment. This means supporting head teachers to use their powers to

issue fixed-period exclusions ('suspensions') in response to poor behaviour, and to permanently exclude ('expel') as a last resort. It also means supporting schools to give children at risk of exclusion the very best chance to succeed.

We must also make sure that on those occasions when pupils are excluded, they are safe and that they receive high-quality education and support to get them back on track. The review is clear that while there is correlation between exclusion and involvement in violent crime, we must be careful not to draw a simple causal link, as there is no evidence to back this up. What is clear is that being in education is a protective factor, and that exclusion must not make a young person more vulnerable.

The Timpson Review makes 30 recommendations to Government, and we accept all of them in principle. We are taking forward an ambitious, wide-ranging response to the findings of the review by:

- Making schools accountable for the outcomes of permanently excluded children. We will work with education leaders over the summer to design a consultation, to be launched in autumn, on how to deliver these reforms.
- Establishing a practice programme to embed effective partnership working between LAs, schools, alternative provision and other partners, to better equip schools to intervene early for pupils at risk of exclusion, and to ensure that the most effective provision is put in place for those who are excluded.
- Working with sector experts, led by DfE's lead advisor on behaviour, Tom Bennett, to rewrite guidance to address the uncertainty amongst some school leaders about what good practice looks like, and give head teachers the confidence to act decisively when that is needed.
- Calling on local authorities, governing bodies, academy trusts and local forums of schools to review information on children who leave schools, by exclusion or otherwise, to ask how the data on the characteristics of such children feeds local trends, and to use this information to inform improvements in practice and reduce disparities.
- Working with Ofsted to define and tackle the practice of 'off-rolling'.
- Extending support for alternative provision. In the autumn, we will set out plans to go further to improve outcomes for children in AP, including through a new workforce programme.

I know that colleagues will take an active interest as these commitments are delivered, and in the Government response.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damian Hinds". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education