

# SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS TRACKER

A termly analysis of official data: Spring 2025

**3,320**

The number of permanent exclusions from school has increased by **6.9** per cent on Spring 2024. In Spring 2025, there were **3,320** permanent exclusions, a rate of **0.04** per 100 pupils. This compares with **3,107** permanent exclusions in Spring 2024, equating to **213** more permanent exclusions.

**312,562**

School suspensions have increased by **5.8** per cent since Spring 2024. There were **312,562** suspensions in Spring 2025, a rate of **3.72** per 100 pupils. This compares to **295,559** suspensions in Spring 2024.

**593,370**

**593,370** days were lost due to suspensions in Spring 2025, a **3.8** per cent increase on Spring 2024 with **3.6** days lost on average per suspension during Spring 2025.

# Contents

Headline statistics .....	1
About the Centre for Social Justice .....	2
Executive summary .....	3
Permanent exclusions .....	4
Suspensions .....	5
Reasons for exclusion .....	6
Breakdown of exclusion data .....	8
<i>Exclusion by school type</i> .....	8
<i>Exclusion by region and local authority</i> .....	8
Exclusion by pupil characteristics .....	11
<i>Exclusion by free school meal eligibility</i> .....	11
<i>Exclusion by special educational needs/disabilities</i> .....	12
<i>Exclusions by sex</i> .....	14
<i>Exclusion by ethnicity</i> .....	16
<i>Exclusion by age and year group</i> .....	16
School exclusions tracker .....	20
<i>Our plan for reform</i> .....	21

# Headline statistics

**There were 3,320 permanent exclusions in Spring 2025.**<sup>1</sup> This is a record for a Spring term and a rise of 6.9 per cent since Spring 2024.

Record numbers of primary school children were permanently excluded in Spring 2025 (558 children).

**It is vulnerable children who are affected most.** In Spring 2025, the rate of permanent exclusion for children eligible for free school meals (FSM) was 5.9 times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM.<sup>2</sup>

**School suspensions have increased compared to the previous year.** There were 312,562 suspensions given in Spring 2025. This is an increase of 5.8 per cent in Spring 2024.<sup>3</sup>

**593,370 days were lost to suspensions in Spring 2025.** There were 3.6 days lost on average per suspension during the term.

---

1 Department for Education, *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Spring term 2024/25*, April 2026

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

# About the Centre for Social Justice

Established in 2004, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) is an independent think tank that studies the root causes of Britain's social problems and addresses them by recommending practical, workable policy interventions. The CSJ's vision is to give people in the UK who are experiencing the worst multiple disadvantages and injustice every possible opportunity to reach their full potential.

The majority of the CSJ's work is organised around five "pathways to poverty", first identified in our ground-breaking 2007 report *Breakthrough Britain*. These are: educational failure; family breakdown; economic dependency and worklessness; addiction to drugs and alcohol; and severe personal debt.

Since its inception, the CSJ has changed the landscape of our political discourse by putting social justice at the heart of British politics. This has led to a transformation in government thinking and policy. For instance, in March 2013, the CSJ report *It Happens Here* shone a light on the horrific reality of human trafficking and modern slavery in the UK. As a direct result of this report, the Government passed the Modern Slavery Act 2015, one of the first pieces of legislation in the world to address slavery and trafficking in the 21st century.

Our research is informed by experts including prominent academics, practitioners and policymakers. We also draw upon our CSJ Alliance, a unique group of charities, social enterprises, and other grassroots organisations that have a proven track record of reversing social breakdown across the UK.

The social challenges facing Britain remain serious. In 2026 and beyond, we will continue to advance the cause of social justice so that more people can continue to fulfil their potential.

# Executive summary

The CSJ has been investigating the issue of school exclusions since 2018.

Our initial report, 'Providing the Alternative', investigated the reasons why a pupil may end up excluded from school and considered the support that is available for excluded pupils. This was followed in 2020 by 'Warming the Cold Spots of Alternative Provision', which uncovered a postcode lottery in access to high-quality alternative provision (AP). More recently the CSJ has conducted extensive research into what is causing the recent high levels of school exclusions and suspensions, in 'Suspending Reality'.

New government figures reveal that, as well as seeing a concerning rise in exclusions since the 2024 Spring term, the number of exclusions is 20.7 per cent higher than in Spring 2019. This picture is even starker for suspensions, with over twice as many in Spring 2025 as in Spring 2019.<sup>4</sup> Spring 2025 marked an all-time record for the number of primary school children expelled from school (558) – a 23 per cent rise compared to Spring 2024.

Disadvantaged children continue to be disproportionately affected. In Spring 2025, the rate of permanent exclusion for children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) was almost 5.9 times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM. Similarly, the rate of permanent exclusions for children in receipt of SEN support was nearly 5.8 times the rate of children with no identified SEN.<sup>5</sup>

The Government's recent Schools White Paper<sup>6</sup> and SEND Consultation<sup>7</sup> set out encouraging plans for reform that will (if implemented) go a long way towards tackling the behaviour crisis and resulting high exclusion rates in schools. Several new policies are CSJ recommendations from previous 'Exclusions Trackers'<sup>8</sup>, including the three-tier system for SEND support, a new 'enrichment entitlement' for pupils and a parental engagement toolkit. These new developments since the last *Exclusions Tracker* in November 2025 reflect a shift in national priorities. However, while these measures are welcome, the Government must go further to address the root causes of the behavioural crisis underpinning exclusions.

The Centre for Social Justice continues to call for urgent, nationwide action. This means raising standards of behaviour, swiftly implementing the enrichment guarantee so every pupil has opportunities to broaden their horizons, introducing a new Right to Sport for all secondary-age pupils, empowering families through rolling out a practical engagement toolkit, and establishing robust national standards for internal alternative provision. Only with comprehensive, system-wide reform can we ensure no child is left behind and that every young person receives the support and enrichment they deserve.

---

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

7 Department for Education, *SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First*, February 2026

8 Centre for Social Justice, *School Exclusions Tracker*, November 2025, July 2025 and April 2025

# Permanent exclusions

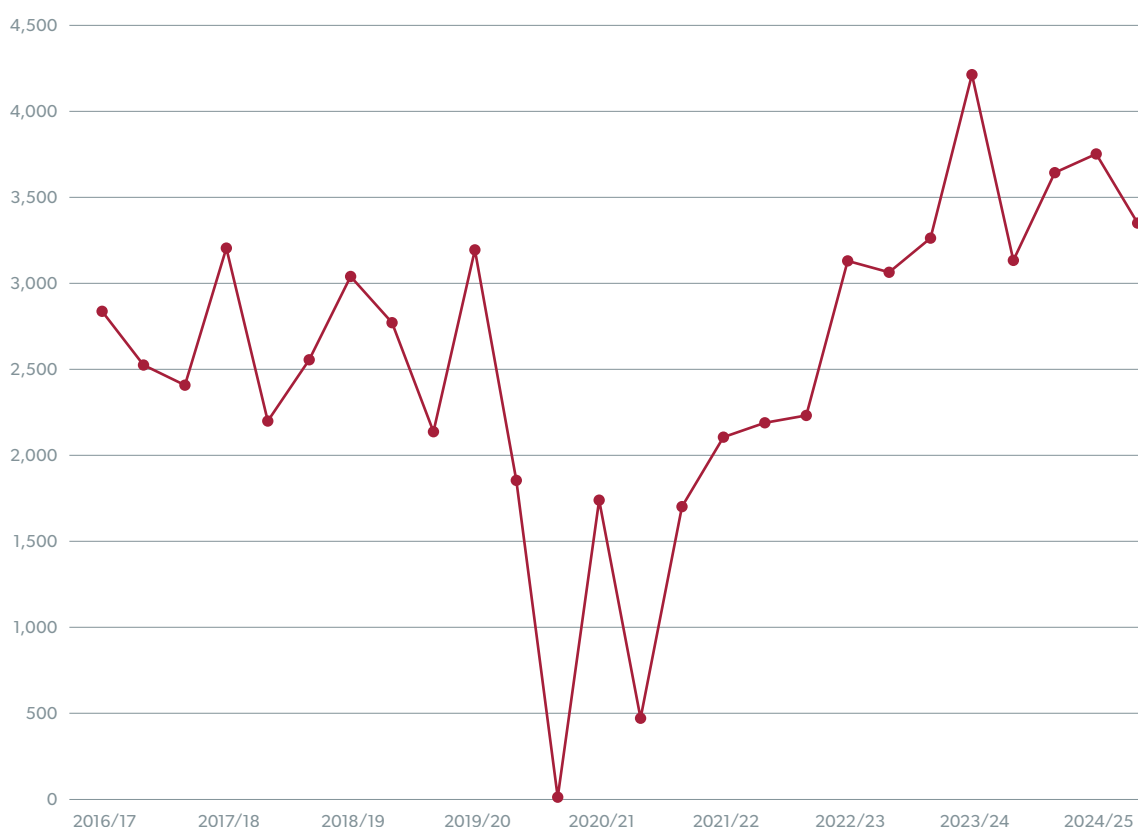
Permanent exclusion is when a child's name is removed from the school's register and they are no longer allowed to attend the school. It is the responsibility of the local authority to arrange suitable alternative full-time education from the sixth school day following the permanent exclusion.

In Spring 2025, there were 3,320 permanent exclusions, which is the highest level of exclusions in a Spring term on record. This represents an 11 per cent decrease on Autumn 2024 and a 7 per cent increase on the previous school year's Spring term, Spring 2024.<sup>9</sup>

The number of permanent exclusions is higher than pre-pandemic levels. In Spring 2019, the last Spring term before schools closed for the pandemic, 2,751 pupils were permanently excluded. The number of permanent exclusions has therefore increased 21 per cent relative to pre-pandemic.<sup>10</sup>

The rate of permanent exclusion in Spring 2025 was 0.040 per 100 pupils. This is an increase from 0.037 in Spring 2024 and from 0.034 in Spring 2019.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 1 – Termly number of permanent exclusions



9 Department for Education, *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Spring term 2024/25*, April 2026

10 Ibid

11 Ibid

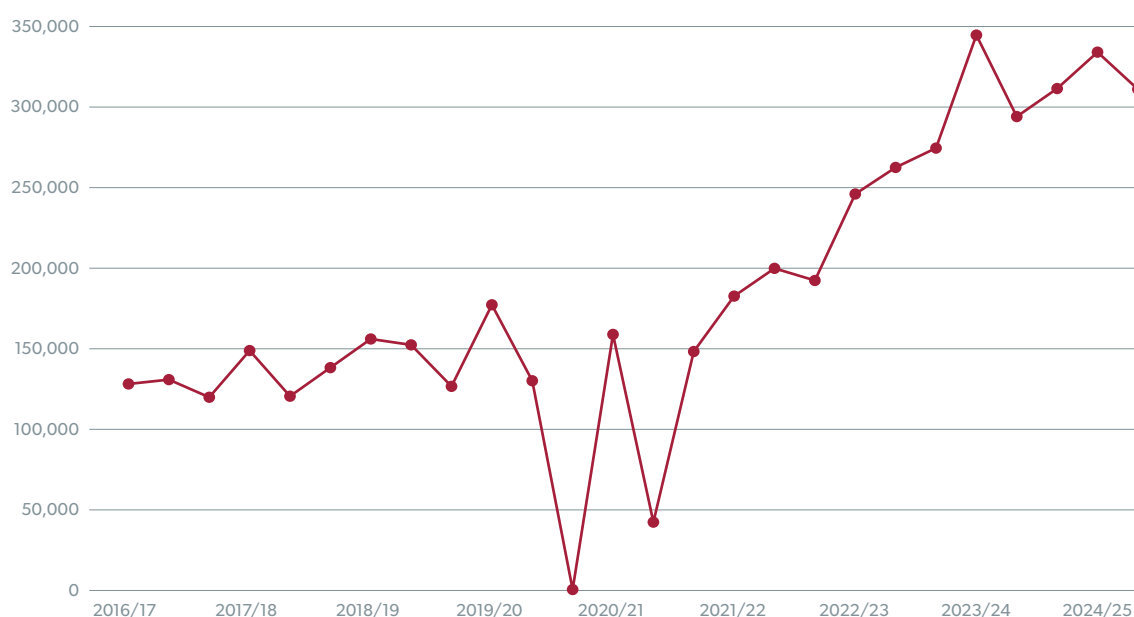
# Suspensions

A suspension is a time-limited exclusion. The term “suspension” has been used by the Department for Education (DfE) in recent years, but in previous years the term “fixed-term exclusion” (FTE) was used. A pupil who is suspended is temporarily removed from school for a set period, which can happen multiple times in a year but cannot total more than 45 days in one school year. For context, there are a total of 190 days in each school year. If a child has been suspended, the school is required to set work for the first five school days and from the sixth day to arrange suitable alternative full-time education.

In Spring 2025, there were 312,562 suspensions. This is lower than the previous term, Autumn 2024, when there were 335,671 suspensions but higher than the Spring term of 2024, when there were 295,559 suspensions.<sup>12</sup>

The number of suspensions is higher than pre-pandemic levels. In Spring 2019, there were 153,465 suspensions. Compared to pre-pandemic, the number of suspensions has increased by 104 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 2 – Termly number of suspensions



The suspensions rate was 3.72 per 100 pupils compared to 3.50 in Spring 2024.<sup>14</sup> The rate of suspensions, however, does not indicate how many pupils receive a suspension. It is therefore useful to consider the number of pupils receiving one or more suspensions. 166,806 pupils received one or more suspensions in Spring 2025, compared to 162,152 pupils in Spring 2024. Just under two per cent of pupils had one or more suspensions.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

# Reasons for exclusion

When a pupil is excluded from school, schools are required to record the main reasons for exclusion in the school census, choosing from a set of 16 codes.

In Spring 2025, the most common reason for both permanent exclusions and suspensions was “persistent disruptive behaviour”, cited in 38.1 per cent of reasons given for permanent exclusions and 51.2 per cent of suspensions. DfE guidance describes “persistent disruptive behaviour” as challenging behaviour, disobedience or persistent violation of school rules.<sup>16</sup> For suspensions the second most common reason cited was “verbally abusive towards the adults”, accounting for 15.0 per cent of suspensions.<sup>17</sup>

The second most common reason for being permanently excluded was “physical assault of pupils. The third most common reason was “physical assault of adults” (12.3 per cent), followed by “verbally abusive to adults” (10.4 per cent).

The number of children permanently excluded for physical assault towards adults has risen from 339 in Spring 2022 to 549 in Spring 2025 – a 62 per cent increase in just three years. For primary school children, it has more than doubled in that time from 131 to 281 and is now the most common reason for exclusion, accounting for 3 in 10 exclusions. More primary school children were expelled in Spring 2025 due to physical assault against teachers (281) than secondary school teenagers (245).

Table 1 – Permanent exclusions by reason

Reason	Proportion of permanent exclusions (%)
Persistent disruptive behaviour	38.1
Physical assault of pupils	16.0
Physical assault of adults	12.3
Verbally abusive to adults	10.4
Offensive weapon	7.2
Verbally abusive to pupils	4.6
Drugs or alcohol	4.2
Damage	3.4
Sexual misconduct	1.1
Bullying	0.6
Media technology	0.6
Racist abuse	0.6
Public Health	0.4
Abuse – sex, gender	0.2
Theft	0.2
Abuse - disability	0.0

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

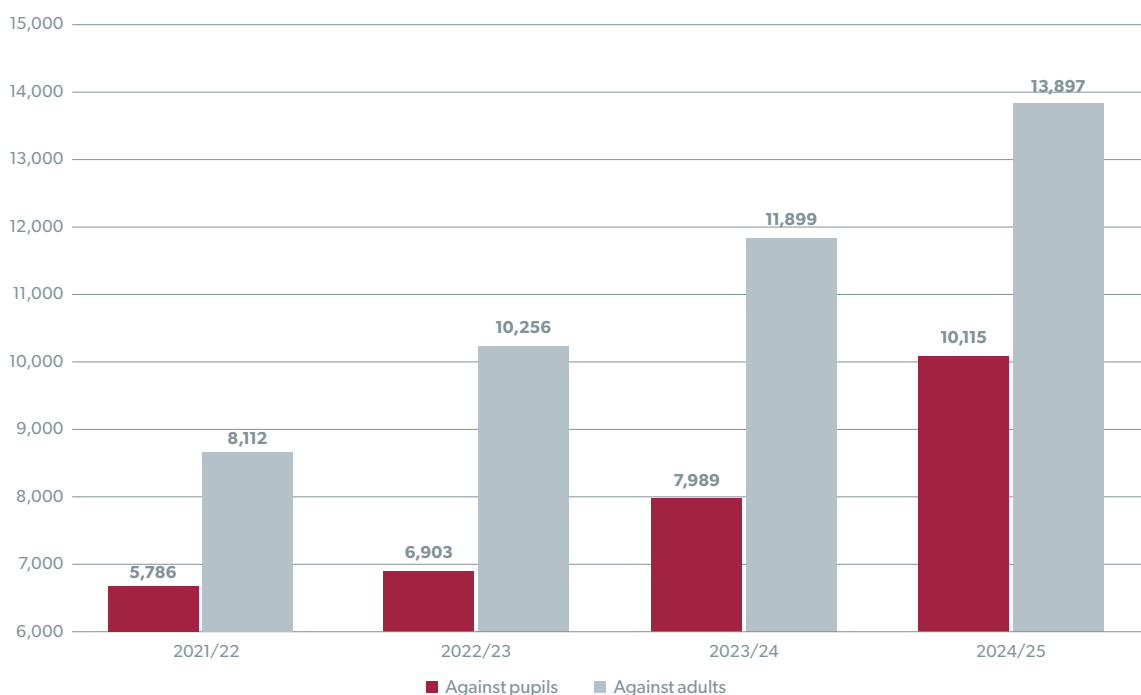
<sup>17</sup> Ibid

Table 2 – Suspensions by reason

Reason	Proportion of suspensions (%)
Persistent disruptive behaviour	51.8
Verbally abusive to adults	14.9
Physical assault of pupils	12.0
Physical assault of adults	5.7
Verbally abusive to pupils	3.9
Damage	2.8
Drugs and alcohol	2.0
Racist abuse	1.6
Offensive weapon	1.5
Media technology	1.2
Bullying	0.8
Sexual misconduct	0.6
Theft	0.6
Public health	0.5
Abuse - sex, gender	0.3
Abuse - disability	0.0

Primary schools have seen a particularly large increase in number of suspensions involving physical assault against adults, increasing by 71 per cent between Spring 2022 and Spring 2025 from 8,112 to 13,897. Physical assault against other pupils has seen a similar rise, increasing by 75 per cent from 5,786 to 10,115 over the same period

Figure 3 - Primary school suspensions involving physical assault



# Breakdown of exclusion data

## Exclusion by school type

In Spring 2025, 2,716 children in state-funded secondary schools were permanently excluded. The rate of permanent exclusion in secondary schools was 0.074 per 100 children.<sup>18</sup>

558 children in state-funded primary schools were permanently excluded in Spring 2025, a rate of 0.012 per 100 children. This is a rise in 35 per cent since Spring 2019, before the pandemic. The rate of school exclusion was 0.027 per 100 children in special schools. In Spring 2025, 46 children educated in special schools were permanently excluded.<sup>19</sup>

In Spring 2025, there were 269,372 suspensions given to pupils in secondary schools, a rate of 7.3 per 100 children. There were 36,336 suspensions given to pupils in primary schools in Spring 2025, a rate of 0.80 per 100 children. In Spring 2025, there were 6,854 suspensions given to pupils in special schools, a rate of 4.1 per 100 children.<sup>20</sup>

## Exclusion by region and local authority

Patterns of exclusion vary across England.

The North East had the highest rate of permanent exclusions in Spring 2025 (0.094 per 100 children) followed by the North West (0.055 per 100 children).<sup>21</sup>

London had the lowest rate of permanent exclusions in Spring 2025 (0.0191 per 100 children) followed by the South East (0.0196 per 100 children).<sup>22</sup>

---

18 Ibid

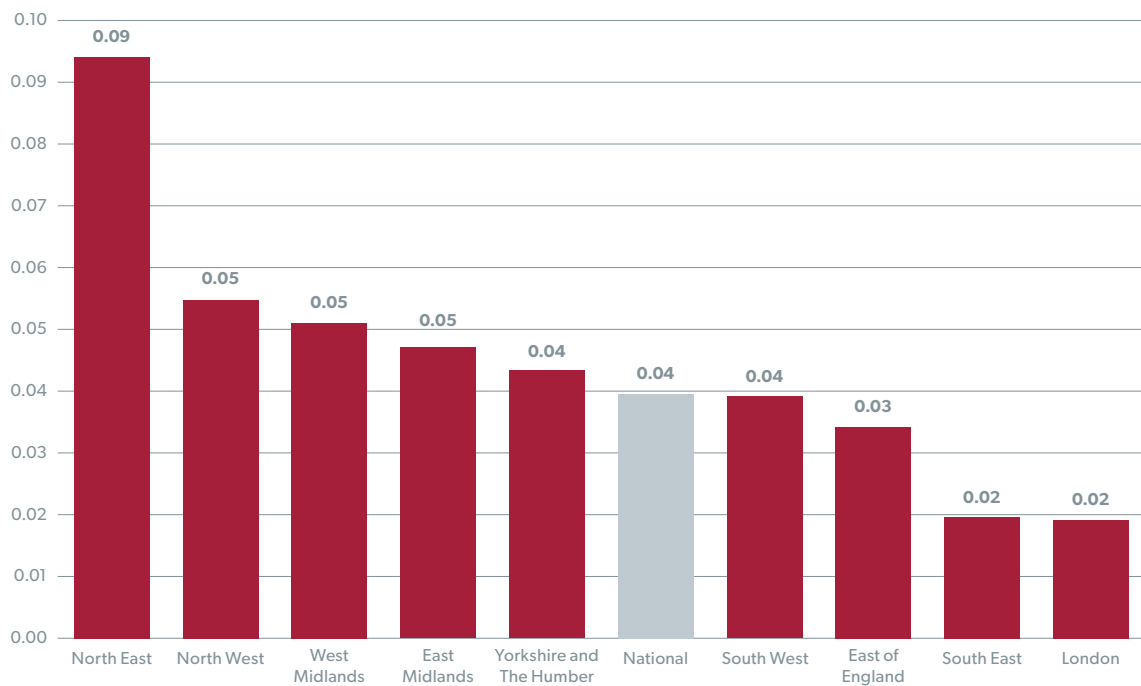
19 Ibid

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 Ibid

Figure 4 – Permanent exclusions by region



The local authority with the highest rate of permanent exclusion in Spring 2025 was the Isles of Scilly (0.40 per 100 children). The local authorities with the lowest rate of permanent exclusion are the City of London and Brighton and Hove, which had no permanent exclusions in Spring 2025.<sup>23</sup>

Table 3 – Local authorities with highest rates of permanent exclusion

Local authority	Permanent exclusion rate
Isles of Scilly	0.398
Blackpool	0.168
South Tyneside	0.150
North Tyneside	0.138
Sunderland	0.135
Darlington	0.107
Middlesbrough	0.101
Stockton-on-Tees	0.098
Nottingham	0.090
Lancashire	0.088

North East had the highest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (6.5 per 100 children) followed by Yorkshire and the Humber (5.2 per 100 children).<sup>24</sup>

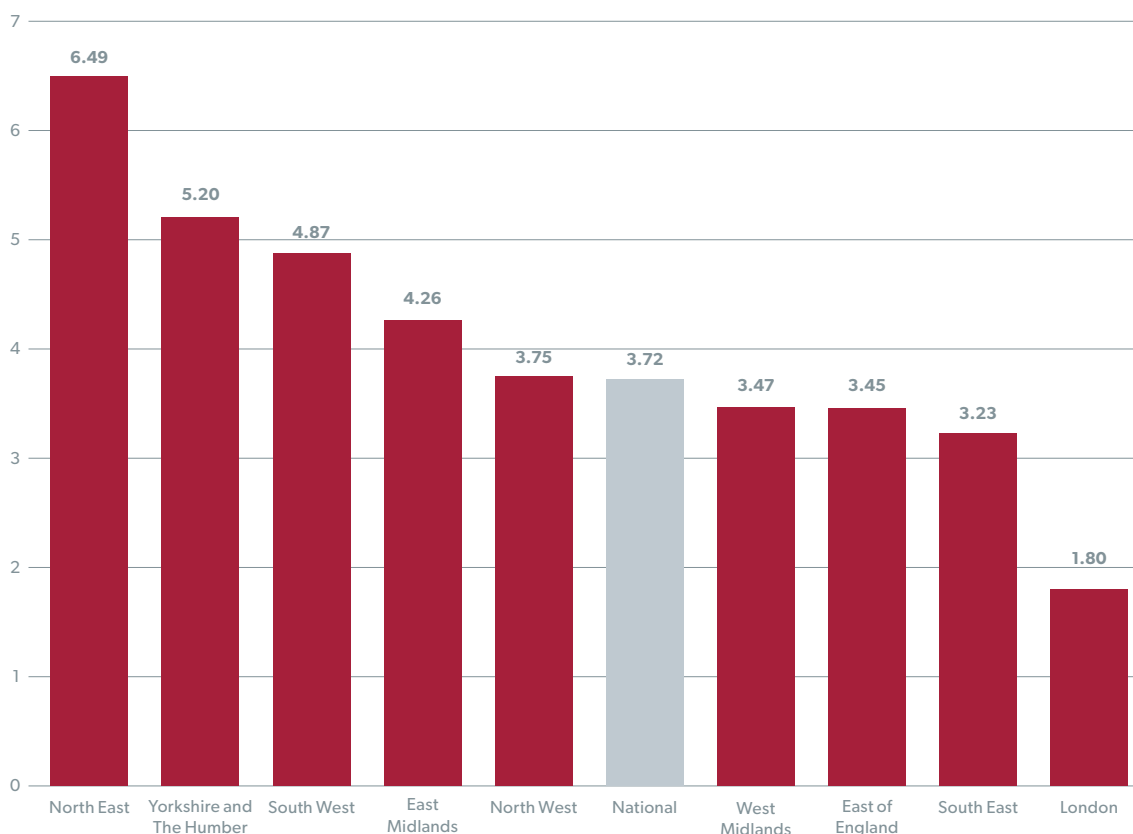
London had the lowest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (1.8 per 100 children), followed by South East (3.2 per 100 children).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

Figure 5 – Suspensions by region



Redcar and Cleveland had the highest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (13.1 per 100 children) followed by Hartlepool (11.6 per 100 children).<sup>26</sup>

Merton had the lowest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (0.86 per 100 children), followed by Richmond upon Thames (0.89 per 100 children).<sup>27</sup>

Table 4 – Local authorities with highest rates of suspensions

Local authority	Suspension rate
Redcar and Cleveland	13.08
Hartlepool	11.56
Middlesbrough	9.09
Stockton-on-Tees	8.28
Tameside	7.78
Newcastle upon Tyne	7.75
North East Lincolnshire	7.22
Sunderland	7.14
Wakefield	7.03
Stoke-on-Trent	7.00

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

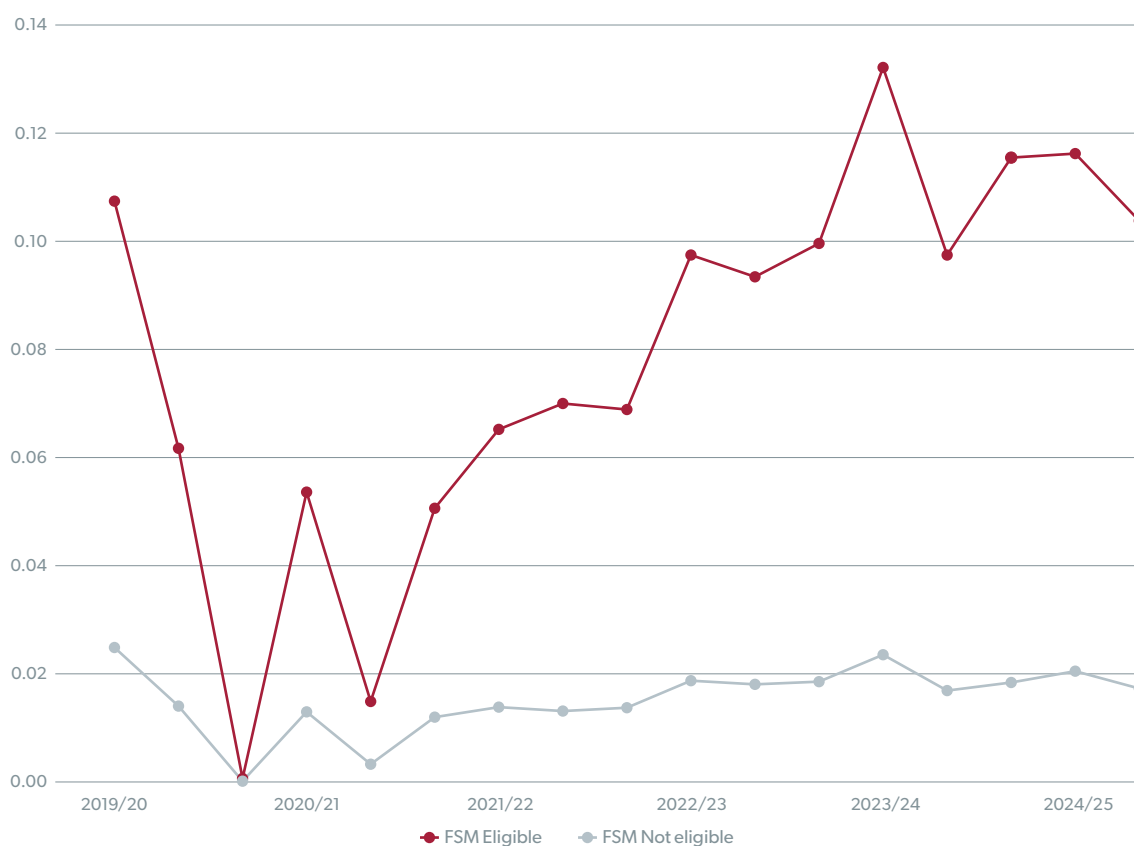
# Exclusion by pupil characteristics

## Exclusion by free school meal eligibility

Children who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) have consistently higher rates of permanent exclusions and suspensions than their peers.

In Spring 2025, the rate of permanent exclusion for children in receipt of free school meals (FSM) was six times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM. The rate of permanent exclusion for children eligible for FSM was 0.10 per 100 children, compared with 0.02 per 100 children for children not eligible.<sup>28</sup>

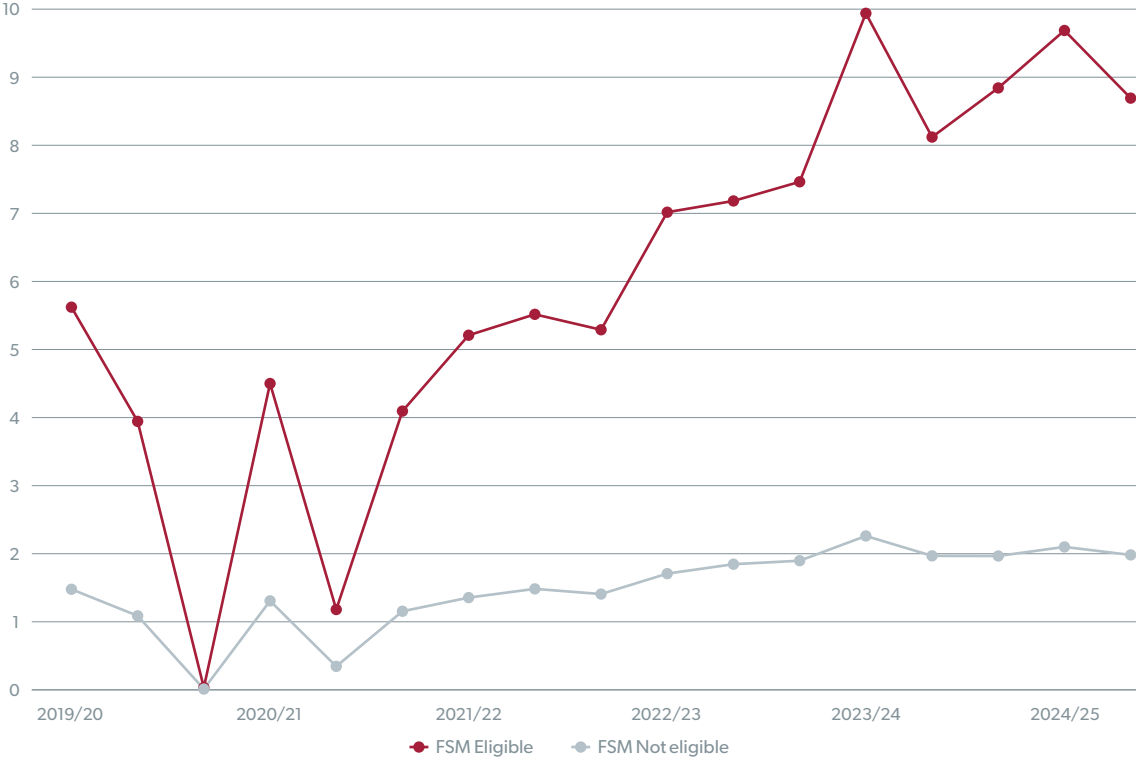
Figure 6 – Permanent exclusion rate by free school meal eligibility



28 Ibid

In Spring 2025, children eligible for FSM had a suspension rate which was over four times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM. The rate of suspensions for children eligible for FSM was 8.7 per 100 children, compared to 2.0 per 100 children for children not eligible.<sup>29</sup>

Figure 7 – Suspension rate by free school meal eligibility



## Exclusion by special educational needs/ disabilities

Children with special educational needs (SEN) support and education, health, and care plans (EHCPs) are more likely than their peers to be both permanently excluded and suspended. In Spring 2025, the rate of permanent exclusions for children in receipt of SEN support was nearly six times the rate of children with no identified SEN.<sup>30</sup>

In Spring 2025, there were 408 permanent exclusions of children with an EHCP and 1,457 permanent exclusions of children with SEN support.<sup>31</sup>

The rate of permanent exclusion was 0.12 per 100 children with SEN support and 0.09 per 100 for children with an EHCP, compared with 0.02 per 100 children with no identified SEN.<sup>32</sup> The permanent exclusions rate for pupils with SEN or an EHCP remains higher than for pupils with no identified SEN, with the gap widening since the pandemic.

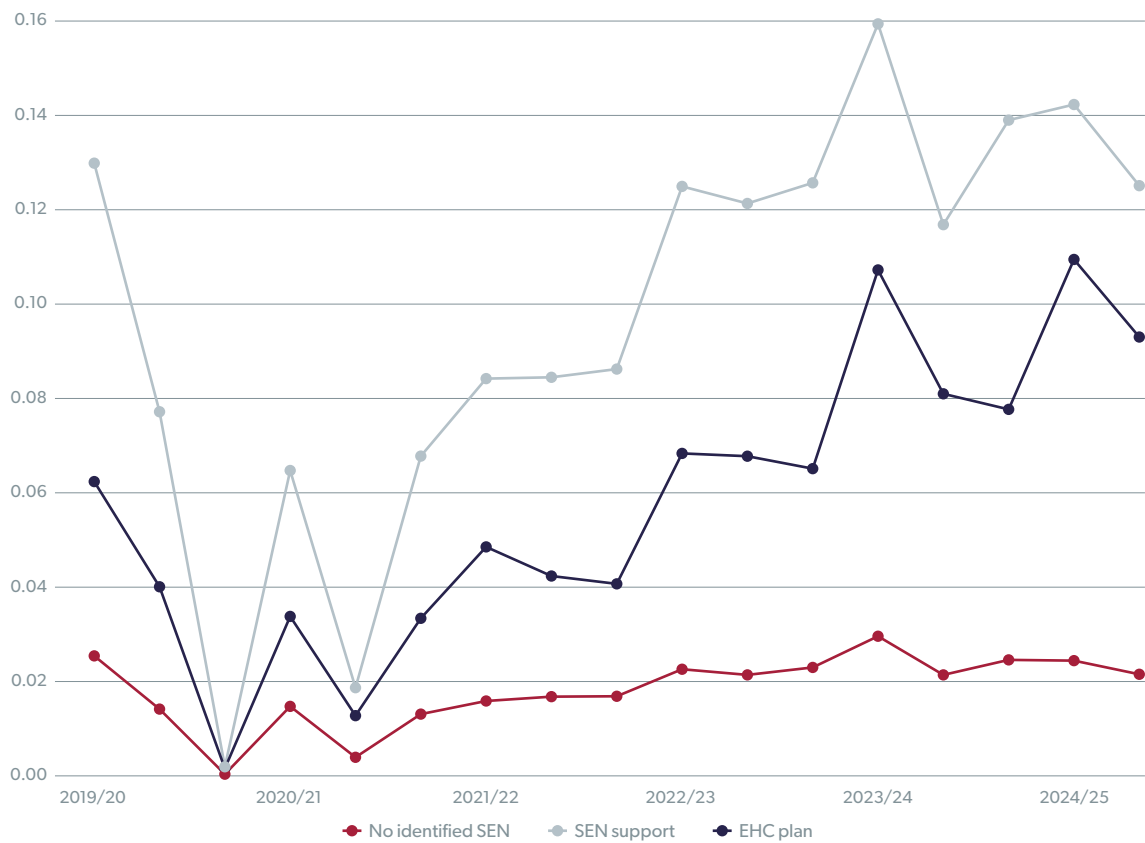
29 Ibid

30 Ibid

31 Ibid

32 Ibid

Figure 8 – Permanent exclusion rates by SEN provision



In Spring 2025, pupils in receipt of SEN support experienced higher suspension rates than those with an EHCP and those with no SEN support. The rate of suspensions for children in receipt of SEN support was over four times the rate of children with no identified SEN.<sup>33</sup>

The suspension rate was 9.8 per 100 children with SEN Support, 8.8 for children with an EHCP, and 2.3 for children with no identified SEN.<sup>34</sup>

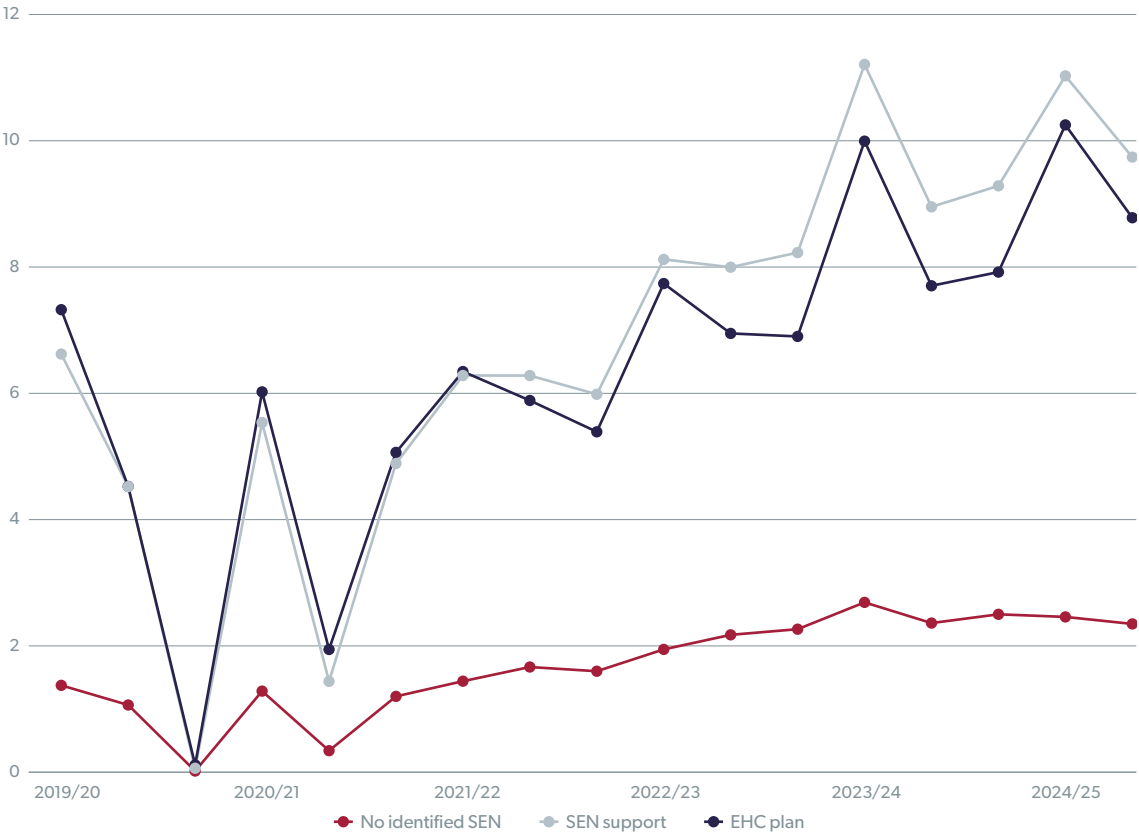
In Spring 2025, there were 38,766 suspensions for children with an EHCP, and 114,173 for children with SEN support.<sup>35</sup> Suspensions for pupils with SEN or an EHCP remains higher than for pupils with no identified SEN, with this data revealing a sustained rise since the pandemic.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

Figure 9 – Suspension rates by SEN provision



## Exclusions by sex

Male pupils are more likely to be permanently excluded and suspended. In Spring 2025, the exclusions rate for male pupils was 0.05, compared to an exclusions rate of 0.02 for female pupils.<sup>36</sup> The exclusions rate for male pupils was over twice the rate for girls.<sup>37</sup>

In Spring 2025, there were 4.6 suspensions per 100 male pupils. For female pupils there were 2.8 suspensions per 100 pupils.<sup>38</sup>

36 Ibid  
 37 Ibid  
 38 Ibid

Figure 10 – Exclusion rates by sex, Spring 2019/20 to Spring 2024/25

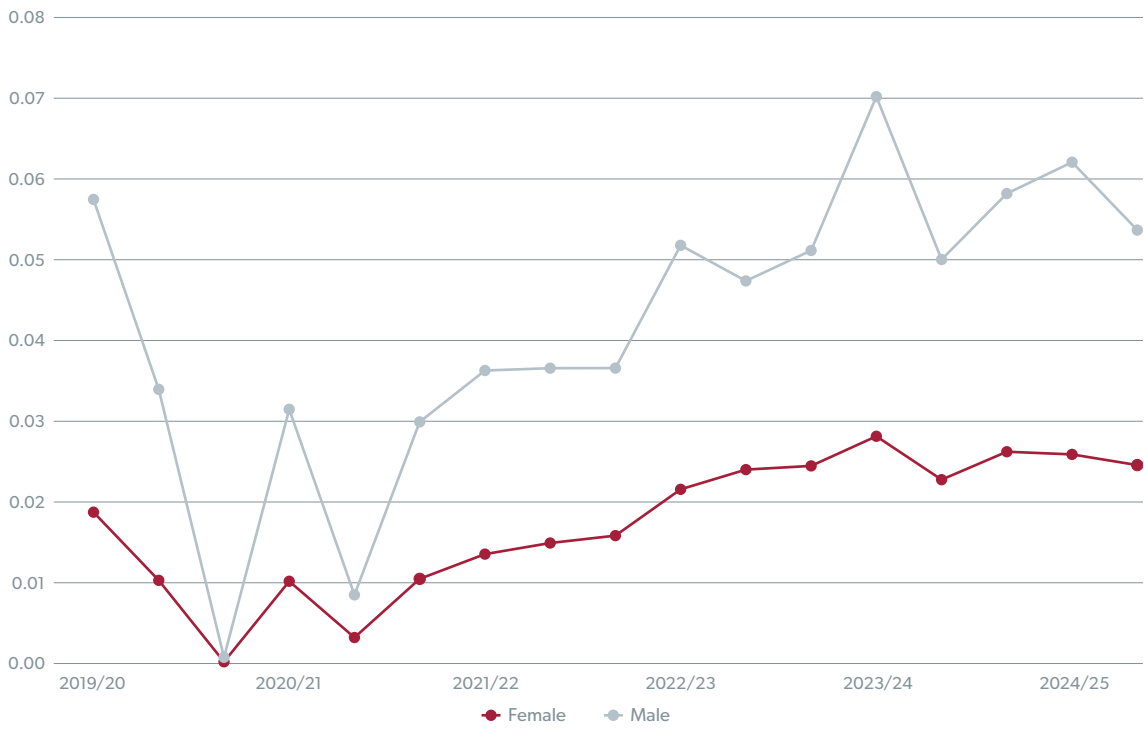
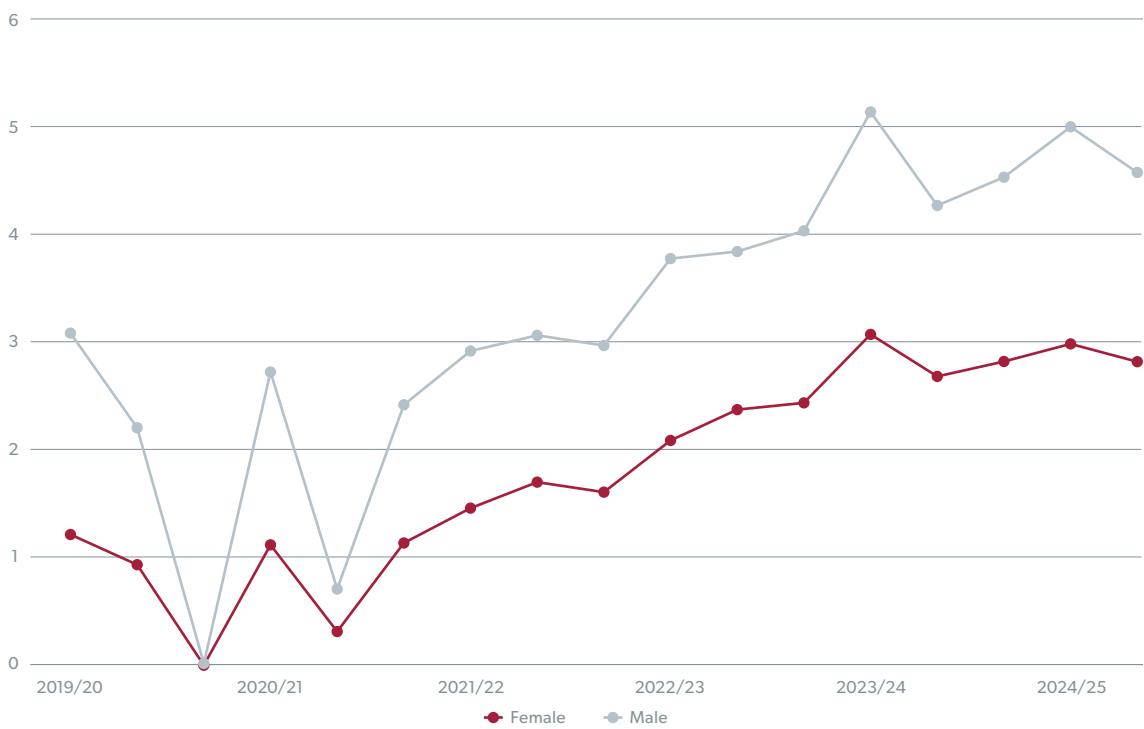


Figure 11 – Suspension rates by sex, Spring 2019/20 to Spring 2024/25



## Exclusion by ethnicity

Exclusion and suspension rates vary by ethnicity. Pupils with 'Gypsy/Roma' or 'Traveller of Irish heritage' ethnicity, and to a lesser extent 'White and Black Caribbean' ethnicity, have the highest rates of school exclusions and suspensions. Conversely, pupils with Chinese, Indian, and Bangladeshi ethnicity have much lower rates of suspensions and exclusions. <sup>39</sup>

In Spring 2025, the suspension rate was 13.9 per 100 children for 'Gypsy/Roma' pupils, 10.1 per 100 children for 'Traveller of Irish heritage' pupils, and 6.8 per 100 children for 'White and Black Caribbean' pupils. It was just 0.42 for Chinese pupils, 0.48 for Indian pupils, and 1.0 for Bangladeshi pupils. For comparison, the suspension rate for 'English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British' pupils was 4.5. <sup>40</sup>

The Government's White Paper highlighted that one key group that has particularly concerning educational outcomes are disadvantaged white children. <sup>41</sup> Examining the suspensions data, this is starkly clear. In Spring 2025, disadvantaged White British children had a suspensions rate of 11.4, fifteen times that of disadvantaged Chinese children and eight times that of disadvantaged Indian or Bangladeshi children.

## Exclusion by age and year group

Spring 2025 marked an all-time record for the number of primary school children expelled from school, with a total of 558 permanent exclusions – a 23 per cent rise compared to Spring 2024.

The year group with the highest rate of permanent exclusion in Spring 2025 was Year 10 (0.121 per 100 children), followed by Year 9 (0.117 per 100 children). The year group with the lowest rate of permanent exclusion was Year 12 and above (0.003 per 100 children), followed by Year 1 and below (0.006 per 100 children). <sup>42</sup>

The rate of permanent exclusions is almost six times higher amongst Year 8 pupils compared to Year 6 pupils, indicating that the transition from primary school into secondary school is a critical period where poor behaviour surges. It is also part of a broader decline in positive pupil engagement with their education at this stage, mirroring the pattern observed in rising absence rates across these year groups. <sup>43</sup> Evidence of educational challenges spiking during the primary to secondary education transition period makes it a crucial time for proactive school engagement with families.

---

39 Ibid

40 Ibid

41 Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

42 Ibid

43 The Centre for Social Justice, *Absent Ambition*, September 2025

Table 5 – Year groups by rates of permanent exclusion

Year group	Rate
Year 1 and below	0.006
Year 2	0.013
Year 3	0.015
Year 4	0.015
Year 5	0.017
Year 6	0.017
Year 7	0.054
Year 8	0.099
Year 9	0.117
Year 10	0.121
Year 11	0.025
Year 12 and above	0.003

14-year-olds had the highest rate of permanent exclusion in Spring 2025 (0.121 per 100 children) followed by 13-year-olds (0.118 per 100 children).<sup>44</sup>

Those aged 18 had no permanent exclusions at all in Spring 2025, followed by those aged 16 for which there were just 5 at a rate of 0.002 per 100 children.<sup>45</sup>

Table 6 – Permanent exclusion rate by age

Age	Rate
Age 4 and under	0.002
Age 5	0.010
Age 6	0.013
Age 7	0.014
Age 8	0.015
Age 9	0.017
Age 10	0.017
Age 11	0.055
Age 12	0.100
Age 13	0.118
Age 14	0.121
Age 15	0.025
Age 16	0.002
Age 17	0.003
Age 18	0.000

44 Department for Education, *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Spring term 2024/25*, April 2026

45 Ibid

The year group with the highest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 was Year 9 (9.90 per 100 children), followed by Year 10 (9.32 per 100 children). The year group with the lowest rate of suspensions was Year 12 and above (0.35 per 100 children), followed by Year 1 and below (0.50 per 100 children).<sup>46</sup>

Table 7 – Rate of suspension by year group

Year group	Rate
Year 1 and below	0.50
Year 2	0.88
Year 3	0.92
Year 4	0.92
Year 5	0.96
Year 6	1.17
Year 7	6.48
Year 8	9.29
Year 9	9.90
Year 10	9.32
Year 11	6.69
Year 12 and above	0.35

13-year-olds had the highest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (9.97 per 100 children) followed by 14-year-olds (9.37 per 100 children).<sup>47</sup>

Those aged 17 had the lowest rate of suspensions in Spring 2025 (0.29 per 100 children), followed by those aged 4 and under (0.29 per 100 children).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

Table 8 – Suspension rate by age

Age	Suspension Rate
Age 4 and under	0.29
Age 5	0.79
Age 6	0.88
Age 7	0.92
Age 8	0.92
Age 9	0.96
Age 10	1.18
Age 11	6.51
Age 12	9.36
Age 13	9.97
Age 14	9.37
Age 15	6.73
Age 16	0.45
Age 17	0.29
Age 18	0.30

# School exclusions tracker

The soaring number of exclusions in our schools reveals an education system that is in disarray. It is a system letting down the teachers who are fearful of coming into work, the pupils who are desperate for an education free from disruption, but also the pupils who are excluded when they could have been better supported by a different route.

It highlights broader warning signs of an education system that has failed to get back on track after being ravaged by successive lockdowns. According to the National Behaviour Survey, poor behaviour in the classroom causes children to miss an average of seven minutes out of every 30 minutes of lesson time due to disruption – the equivalent to losing roughly a quarter of each lesson or nine weeks of learning a year.<sup>49</sup> The same survey found that fewer than half of secondary school pupils said they felt safe at school ‘every day’ in the past week and one in four parents of primary school pupils said their child didn’t feel safe every day.

A separate poll by the teaching union NASUWT found 81 per cent of teachers had seen an increase in violent and abusive behaviour, with two in five reporting being assaulted, and that more than half had seriously considered leaving the profession as a result.<sup>50</sup> One third of teachers now leave the profession within five years.<sup>51</sup>

The drivers of the behaviour crisis are complex. The CSJ has found that a third of children are not “school ready” when arriving at Reception, with 800,000 under-5s now estimated to be using social media despite links to heightened behavioural problems.<sup>52</sup>

Polling for the CSJ found two in five parents think trust between home and school has “broken down”, while almost half thought missing one in ten days of school was “reasonable”. Meanwhile, seven in ten teachers report facing abusive language from parents.<sup>53</sup>

We recognise the scale of the challenge – and the difficult balancing act schools must perform. But while the Government has put in place some welcome initiatives and pledged more changes to come, we are still a long way from resolving the underlying causes of large rises in suspensions and exclusions.

---

49 Department for Education (2025) National behaviour survey report: 2024 to 2025 academic year. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-behaviour-survey-report-2024-to-2025-academic-year> (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

50 ITV News (2025) Violence and abuse by students against teachers is on the rise, union warns, 18 April. Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-18/violence-and-abuse-by-students-against-teachers-is-on-the-rise-union-warns> (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

51 Foster, D. (2019) Teacher recruitment and retention in England. House of Commons Library Briefing Paper CBP-7222. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7222/CBP-7222.pdf> (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

52 Centre for Social Justice (2025) New analysis: 800,000 under-5s using social media, 1 December. Available at: <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/newsroom/under-5s-using-social-media> (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

53 Centre for Social Justice (2025) Absent Ambition. Available at: [https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CSJ-Absent\\_Ambition.pdf](https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/CSJ-Absent_Ambition.pdf) (Accessed: 30 April 2026).

Over the next year the CSJ will produce further research seeking to address the root causes of the biggest challenges in England's education system through research on physical activity, family formation, rewiring education, and the social contract. Here, we outline the next steps for improving the education system as it exists today, to make sure that every child can receive the support they need to thrive.

## Our plan for reform

The CSJ has a plan to turn the tide on the rise in exclusions. The plan was developed after extensive research with schools, alternative provisions, multi-academy trusts, local authorities and charities that work with children on the brink of exclusion.

Previous 'Exclusions Trackers'<sup>54</sup> have emphasised the importance of inclusive practice in the mainstream education system: something we were pleased to see Ofsted respond meaningfully to in their reforms of inspections.

In February 2026, the Department for Education published the Schools White Paper *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*. It sets out a number of welcome reforms including stronger recognition of the role of a child's family context and the important relationship between home and school, as well as an emphasis on the early years and plans to redesign the SEND system to better target support. Many of these proposals reflect recommendations from previous CSJ research, advocated for in our 'Exclusions Trackers'. It is important that we continue to monitor the implementation of these changes and advocate for any further measures needed to create a school system in which every child can flourish.

The exclusions statistics published today indicate a crisis in behaviour disrupting the education of youngsters across the nation. To tackle this, decisive action is needed to grapple with the root causes of school exclusions and suspensions.

### 1) Be inclusive of pupil needs by delivering high standards of behaviour in classrooms.

As the Government's Schools White Paper<sup>55</sup> makes clear, schools can only be truly inclusive if classrooms are calm, orderly and safe, so that everyone (including children with SEND) can learn. Yet the Department for Education admits that currently "too many children" experience inconsistent and low behaviour standards, undermining the goal of an inclusive learning environment<sup>56</sup>. The Government must go further to tackle the behaviour crisis to ensure classrooms are caring, predictable and inclusive.

---

54 Centre for Social Justice, *School Exclusions Tracker*, November 2025, July 2025 and April 2025

55 Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

56 Ibid

## RECOMMENDATION

### **The Department for Education should deliver an urgent review of behaviour standards in schools.**

To address exclusions rates, the Government needs to grip the behaviour crisis, starting by conducting an urgent review of inconsistent behaviour standards in schools. Although the latest National Behaviour Survey results show some signs that the spike in poor behaviour since the pandemic may now be starting to gradually improve<sup>57</sup>, teachers report ongoing mayhem in schools. The survey found that poor behaviour in the classroom causes children to miss an average of seven minutes out of every 30 minutes of lesson time due to disruption. For each pupil, this is the equivalent to losing around nine weeks of learning a year: an unacceptable portion of children's education lost to poor behaviour.<sup>58</sup>

Other official data from the survey revealed that less than half of secondary school pupils said they felt safe at school 'every day' in the past week in May 2025.<sup>59</sup> In April 2025, the Teachers' Union NASUWT published a poll of its members which found that 81 per cent of teachers felt that the number of pupils exhibiting violent and abusive behaviours has increased<sup>60</sup>.

Pupils' poor behaviour means more children losing out on learning, and it is also fuelling the teacher retention crisis: NASUWT found that over half of teachers have "seriously considered" leaving teaching due to the impact of verbal or physical abuse from pupils experienced in the last 12 months<sup>61</sup>. A recent Tes survey on teacher wellbeing found that the challenges with pupil behaviour have "shifted from managing isolated incidents to navigating a daily environment of persistent disrespect and shifting cultural attitudes."<sup>62</sup> It is clear an urgent review of behaviour standards in schools is needed to ensure that trends in poor behaviour since the pandemic do not become the new normal.

#### **Progress update: limited action taken**

In the Schools White Paper<sup>63</sup> the Government acknowledged the "worrying trend" of school staff reporting abuse and said they would tackle poor behaviour through "refreshed behaviour resources" including Behaviour in Schools guidance, statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance and a toolkit for teachers on behaviour and bullying.<sup>64</sup> The Government also announced the roll-out of 800 Attendance and Behaviour Hubs for schools to access guidance and training, overseen by behaviour ambassadors. The newly announced phones ban in schools will also go a long way to addressing the behaviour crisis.

While tightening guidance and banning phones in schools is a step in the right direction, the CSJ is calling the Government to go further by conducting a review of the standards schools have for the behaviour of their pupils to ensure that every child can thrive in the learning environment.

57 Department for Education, *National Behaviour Survey*, November 2025

58 Ibid

59 Ibid

60 NASUWT *Behaviour in Schools 2025*, May 2025

61 Ibid

62 Tes *Teacher wellbeing report 2026: UK*, March 2026

63 Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

64 Ibid

## 2) Introduce an 'enrichment' guarantee and recognise the value of sport

### RECOMMENDATION

#### **An enrichment guarantee should be introduced, including a new 'Right to Sport'.**

The CSJ's *Game Changer* report<sup>65</sup> found that sports can play a crucial role in reducing levels of anti-social behaviour among children and young people and promote educational engagement. Therefore, the Government should introduce an 'enrichment guarantee' in schools, ensuring schools have the appropriate resources to support this. All secondary pupils would be required to do at least 5 hours of extra-curricular enrichment every school week (excluding weekends), with the third sector leveraged to deliver the sessions which extend the school day. Pupils who already engage in extra-curricular activities on school days would be able to offset the relevant hours against the core requirements.

As part of this, the Government should also announce a new 'Right to Sport' for all secondary school pupils. Of the five hours of extra-curricular activity, the Right to Sport would see all pupils participate in a minimum of two hours of extra-curricular sport per week, on top of PE time already scheduled in the curriculum.

**Progress update: Significant planned action, limited action taken**

The Government has announced a new "enrichment entitlement" in the recent Schools White Paper<sup>66</sup>, which is a hugely positive step towards implementing this recommendation. The 'Enrichment Framework' is due to be published this year, and will demand that schools offer sport and physical activities. This framework, first announced in March 2025, will highlight best practice on enrichment and provide advice for schools on how to deliver a high-quality enrichment offer. The CSJ is also pleased that enrichment will be included in Ofsted inspection criteria moving forwards through the vehicle of 'personal development'.

In terms of other action to date, the Government is also planning to deliver enhanced PE and School Sport Partnerships: first announced in June 2025, these partnerships will aim to deliver equal access to sport and two hours of PE every week for every child. In November 2025, the Government published their independent review of curriculum and assessment. This review highlighted the importance of sport through PE but fell short of making sport a right.

65 The Centre for Social Justice, *Game Changer: A plan to transform young lives through sport*, September 2023

66 Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

The CSJ will continue to campaign for the Government to formally establish a ‘Right to Sport’ to ensure that children and young people can consistently reap the benefits of physical activity in the school week.

Progress on these planned actions will be worth following in upcoming legislation, especially since the White Paper did not set out a timetable for implementation. There is no question that if the Government is to realise the vision it is setting out for enrichment, it will depend upon delivery from local organisations – especially through small charities – and substantial philanthropic support.

The CSJ report *Inactive Nation* finds that over half of primary school children are not meeting recommended physical activity levels. Given the clear benefits of reducing sedentary behaviour and increasing physical activity – including improved classroom behaviour and attention in class – the report calls for stronger expectations for schools to embed physical activity throughout the school day through a School Activity Standard. The CSJ will publish further research on activity levels of secondary school aged children as it works to address this longstanding issue.

### 3) Overhaul parental engagement at schools

Parenting is challenging, and arguably more so today than ever. Increasing difficulties in early years development, not least thanks to the rise of technology; growing challenges in language and literacy;<sup>67</sup> a decline in family formation, especially among the poorest;<sup>68</sup> and growing mental health challenges<sup>69</sup> have all detrimentally impacted the landscape for parents across the country. But greater parental engagement with addressing their child’s poor behaviour will be crucial to reducing school exclusions rates. Schools cannot be expected to reverse the behaviour crisis on their own: this must be a shared effort with parents. Strong, long-term relationships between schools and parents are essential to improving behaviour.

#### RECOMMENDATION

**The Department for Education should support teachers through expanding the ‘Communication with families’ toolkit into an ‘Engaging with parents’ toolkit, including:**

- Guidance on communicating with parents, emphasising positive communication and the importance of in-person events such as parents’ evenings.
- Resources for introducing parental engagement into school Continuing Professional Development.
- Guidance on how to support the home learning environment.
- Guidance for schools on constructively managing transitions from Primary to Secondary school.
- Guidance on including fathers.
- Primary schools engaging with families in the early years as best practice where appropriate.
- Parent-friendly materials for schools on the importance of attendance.

This toolkit should be based on Parentkind’s ‘Blueprint for Parent-Friendly Schools’

**Progress update: Significant planned action, no action taken yet**

67 Centre for Social Justice, *Absent Ambition*, September 2025

68 Centre for Social Justice, *I do?*, February 2026

69 Centre for Social Justice, *Change the Prescription*, January 2025

Pleasingly, the Government has announced plans to broadly implement this recommendation in the White Paper<sup>70</sup>, alongside minimum standards for home-to-school relationships. We also recommended that engaging with parents is introduced into Initial Teacher Training and continued professional development, and we see this inclusion in the home-to-school expectations section of the White Paper, alongside broader reforms to improve teacher training. Now, we are urging the Government to roll out these proposals.

#### 4) Ensure any use of alternative provision is suitable, in the best interests of the child and leads to progress

##### RECOMMENDATION

**DfE should publish guidance on national standards for high quality internal alternative provision (AP) by:**

- Consulting schools and trusts in more detail on their use of internal AP, to inform best practice.
- Publishing these standards as national standards. This should be developed in conjunction with the SEND and AP national standards.
- Conducting a yearly audit on the use of internal AP in mainstream schools and across trusts.

**Progress update: some action taken, further action planned**

In August 2025, the DfE published voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision.<sup>71</sup> This guides AP in areas such as safeguarding, health and safety, admissions and induction, quality of education and outcomes for children. The DfE has indicated that it intends to make these standards statutory when parliamentary time allows. Until statutory, the DfE encourages local authorities and APs to align with this guidance, with some local authorities updating their quality assurance processes in response.

##### RECOMMENDATION

**The three-tier system for SEND and AP should be implemented.**

The Department for Education should implement the move towards a three-tier system for SEND and AP as soon as possible, with a focus on targeted early support in mainstream settings.

**Progress update: significant planned action, limited action taken**

<sup>70</sup> Department for Education, *Every Child Achieving and Thriving*, February 2026

<sup>71</sup> Department for Education, *Non-school alternative provision: Voluntary national standards*, August 2025

Encouragingly, the Government's recent SEND consultation paper<sup>72</sup> adopts the CSJ's recommendation from previous 'Exclusions Trackers' for a three-tier system for SEND support and early support in mainstream settings. From 2030 the Government intends to implement a new tiered system, where what is now covered by EHCPs will be separated into 'targeted', 'targeted plus', and 'specialist' support, with only the final category having EHCPs. No clear sense of the threshold criteria for each of these is given, although some suggestions are made.

Proposals to implement a three-tier system for SEND and AP were originally included as part of the SEND and AP improvement plan, published in 2023 under the Sunak Government. Since then, the CSJ has called for this plan to be implemented.

The CSJ is pleased to have shaped Government plans for SEND reforms so that children and young people can be better supported, but more remains to be done. Over the coming months, we plan to focus on better understanding the root causes of challenges in education, strengthening protective factors for children (especially around SEND), and identifying practical solutions by learning from charities, schools, and trusts that are successfully addressing these problems.

---

72 Department for Education, *SEND Reform: Putting Children and Young People First*, February 2026





The Centre for Social Justice  
Kings Buildings  
16 Smith Square  
Westminster, SW1P 3HQ

[www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)  
@csjthinktank