

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS TRACKER

A termly analysis of official data relating to exclusion from schools: Summer term 2025

9,906

The number of permanent exclusions from school has decreased by **9** per cent on 2023/24. In 2024/25, there were **9,906** permanent exclusions, a rate of **0.12** per 100 pupils. This compares with **10,885** permanent exclusions in 2023/24, equating to **979** fewer permanent exclusions.

913,000

School suspensions have decreased by **4** per cent since 2023/24. There were **913,000** suspensions in 2024/25, a rate of **10.9** per 100 pupils. This compares to **954,952** suspensions in 2023/24.

1,716,502

1,716,502 days were missed due to suspensions in 2024/25, a decrease of **6** per cent on the 2023/24 academic year, with **5.3** days lost on average per suspended pupil during the academic year 2024/25.

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Headline statistics

Department for Education (DfE) data released today reflects not just termly statistics from Summer 2025 but also the full 2024/25 academic year. Where possible, this report will focus on the annual data but will also report on the Summer 2025 term.

There were 9,906 permanent exclusions in 2024/25.¹ This is a decrease of 9 per cent on 2023/24.

It is vulnerable children who are affected most. In 2024/25, the rate of permanent exclusion for children eligible for free school meals (FSM) was 6.4 times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM.²

School suspensions have decreased compared to the previous year. There were 913,000 suspensions given in 2024/25. This is a decrease of 4 per cent on 2023/24.³

1,716,502 days were lost to suspensions in 2024/25. There were 5.3 days lost on average per suspended pupil during the year.

¹ Department for Education, *Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Summer term 2024/25*, July 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 new exclusions data, for the 2024/25 academic year, tells an encouraging story. After three successive years of a spiralling crisis in the number of children suspended and excluded following the pandemic, numbers are slowly starting to come down.

In 2024/25, there were 9,906 permanent exclusions, down nearly ten per cent from 10,885 in 2023/24 and beginning to arrest a surge of 68 per cent in two years from 2021/22 to 2023/24.

There were 913,000 suspensions, down from 954,952 in 2023/24. This remains over three times the number of suspensions ten years ago in 2014/15 but marks a possible turn in the tide.

Despite this progress, two things must be acknowledged. First, we are still in a behaviour crisis. Second, further progress in exclusions and suspensions will depend on fixing the broken SEND system.

The enduring behaviour crisis

The suspensions rate per 100 children remains above 10 (10.9), having averaged 4.3 from 2010/11 to 2018/19. Similarly, nearly 10,000 exclusions remains 71 per cent higher than in 2014/15.

Here, we must acknowledge the broader behaviour crisis in our schools. 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.⁴ Less than half of secondary school pupils report having felt safe at school 'every day' in the past week as of May 2025.⁵ 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.⁶

As well as children losing out on learning, poor behaviour is fuelling the teacher retention crisis: 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 months⁷. 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."⁸ 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.

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 NASUWT *Behaviour in Schools 2025*, May 2025

7 Ibid

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

Fixing the broken SEND system

Despite meaningful progress overall, the number and rate of suspensions and exclusions of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have both hit a new record.

Permanent exclusions of pupils on EHCPs have risen from 347 in 2014/15 to 1,198 in 2024/25. As the group has grown rapidly, the exclusion rate within the group has also surged three quarters in ten years.

Similarly, the number of suspensions of children with EHCPs has surged by 246 per cent from 33,544 in 2014/15 to 116,188 in 2024/25. Here too, the rate has risen by three quarters in the same period up to 26 suspensions per 100 children with an EHCP from 15 in 2014/15.

The high needs SEND system has seen large growth in mental health, behavioural and neurodivergent conditions, with the number of pupils with EHCPs more than doubling since 2015/16 and hitting 640,000 this year. The annual cost of the SEND system (26/27 prices) has risen from £8 billion (2015/16) to £15.1 billion (2025/26) over a decade.⁹

Eighty-eight per cent of the rise in school-pupil EHCPs has come from three areas of need: Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Speech, Language and Communication Needs, and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. These now account for over 70 per cent of EHCPs.

The CSJ has warned that, despite soaring spending, outcomes have not improved as today's figures show. We are also seeing rising waiting lists for assessment, and a fall of almost a third in real terms funding per EHCP, and a new market for private assessments which cost an average of around £1,361 for ADHD.

Children from the poorest areas are now up to four times less likely to get an EHCP than those from more affluent areas, despite being more likely to have additional needs.

Making progress

The Government's recent Schools White Paper¹⁰ and SEND Consultation¹¹ set out encouraging plans for reform that can 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*¹², including the three-tier system for SEND support, a new 'enrichment entitlement' for pupils and a parental engagement toolkit. Since the last *Exclusions Tracker* in April, the Government has published new statutory guidance on suspensions and permanent exclusions. The guidance reflects concerns previously highlighted by the CSJ about off-rolling, including evidence that some parents have felt pressured to remove their children from school and electively home educate. However, while these measures are welcome, the Government must go further to address the root causes of the behavioural crisis underpinning exclusions, this will mean:

9 Centre for Social Justice, *Change the Prescription: Update: Transforming support for children in the welfare and education system*, June 2026

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

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

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

1. Being inclusive of pupil needs by delivering high standards of behaviour in classrooms, including the DfE delivering a review of behaviour standards.
2. Introducing an enrichment guarantee so every pupil has opportunities to broaden their horizons, introducing a new Right to Sport for all secondary-age pupils.
3. Overhauling parental engagement at schools, including empowering families through rolling out a practical engagement toolkit.
4. Establishing robust national standards for internal alternative provision by ensuring any use of alternative provision is suitable, in the best interests of the child and leads to progress.

It must also fundamentally reset the SEND system based on four principles:

1. Intervene earlier by radically expanding Family Hubs, improving school readiness, expanding speech and language support, restoring attendance and behaviour expectations, and increasing access to sport and enrichment.
2. Define need more clearly by reforming the SEND Code of Practice, narrowing statutory thresholds, and ensuring specialist support is reserved for children with severe, enduring and complex needs.
3. Reduce escalation incentives by strengthening targeted mainstream support, reforming tribunals, restoring local authority commissioning power, controlling independent special school costs, and decoupling diagnosis and educational designation from welfare entitlement.
4. Reinvest in effective support by tightening eligibility to Child Disability Living Allowance for milder behavioural and neurodevelopmental cases, while protecting children with substantial functional impairment, redirecting savings into a £500 million investment in evidence-based parenting support programmes as well as an above-inflation increase to benefits for children with the most severe and complex support needs.

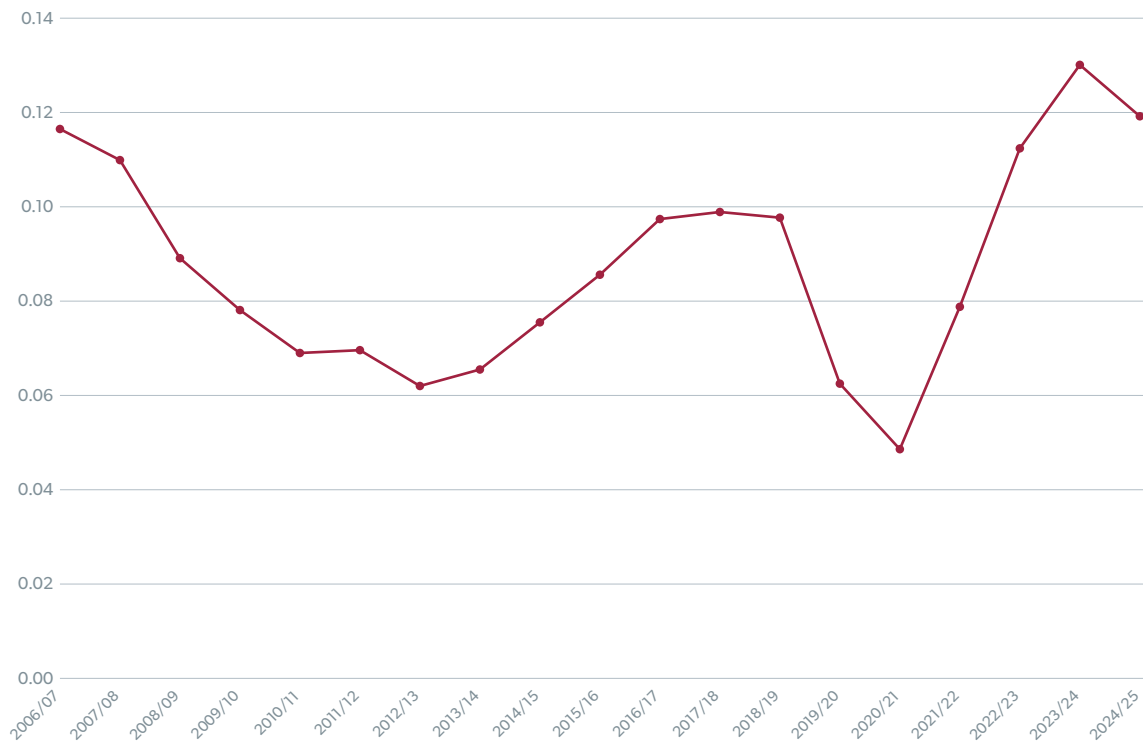
We are at a crossroads. A tragic crisis is showing some signs of improvement, but the improvement is small, fragile, and partial. With comprehensive, system-wide reform it is possible to ensure no child is left behind and that every young person receives the support and enrichment they deserve. We must be ambitious.

Exclusions data review

Although figures dropped during school shutdowns, school exclusion and suspension rates have been on an upwards trajectory for a decade. This has spiralled since the pandemic.

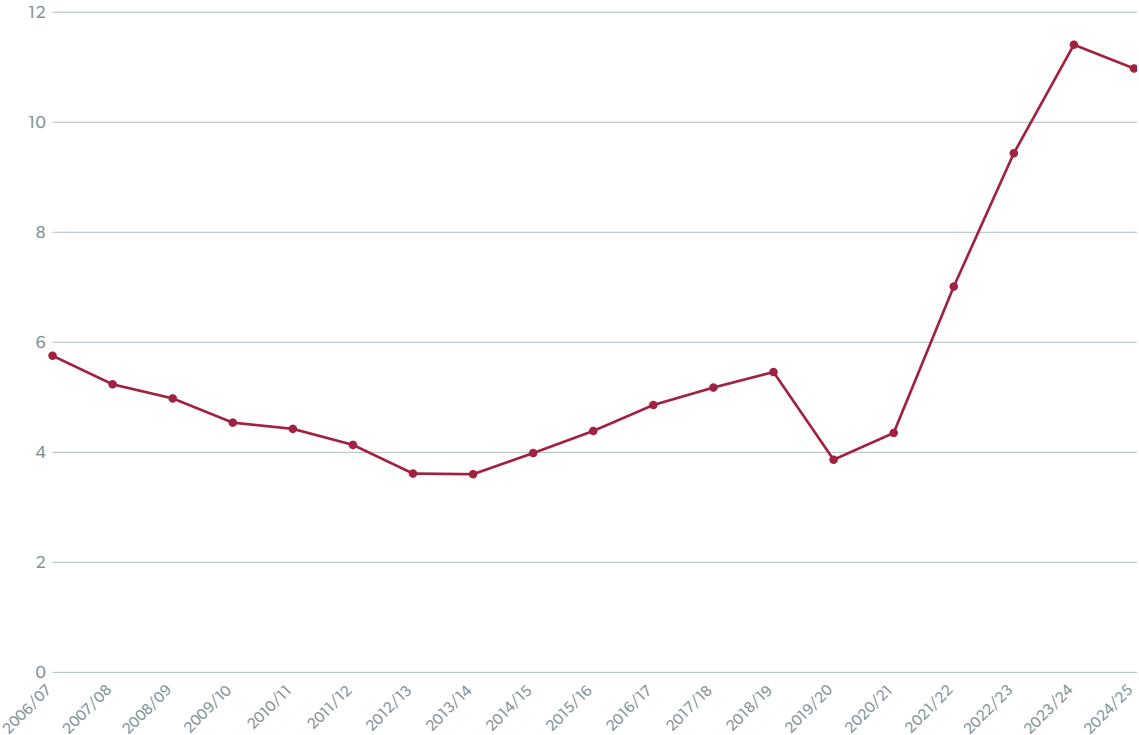
The most recent data release by the DfE included the exclusions data for the full 2024/25 academic year, as well as data for the Summer term 2025. Over the full year, there were 9,906 permanent exclusions, a 9 per cent decrease on the previous academic year.

Figure 1 – Rate of permanent exclusions, 2006/07 to 2024/25



There were 913,000 suspensions, a 4 per cent decrease on the previous academic year. In total over the course of the year, 1,716,502 days of learning were lost to suspensions, down 6 per cent on the previous year.

Figure 2 – Rate of suspensions, 2006/07 to 2024/25



Permanent exclusions

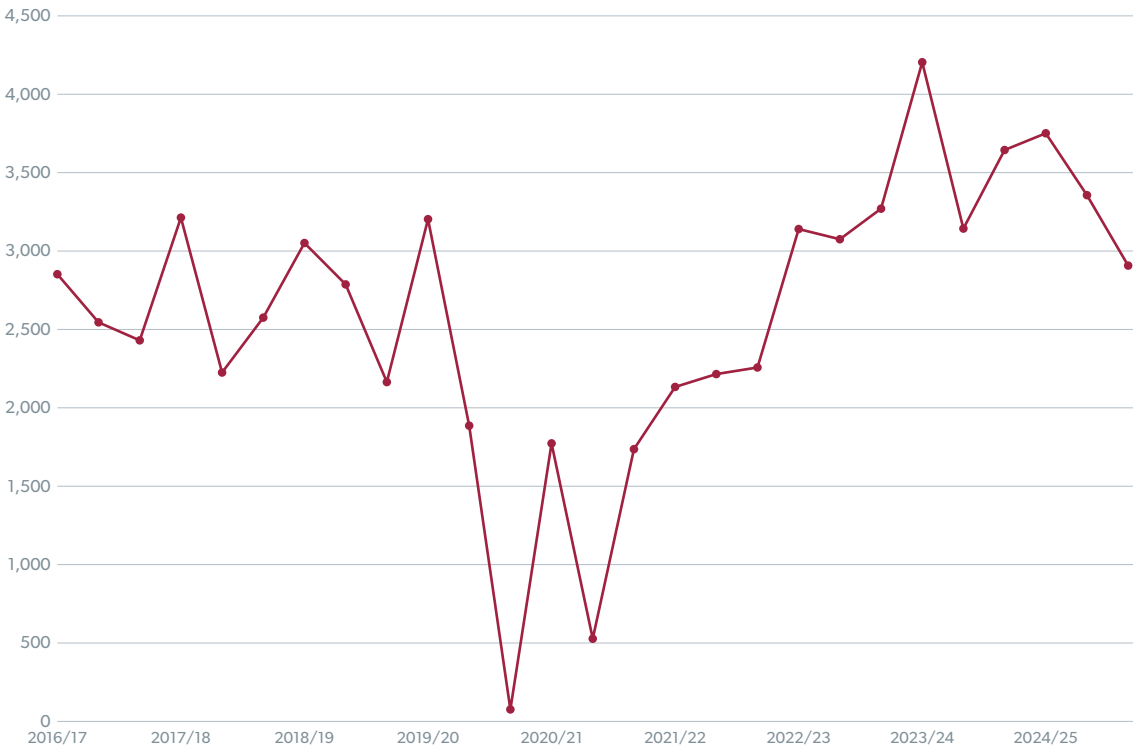
Permanent exclusion is when a child's name is removed from the school's register and they are no longer allowed to attend the school. It is the responsibility of the local authority to arrange suitable alternative full-time education from the sixth school day following the permanent exclusion.

In Summer 2025, there were 2,871 permanent exclusions. This represents a 14 per cent decrease on Spring 2025 and a 20 per cent decrease on the previous school year's Summer term.¹³

The number of permanent exclusions is higher than pre-pandemic levels. In Summer 2019, the last Summer term before schools closed for the pandemic, 2,128 pupils were permanently excluded. The number of permanent exclusions has therefore increased 35 per cent relative to pre-pandemic.¹⁴

The rate of permanent exclusion in Summer 2025 was 0.034 per 100 pupils. This is a decrease from 0.043 in Summer 2024 but an increase from 0.026 in Summer 2019.¹⁵

Figure 3 – Termly number of permanent exclusions



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

14 Ibid

15 Ibid

Suspensions

A suspension is a time-limited exclusion. The term “suspension” has been used by the 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 Summer 2025, there were 264,767 suspensions. This is lower than the previous term, Spring 2025, when there were 312,562 suspensions and lower than the previous Summer 2024 term, when there were 313,008 suspensions.¹⁶

The number of suspensions is higher than pre-pandemic levels. In Summer 2019, there were 127,662 suspensions. Compared to pre-pandemic, the number of suspensions has more than doubled.¹⁷

Figure 4 – Termly number of suspensions



16 Ibid

17 Ibid

The suspensions rate was 3.15 per 100 pupils compared to 3.69 in Summer 2024.¹⁸ 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.

147,217 pupils received one or more suspensions in Summer 2025, compared to 167,619 pupils in Summer 2024. 1.75 per cent of pupils had one or more suspensions.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ 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 2024/25, the most common reason for both permanent exclusions and suspensions was “persistent disruptive behaviour”, cited in 39.6 per cent of reasons given for permanent exclusions and 51.6 per cent of suspensions. DfE guidance describes “persistent disruptive behaviour” as challenging behaviour, disobedience or persistent violation of school rules.²⁰ For suspensions, the second most common reason cited was “verbally abusive towards adults”, accounting for 14.7 per cent of suspensions.²¹

The second most common reason for being permanently excluded was “physically abusive towards pupils”, at 15.6 per cent. The third most common reason was “physically abusive to adults” (12.0 per cent), followed by “verbally abusive to adults” (10.8 per cent).

Table 1 – Permanent exclusions by reason, 2024/25

Reason	Proportion of permanent exclusions (%)
Persistent disruptive behaviour	39.6
Physically abusive to pupils	15.6
Physically abusive to adults	12.0
Verbally abusive to adults	10.8
Offensive weapon	5.8
Verbally abusive to pupils	4.7
Drugs or alcohol	4.6
Damage	2.9
Sexual misconduct	1.1
Media technology	0.8
Racist abuse	0.7
Bullying	0.6
Public health	0.5
Theft	0.4
Abuse – sex, gender	0.2
Abuse - disability	0.0

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Table 2 – Suspensions by reason, 2024/25

Reason	Proportion of suspensions (%)
Persistent disruptive behaviour	51.6
Verbally abusive to adults	14.7
Physically abusive to pupils	12.3
Physically abusive to adults	5.9
Verbally abusive to pupils	3.9
Damage	2.8
Drugs and alcohol	1.9
Racist abuse	1.5
Offensive weapon	1.4
Media technology	1.0
Bullying	0.8
Sexual misconduct	0.7
Theft	0.6
Public health	0.5
Abuse - sex, gender	0.3
Abuse - disability	0.0

Breakdown of exclusion data

Exclusion by school type

In 2024/25, 8,291 children in state-funded secondary schools were permanently excluded. The rate of permanent exclusion in secondary schools was 0.23 per 100 children.²²

1,481 children in state-funded primary schools were permanently excluded in 2024/25, a rate of 0.03 per 100 children. The rate of school exclusion was 0.08 per 100 children in special schools. In 2024/25, 134 children educated in special schools were permanently excluded.²³

In 2024/25, there were 779,642 suspensions given to pupils in secondary schools, a rate of 21.2 per 100 children. There were 112,545 suspensions given to pupils in primary schools in 2024/25, a rate of 2.47 per 100 children. In 2024/25, there were 20,813 suspensions given to pupils in special schools, a rate of 12.3 per 100 children.²⁴

Exclusion by region and local authority

Patterns of exclusion vary across England.

The North East had the highest rate of permanent exclusions in 2024/25 (0.25 per 100 children) followed by the North West (0.17 per 100 children).²⁵

London had the lowest rate of permanent exclusions in 2024/25 (0.057 per 100 children) followed by the South East (0.059 per 100 children).²⁶

22 Ibid

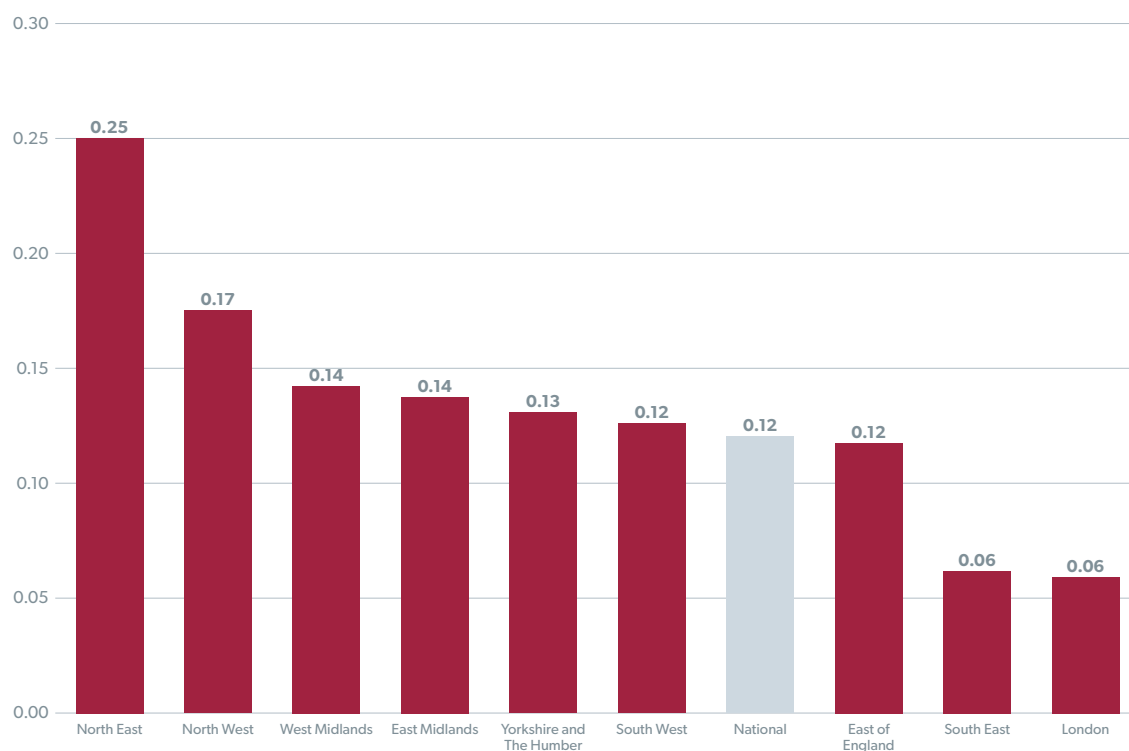
23 Ibid

24 Ibid

25 Ibid

26 Ibid

Figure 5 – Permanent exclusions by region, 2024/25



The local authority with the highest rate of permanent exclusion in 2024/25 was Blackpool (0.45 per 100 children). The local authorities with the lowest rate of permanent exclusion were the City of London and Brighton and Hove, which had just one permanent exclusion between them in 2024/25 at a rate of 0.003 per 100 children.²⁷

Table 3 – Local authorities with highest rates of permanent exclusion, 2024/25

Local authority	Permanent exclusion rate
Blackpool	0.452
Isles of Scilly	0.398
North Tyneside	0.338
Sunderland	0.314
South Tyneside	0.305
Hartlepool	0.293
Nottingham	0.282
Middlesbrough	0.277
Lancashire	0.261
Rochdale	0.261

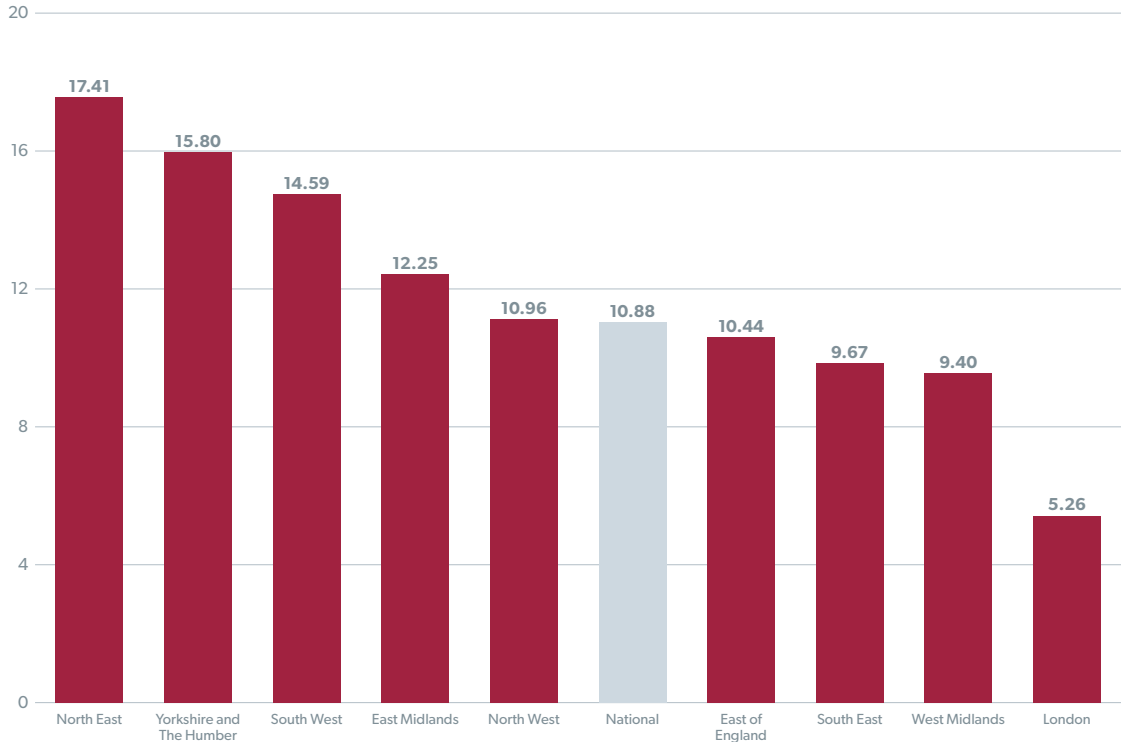
North East had the highest rate of suspensions in 2024/25 (17.4 per 100 children) followed by Yorkshire and the Humber (15.8 per 100 children).²⁸

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

London had the lowest rate of suspensions in 2024/25 (5.26 per 100 children), followed by the West Midlands (9.40 per 100 children).²⁹

Figure 6 – Suspensions by region, 2024/25



Redcar and Cleveland had the highest rate of suspensions in 2024/25 (33.0 per 100 children) followed by Hartlepool (30.6 per 100 children).³⁰

The City of London had the lowest rate of suspensions in 2024/25 (2.41 per 100 children), followed by Richmond upon Thames (2.41 per 100 children).³¹

Table 4 – Local authorities with highest rates of suspensions, 2024/25

Local authority	Suspension rate
Redcar and Cleveland	33.01
Hartlepool	30.59
Middlesbrough	22.47
Stockton-on-Tees	21.87
Bradford	21.81
Doncaster	21.24
Wakefield	20.89
North East Lincolnshire	20.63
Newcastle upon Tyne	20.54
Sunderland	20.27

29 Ibid

30 Ibid

31 Ibid

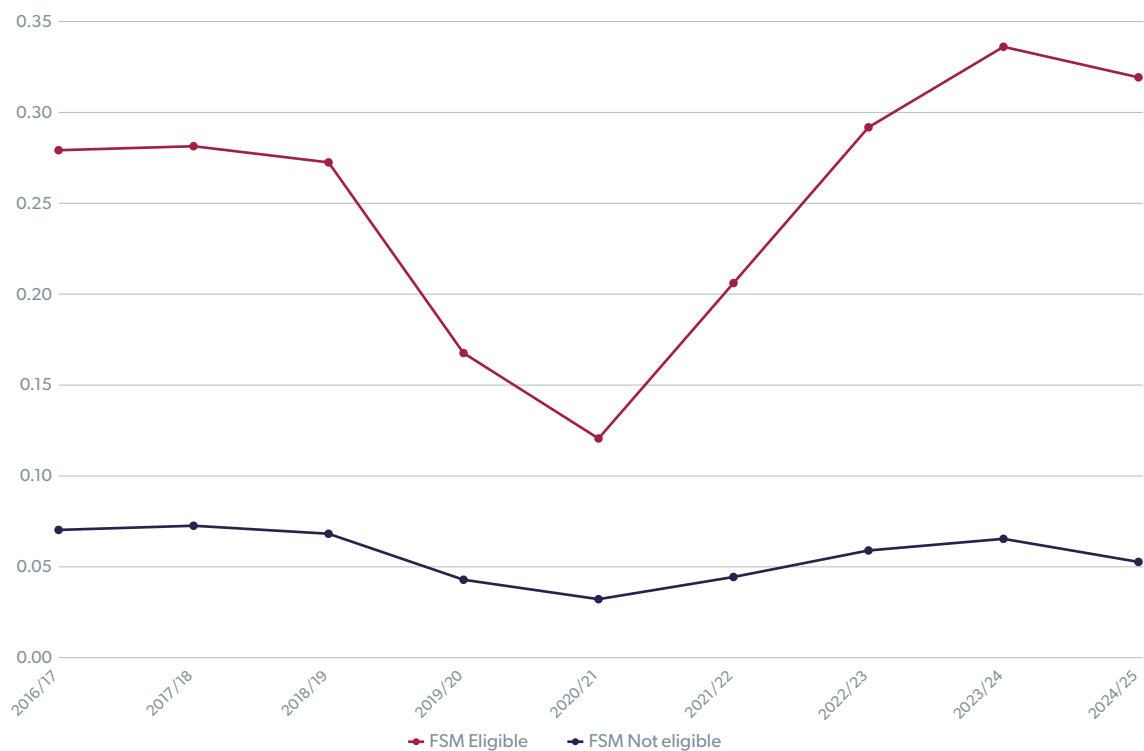
Exclusion by pupil characteristics

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 the 2024/2025 academic year, children eligible for FSM had a permanent exclusion rate which was 6.4 times the rate for children who were not eligible for FSM. The rate of permanent exclusion for children eligible for FSM was 0.32, compared to 0.05 for children not eligible.

Figure 7 – Permanent exclusion rate by free school meal eligibility, 2016/17 to 2024/25



In the 2024/25 academic year, children eligible for FSM had a suspension rate which was 4.9 times the rate of children who were not eligible for FSM. The rate of suspensions for children eligible for FSM was 26.7, compared to 5.4 for children not eligible.

Figure 8 – Suspension rate by free school meal eligibility



Exclusion by special educational needs/ disabilities

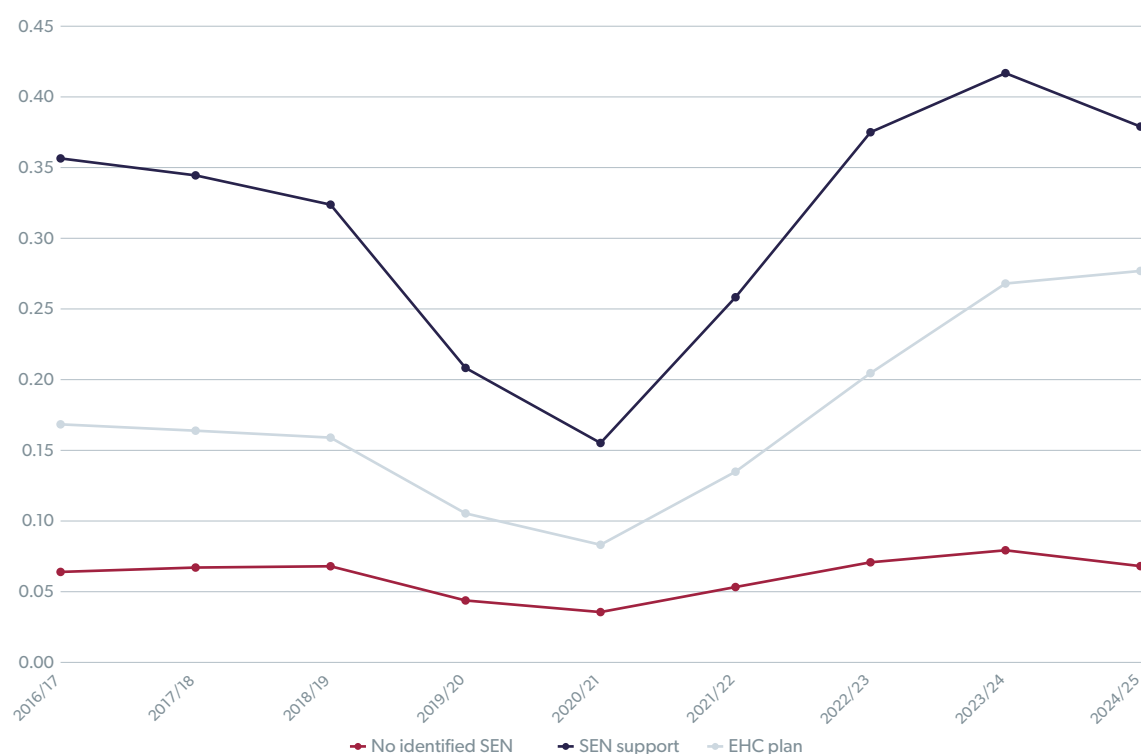
Children with special educational needs (SEN) support and EHCPs are more likely than their peers to be both permanently excluded and suspended.

In the 2024/25 academic year, 1,198 children with an EHCP were permanently excluded and 4,370 children with SEN support were permanently excluded.

The rate of permanent exclusion was 0.37 for children with SEN support, 0.27 for children with an EHCP, and 0.06 for children with no identified SEN.

In the 2024/25 academic year, children with social, emotional and mental health, other difficulty/ disability, moderate learning difficulty and specific learning difficulty had the highest rates of permanent exclusions. In 2024/25, the permanent exclusion rate of children with social, emotional and mental health was 0.92, compared to the national rate of 0.12 for the same time period.

Figure 9 – Permanent exclusion rates by SEN provision, 2019/20 to 2024/25



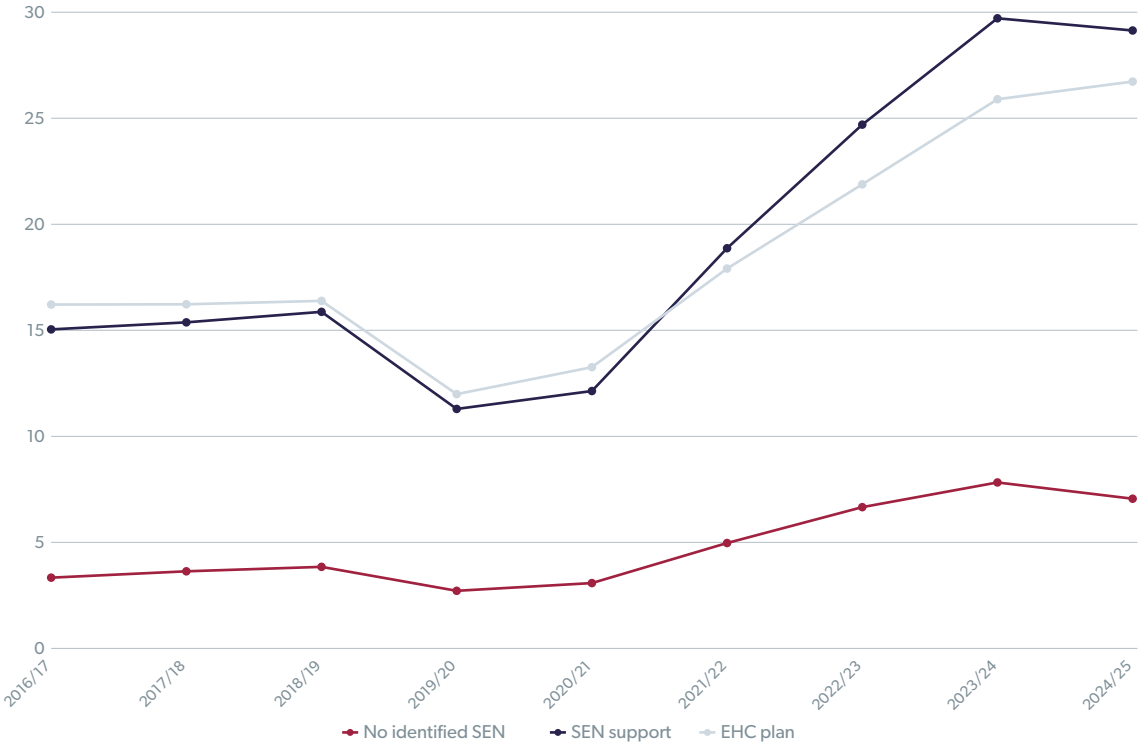
In the 2024/25 academic year, pupils in receipt of SEN support experienced higher suspension rates than those with an EHCP and those with no SEN support.

The suspension rate was 28.9 per 100 children for those with SEN Support, 26.5 per 100 children for those with an EHCP, and 6.8 per 100 children for those with no identified SEN.

In the 2024/25 academic year, there were 116,188 suspensions for children with an EHCP, and 336,484 for children with SEN support.

In 2024/25, children with social, emotional and mental health, other difficulty/disability, moderate learning difficulty, and specific learning difficulty had the highest rates of suspensions. Children with social, emotional and mental health had a suspension rate of 68.8, compared to the national rate of 10.9 for the same time period.

Figure 10 – Suspension rates by SEN provision, 2016/17 to 2024/25



Exclusions by sex

In the 2024/25 academic year, the rate of exclusions of male pupils was 0.16, compared to the rate of 0.07 exclusions for female pupils. There were 13.5 suspensions per 100 male pupils and for female pupils there were 8.2 suspensions per 100 pupils.

Figure 11 – Exclusion rates by sex, 2016/17 to 2024/25

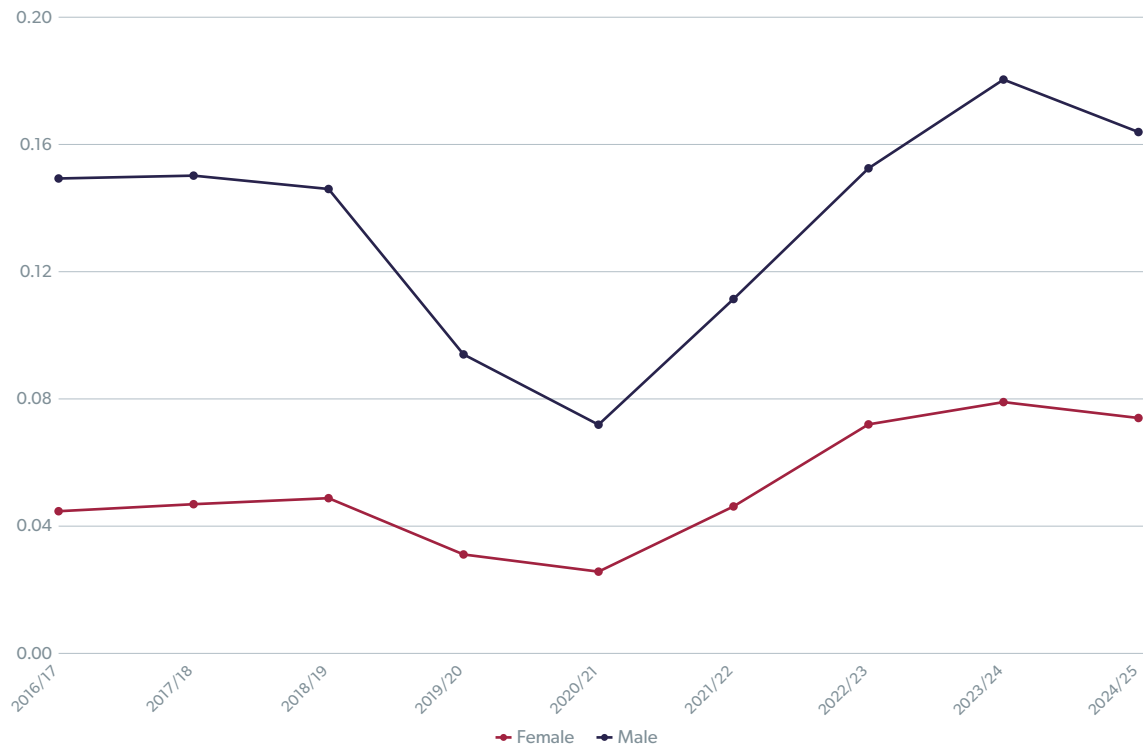
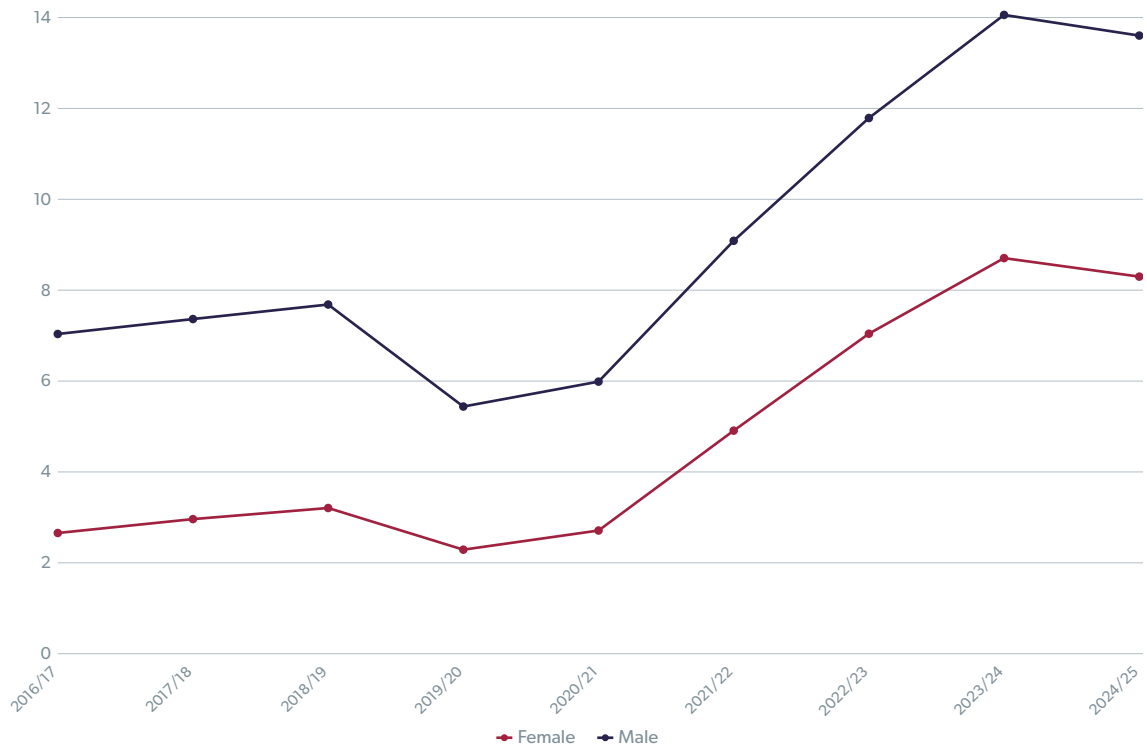


Figure 12 – Suspension rates by sex, 2016/17 to 2024/25



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.³²

In 2024/25, the suspension rate was 40.3 per 100 children for 'Gypsy/Roma' pupils, 30.7 per 100 children for 'Traveller of Irish heritage' pupils, and 19.9 per 100 children for 'White and Black Caribbean' pupils. It was just 1.1 for Chinese pupils, 1.3 for Indian pupils, and 2.8 for Bangladeshi pupils. For comparison, the suspension rate for 'English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British' pupils was 13.3.³³

The Government's White Paper highlighted that one key group that has particularly concerning educational outcomes are disadvantaged white children.³⁴ Examining the suspensions data, this is starkly clear. In 2024/25, disadvantaged White British children had a suspensions rate of 34.6, 15 times that of disadvantaged Chinese children and eight times that of disadvantaged Indian or Bangladeshi children.

Exclusion by year group

2024/25 marked an all-time record for the number of primary school children expelled from school, with a total of 1,481 permanent exclusions – a one per cent rise compared to 2023/24.

The year group with the highest rate of permanent exclusion in 2024/25 was Year 9 (0.35 per 100 children), followed by Year 10 (0.35 per 100 children). The year group with the lowest rate of permanent exclusion was Year 12 and above (0.01 per 100 children), followed by Year 1 and below (0.02 per 100 children).³⁵

The rate of permanent exclusions is almost eight 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 groups³⁶. Evidence of educational challenges spiking during the primary to secondary education transition period makes it a crucial time for proactive school engagement with families.

32 Ibid

33 Ibid

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

35 Ibid

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

Table 5 – Year groups by rates of permanent exclusion, 2024/25

Year group	Rate
Year 1 and below	0.02
Year 2	0.04
Year 3	0.04
Year 4	0.04
Year 5	0.05
Year 6	0.04
Year 7	0.15
Year 8	0.29
Year 9	0.35
Year 10	0.35
Year 11	0.12
Year 12 and above	0.01

The year group with the highest rate of suspensions in 2024/25 was Year 9 (30.0 per 100 children), followed by Year 8 (28.2 per 100 children). The year group with the lowest rate of suspensions was Year 12 and above (0.9 per 100 children), followed by Year 1 and below (1.5 per 100 children).³⁷

Table 6 – Rate of suspension by year group, 2024/25

Year group	Rate
Year 1 and below	1.5
Year 2	2.7
Year 3	2.8
Year 4	2.9
Year 5	3.0
Year 6	3.5
Year 7	18.4
Year 8	28.2
Year 9	30.0
Year 10	27.8
Year 11	16.1
Year 12 and above	0.9

37 Ibid

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 and 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. One where far too many children are on the edges, at risk of tragically slipping away from education entirely.

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.

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*³⁸ 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 DfE 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.

Specifically, today's statistics highlight the growing need for clearer direction in primary schools. With a record annual number of exclusions in the primary sector, it is evident that current approaches to early intervention and prevention are not delivering the desired outcomes.

Reversing this trend will require stronger behaviour policies in the early years, greater access to enrichment opportunities and higher levels of parental engagement. Whilst all of the policies set out below are relevant to primary schools, national policy currently provides insufficient guidance on how these should be implemented effectively in the primary context.

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

As the Government's Schools White Paper³⁹ 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 DfE admits that currently "too many children" experience inconsistent and low behaviour standards, undermining the goal of an inclusive learning environment⁴⁰. The Government must go further to tackle the behaviour crisis to ensure classrooms are caring, predictable and inclusive.

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

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

40 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 improve⁴¹, teachers report ongoing mayhem in schools. The survey found that poor behaviour in the classroom causes children to miss an average of seven out of every 30 minutes of lesson time due to disruption. For each pupil, this is the equivalent of losing around nine weeks of learning a year: an unacceptable portion of children's education lost to poor behaviour.⁴²

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 2025.⁴³ 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 increased⁴⁴.

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 months⁴⁵. 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."⁴⁶ 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 Paper⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ In May 2026, the DfE published updated statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions for England.⁴⁹ We welcome the recognition of the guidance, which exists alongside the government's 'Behaviour in Schools' guidance, that behaviour and inclusion policies are complementary. This guidance also clarifies the disciplinary role of suspension as a tool of last resort and further highlights the importance of early intervention.

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

42 Ibid

43 Ibid

44 NASUWT *Behaviour in Schools 2025*, May 2025

45 Ibid

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

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

48 Ibid

49 Department for Education, *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement: Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England*, July 2026

However, beyond clarifying these broader existing principles, the guidance fails to provide detailed best practice for schools to support reintegration into the classroom following disciplinary measures to prevent repeated exclusion occurring. Notably, it also fails to explicitly provide support for primary schools and how grounds and mitigations for such measures might differ across age groups.

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

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* report⁵⁰ 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.

As part of the Government's 'enrichment entitlement', as outlined in the recent Schools White Paper, the Government has now published its new national 'Enrichment Framework'.⁵¹ The framework establishes non-statutory guidance to support schools and colleges to plan and improve their enrichment offering, by highlighting best practice and providing advice. The framework explicitly recognises the importance of sport and physical activity to well-being, listing it as one of the core five categories of enrichment activity that a school should provide at minimum. The framework lists 8 benchmarks which schools and colleges can self-assess their own provision and a centralised list of resources that schools can use to improve.⁵² This follows the results of the Government's independent review of curriculum and assessment in November 2025, which also highlighted the importance of sport through PE. The CSJ welcomes the government's recognition of enrichment as a universal entitlement rather than simply good practice.

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

51 Department for Education, *Background supporting the enrichment framework for schools and colleges*, June 2026

52 *Resources to support schools and colleges with enrichment*. Department of Education. 15 June 2026

The CSJ is also pleased that enrichment has been included in Ofsted's new inspection criteria through the category of 'personal development'. From September, schools will be expected to ensure pupils have access to activities across five categories, including sport.

In May 2026, the Government also announced a £1bn investment into sport over the next three years through the new PE and School Sport Partnerships Network, including £200 million for improving primary school sporting facilities. The Network will provide primary and secondary schools with access to local partnerships, including creating connections to local grassroots sport clubs and national governing bodies. From January 2027, schools will receive a hybridised process of receiving universal support, as well as targeted support based on need, especially focused on improving provision for girls, disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with SEND.

The network replaces the existing PE and Sport Premium scheme for primary schools, which provided ring-fenced government grants proportional to pupil numbers, changing the system of additional sports funding for schools away from school-level grants towards an integrated, system-wide delivery. The CSJ welcomes the uptake of a recommendation from its 'Game Changer' report to increase the integration of grassroots and local organisations in sporting provision - especially through small charities - but 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.

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 support and 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,⁵³ a decline in family formation, especially among the poorest;⁵⁴ and growing mental health challenges⁵⁵ 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.

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

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

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

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

Pleasingly, the Government has announced plans to broadly implement this recommendation in the White Paper⁵⁶, 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.
- Conduct a yearly audit on the use of internal AP in mainstream schools and across trusts.

Progress update: some action taken, further action planned

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

In August 2025, the DfE published voluntary national standards for non-school alternative provision.⁵⁷ 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

Encouragingly, the Government’s recent SEND consultation paper⁵⁸ 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, only those considered to be in the ‘specialist’ category will receive EHC plans, while most children with SEND needs will be categorised as ‘targeted’ or ‘targeted plus’. Students in all three categories will be given digital Individual Support Plans, as a record of a child’s needs and details of the support they will be given. While no clear sense of the threshold criteria for each of these is given, and legislation remains subject to scrutiny and consultation, the plans represent a significant step towards the tiered model the CSJ has long advocated.

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.

57 Department for Education, *Non-school alternative provision: Voluntary national standards*, August 2025

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



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