


Stark increase in rates of school suspensions and exclusions

13 December 2024  Hayley O'Sullivan

The Department for Education (DfE) has now [published its data on suspension and exclusion statistics for the 2023/24 academic year](#). Headline statistics include:

1. In the autumn term of 2023/24 there was a 39.98% increase in the number of suspensions and a 35.48% increase in the number of permanent exclusions compared to the autumn term of the previous year (346,300 suspensions compared to 247,400 and 4,200 permanent exclusions compared to 3,100)
2. Persistent, disruptive behaviour remains the most common reason for suspensions and permanent exclusions, accounting for 50% of all reasons given for suspensions and 36% of reasons given for permanent exclusions.
3. The second most common reason for suspensions was verbal abuse or threatening behaviour against an adult followed by physical assault against a pupil. For exclusions the second most common reason was physical assault against a pupil followed by physical assault against an adult.
4. Boys are more than twice as likely to be permanent excluded than girls and 1.5 times more likely to be suspended.
5. Suspension rates and permanent exclusions rates for pupils eligible for Free School Meals was more than 4x and 6.5x that of pupils who were not eligible.
6. Pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are 3.6 times more likely to be permanently excluded and those on Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support 5.2 times more likely to be permanently excluded compared to those without SEN.
7. In secondary schools, Year 9 saw the highest number of suspensions, Year 10 for permanent exclusion. In the primary phase, Year 6 had the highest rates of suspensions at 1.24 and permanent exclusions at 0.02. Compared to the previous autumn term, Year 6 also experienced the largest increase in the number of suspensions, rising by 2,400.
8. Gypsy/Roma, Travellers of Irish heritage and White and Black Caribbean children remain at greater risk of being suspended and permanently excluded.

More pupils are being suspended, more frequently across all phases. The rate of permanent exclusions continues to rise and we do not yet know how the government will respond to these upward trends.

Will schools receive more targeted support and resources to tackle behaviour, particularly in areas of high deprivation? Will there be greater investment in external support services such as mental health support and youth services? When will the SEND system get a much-needed radical overhaul?

The results of our recent [School Leaders Survey](#) feature an in-depth analysis of the SEND crisis and the correlation between increases in exclusions from those on the frontline, who are best placed to advise and comment. As always, we're here to support schools with SEND, pupil behaviour and exclusions.

[Find out more](#) →

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