

For general release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 12 March 2019
SUBJECT:	Interim Report of the Task and Finish Group (TFG) of the Scrutiny Children and Young People Sub-Committee on Removal from Roll and Off Rolling of Pupils in Croydon Schools
LEAD OFFICER:	Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick , Leo Morrell and Elaine Jones
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Councillor Jerry Fitzpatrick/ Leo Morrell

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This was included in the Sub-Committee’s work programme following the recommendation made at the meeting of 27 November 2018.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To review the details of the draft interim report into children that have been removed from the school roll or off rolled and to consider the recommendations as directed by the report.

Task and Finish Group- Removal from Roll and Off Rolling in Croydon Schools

1. Recommendations

The Sub-Committee is invited:

- (i) to note the report;
- (ii) to extend the life of the TFG in order to enable it to receive evidence from relevant stakeholders, such as education professionals, parents/carers and pupils/students and thereafter to prepare and present a final report; and,
- (iii) to increase the size of the TFG by two or three.

2. Background

2.1 The TFG was set up by a decision of the Scrutiny Children and Young People Sub-Committee on 27 November 2018 following consideration of a report headed “Performance of academy schools in Croydon Children/Overview and analysis of elective home education, fair access panel and children missing education” presented and discussed at that meeting (Agenda Item 9).

2.2 The primary purpose of the TFG is to obtain and collate evidence regarding children who have been removed from school roll or offrolled. The TFG is

referred to as the “TFG on Removal from Roll and Offrolling in Croydon Schools”.

2.3 The TFG was established in the context of the currency of a variety of issues of public policy, which include:

- (i) whether the application of the sanction of permanent exclusion and managed moves is used in a consistent way, and whether alternatives to permanent exclusion and managed moves could be more frequently used;
- (ii) the impact of exclusion and non-exclusion on the children and families and agencies and institutions directly and indirectly affected;
- (iii) whether there is a practice of offrolling, a term which as used by OFSTED connotes the unlawful removal of a pupil from the school roll.

2.4 The members of the TFG are or were Cllr Jerry Fitzpatrick, Elaine Jones (Archdiocese of Southwark Education Commission), Cllr Maggie Mansell and Leo Morrell (Southwark C of E Diocesan Board of Education). Very sadly, Cllr Mansell died on 5 January 2019.

2.5 The TFG met on four occasions: 7 December 2018, 1 February 2019, 25 February 2019 and 4 March 2019.

2.6 At its meeting on 7 December, Cllr Fitzpatrick was elected as Chair of the TFG. The TFG agreed to prepare questions seeking further information from Council officers. Those questions were sent to the then Director of Education, David Butler, on 18 December. Given that David Butler was working out notice prior to leaving the Council on 7 February 2019, the task of leading the team answering the TFG’s questions fell to Shelley Davies, Interim Director of Education.

2.7 Cllr Fitzpatrick met Shelley Davies on 27 December in order to talk through the questions and to agree a timetable for the answering of the questions.

2.8 At its meeting on 25 February, the TFG met with officers in order to discuss further the answers to the questions raised. The officers present were Shelley Davies (Interim Director of Education and Youth Engagement), Chris Roberts (Head of Learning Access), Paul Brightly-Jones (Principal Officer Exclusion Prevention) and Michael McKeaveney (Interim Head of Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion).

3. Themes for further exploration

3.1 The TFG identified the following as themes which might usefully bear further scrutiny and overview:

Scrutiny of managed moves/work of Fair Access Panel

Possible measures to reduce the number of FTE and permanent exclusions

Whether offrolling is a problem in Croydon

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Training needs relating to CME

Collection and analysis of longitudinal data

3.2 In identifying these themes, the only judgement which the TFG is making is that there is public interest in the theme, or – and of course it is not the same – that there is a public interest in the more detailed scrutiny and overview of the theme.

3.3 We set out below a brief rationale for the identification of each theme.

4. Scrutiny of managed moves

4.1 Most managed moves require the child who is the subject of the move to be at immediate risk of permanent exclusion. Very occasionally a managed move may happen at the instigation of a parent or carer. The vast majority are instigated by a Headteacher. The large majority of managed moves have to be sanctioned by the Fair Access Panel. A case may not be brought to the FAP without the consent of the parent/carer of the child concerned. Given the choices entailed, the parent/carer may be reluctant to withhold consent. Some managed moves occur through one headteacher contacting another.

4.2 A managed move may be seen as preferable to permanent exclusion.

4.3 30% of children whose name has been before the Fair Access Panel do not complete their schooling in a mainstream setting. Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 below are relevant here too.

4.4 The Council currently provides little data about the number of managed moves. For reasons of confidentiality, the papers before and the minutes of the Fair Access Panel have not been made available to us.

5. Possible measures to reduce the number of FTE and permanent exclusions

5.1 Broadly speaking, children go to school to learn. Permanent exclusion as a sanction of last resort may be seen as necessary to remove individuals who provide either a physical risk to their peers or who may seriously interfere with their peers' opportunity to learn.

5.2 Children who are permanently excluded are likely already to have experienced significant instability in their lives. Most children thrive on stability. Further to destabilise a child who already has an unstable life continues or perhaps sometimes commences the downward trajectory of the child's life. There is a danger that permanent exclusion will have a seriously negative impact on the life of the children whom it affects, and their families, and those who may suffer harm at the hands of the child in the world outside school.

5.3 As the recently published "Vulnerable Adolescent Thematic Review" shows, the stakes are high. This important report can be found on the website of the

Croydon Safeguarding Children Board using the following link:
<http://croydonlcsb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/CSCB-Vulnerable-Adolescent-Thematic-Review-PUBLISHED-Feb-2019.pdf>

6. Whether offrolling is a problem in Croydon

- 6.1 OFSTED have expressed concerns in their report of September 2018 about the practice of offrolling, which entails the unlawful removal of a child from the roll of a school.
- 6.2 OFSTED itself recognises the difficulty of obtaining evidence about offrolling. Understandably, schools do not declare unlawful practice. Such evidence as does exist about offrolling relates to the large discrepancies which can exist between schools in respect of annual churn of pupils. Such discrepancies may be explicable in a variety of ways. However, the concern of OFSTED which in part has been evoked by anecdotal evidence needs to be treated respectfully.
- 6.3 The Local Authority has access to details of pupils on roll at the commencement of the academic year, details of those who are enrolled in the course of the year, and details of those lawfully removed from roll in the course of the year. On the face of it, those not on roll at the commencement of the following year, and not lawfully removed, may have been offrolled.

7. Mental Health and Wellbeing

- 7.1 Mental Health and Neurological issues affect a significant proportion of children who undergo managed moves or are excluded for a fixed term or permanently.
- 7.2 Consideration needs to be given, therefore, to the adequacy of resources available to schools for the training of staff who are dealing with children with mental health and neurological issues, and the availability and provision of support generally to schools in this area. This is an issue which bears on health agencies as well as the local authority.

8. Training needs relating to removal from roll and offrolling

- 8.1 Schools enjoy autonomy as to what training they purchase to ensure the continuing education of their staff.
- 8.2 The question which arises is how the Local Authority might use its influence to frame training agendas, if it considers that insufficient training is being provided relating to reducing the perceived need to exclude children permanently from school.
- 8.3 It follows from the above that the Local Authority may need to consider how it might better be able to support schools to keep children who might otherwise be permanently excluded.

9. Collection and analysis of longitudinal data

- 9.1 The recently published Vulnerable Adolescent Thematic Review shows the benefit of keeping and analysing data which evidences satisfactorily the

existence of a serious social problem. Such work provides part of the solid evidential basis required for effective policy discussion and formation.

- 9.2 The Local Authority is unlikely to have resources to keep and analyse complex longitudinal data on its own. This raises a question as to the possibility of partnerships which might enable such work to happen and continue.

10. Interim conclusions

- 10.1 The TFG has received and read a huge amount of evidence provided by the Interim Director of Education and her colleagues.
- 10.2 The TFG considers that it would be premature to identify what at this stage may be the most striking pieces of evidence which it has received.
- 10.3 The TFG feels that it will fulfil its role most effectively if it receives evidence from a wider range of sources, including evidence from stakeholders within the community of Croydon. The TFG will continue to seek guidance and information from the Interim Director of Education and her team, and will discuss in due course with the Director and her team the key themes raised in the additional sources of evidence, and the TFG's draft conclusions and recommendations.

11. Final report

- 11.1 The TFG propose to place its final report before the Scrutiny and Overview Children and Young People's Sub-Committee at its meeting on 17 September 2019.

12. Acknowledgements

- 12.1 The TFG gratefully acknowledges the hard work of the Interim Director and her team in providing detailed responses to its many questions.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: None

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