

THE BEHAVIOUR, LEARNING AND INCLUSION SUPPORT STRATEGY

2019-2022



the **RIGHT SUPPORT**
the **RIGHT ACTION**
at the **RIGHT TIME**



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Foreword

The Behaviour, Learning and Inclusion Support Strategy (BLISS) has been created to provide the framework for a partnership of Bedford Borough, education providers and other partners to be able to support children and young people and create an inclusive ethos across the borough. To reduce the possibility of exclusions, we make a commitment to commissioning services and providing behaviour support and alternative provision which will allow schools and educationists to consider new approaches to dealing with challenging behaviour. Schools and partners who engage with the strategy should share our enthusiasm to improve inclusivity for all Children and Young People in Bedford Borough. There should be an ethos of shared working and collaboration to achieve the goals and aims of the strategy.

Our partnership working has seen a decrease in permanent exclusions last academic year (2018/19) and we are all keen to build on this progress. We know that a focus on reducing fixed-term exclusions is necessary, and this strategy will support this focus. By focusing the strategy on our service users, we can provide **the right support and the right action at the right time**.



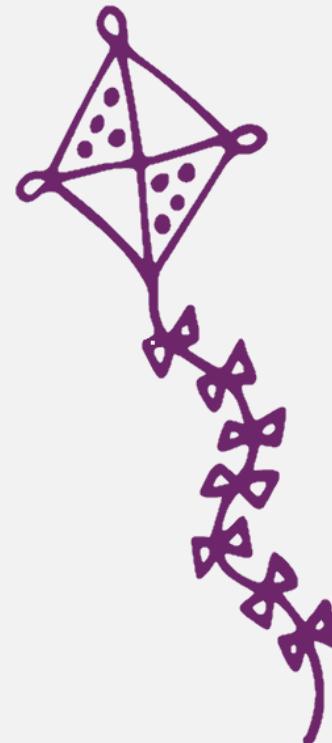
Cllr James Valentine

Introduction

The majority of children can access the education and extended provision schools offer. However, some find it difficult to engage positively in learning and communicate these difficulties through poor behaviour. The Behaviour, Learning and Inclusion Support Strategy (BLISS) identifies how a partnership of the council, schools, parents and other stakeholders can promote positive behaviour and provide additional support to all children when it is needed.

Both **nationally and locally**, there has been a shift in the responsibilities of schools and local authorities around **inclusion and behaviour support** and associated functions (LGA, 2019, p. 4). Schools are allocated resources to address inclusion and behaviour support but the local authority retains key statutory accountabilities. As a result, council provided services and provisions focus on higher-level needs, meaning BLISS is aligned with the following strategies:

- Children's Services
- Early Help and Intervention
- SEND
- School Improvement



Bedford Borough's BLISS will be delivered through an identified work-stream (see [BLISS Graduated Response](#)). To ensure delivery, the Council commits to securing the active support for and engagement with, the strategy's principles from schools and relevant partners. Alongside this comes their investment and participation in the strategy's work-stream activities.

The strategy will evolve and develop in a changing overall context. However, the broad aims will remain constant. Progress in achieving the intended outcomes will be measured by the **SEND Improvement Board**.

OUR VISION

Bedford Borough Council will provide the framework for active collaboration across all partners to provide suitable, full-time education to all children in Bedford Borough, through a school rooted in their local community. We have an imperative to respond to the recommendations of two reviews to achieve this and deliver high quality inclusive education. The first is a review of secondary inclusion support work (2018), and the second a Peer Diagnostic into exclusions in primary schools (2019).

03

Broad aims of BLISS

01

Secure and protect the legal entitlement of all children in Bedford Borough, especially those considered vulnerable.

02

Ensure suitable, full-time education for all children and young people regardless, of any identified needs they may have or where they live and/or go to school.

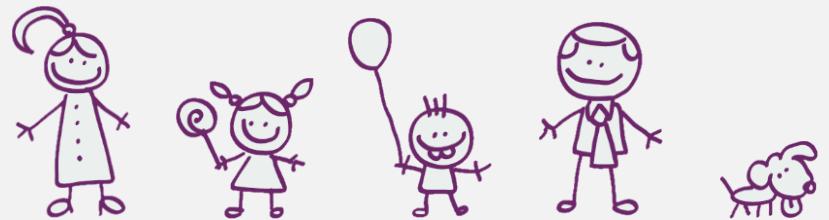


03

Enable schools to create a truly inclusive ethos and a learning environment in which children can actively participate and where positive behaviour can flourish.

04

Enable children and young people to articulate their needs and to identify how their voices, views, wishes, feelings and experiences can influence the outcomes of the strategy.



05

Enhance the ability of schools to identify and engage, at an early stage, those children who are at risk of becoming disaffected and disengaged from learning and who manifest this through poor behaviour.

06

Enhance the ability and capacity of schools to work in partnership with each other to retain ownership of, and secure positive outcomes for all children.

O7 Secure the full and active participation of parents/carers in supporting children who are becoming/have become disaffected and disengaged from learning.

O8 Enhance the coordination, integration and effectiveness of local authority support services to secure appropriate targeted interventions, which lead to sustained quality outcomes.

O9 Ensure the partnership between schools, education services and other agencies – in particular children's social care and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) – becomes more integrated, robust and effective.

Underpinning principles

BLISS is underpinned by government legislation and guidance and a set of principles to which schools and all stakeholders are expected to commit. These principles are:

1. Every child has an entitlement to receive full-time education. It should be suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs.

It is the **shared duty of all stakeholders** to work together to protect this entitlement; no child should be allowed to “fall through the gap” or be “left behind”. Individual children should have access to a continuum of support, which can respond to **their particular needs** and **enable them to be all they can be**.

2. Early identification and intervention is crucial

It remains the case that some interventions tend to be triggered only when a **pattern of poor behaviour** has become ingrained and more challenging over a period. Early identification and intervention should be **a reality, rather than an aspiration**.

3. The voices of children and their parents/carers should be sought and listened to

Children and parents/carers should be **active participants** rather than **passive recipients** in processes. Where they cannot articulate their views and opinions, it should never mean they are peripheral or irrelevant. Children and parents/carers may sometimes need an **advocate**, which schools should ensure is **available and accessible**.

Early Help Assessments (EHA) and plans should be used to secure the active involvement of parents/carers to ensure joint planning, cooperation and review.

4. Behaviours can change and improvement can be secured

Behaviour is affected by a systemic interaction of a variety of factors, such as the **living environment** and/or **level and nature of support offered**. Interventions for poor behaviour and underlying issues should be underpinned by a belief in **effecting positive change**. This may require **innovative thinking** in working practice and engaging children who demonstrate challenging behaviour. Addressing the underlying need to promote positive behaviour is a **learning process** both for children and parents/carers.



5. Behaviour is a symptom of underlying issues

Children who exhibit challenging behaviour **should not be blamed or stigmatised**. These children often face **multiple and complex difficulties** and in addressing these difficulties **all partners** should ensure their approach is underpinned by the need to **analyse, not to moralise**.



6. Outcomes should be efficient, effective and value for money

For all children a good outcome is to **engage positively in learning and advocate for their own future**. Such outcomes need to be secured **efficiently** (good use is made of available resources), **effectively** (clearly defined objectives have been achieved) and offer **value for money**.

In determining whether these outcomes have been achieved, schools and stakeholders need to ensure **shared data informs all interventions and resource allocation processes**.

7. Flexibility and creativity are essential

Responses need to be personalised and designed to meet specific needs of each child, so “**thinking outside the box**” is crucial. Whilst clearly defined procedures and protocols are essential, they should not block the development of **original and creative solutions**.



8. Shared commitment and mutual trust are vital

Positive outcomes will be most easily secured if schools, parents, local authority officers and other partners **work together** in a spirit of **trust and good will**. Collaborative, collective, solution-focused problem-solving is the most effective route to positive outcomes.

9. There should be cohesion, consistency and equity

We all have a **moral duty** to ensure this strategy delivers cohesion, consistency and equity across Bedford Borough. All children experiencing behavioural difficulties must be able to access the same level of **high-quality support** regardless of where they go to school or where they live.

10. Schools know their children (and their families)

School staff (and of course parents) are the **key personnel** in **promoting positive behaviour**.

Teachers and other school staff witness – and experience – an individual child's behaviour on a **day-by-day basis**. Their perspectives and insights – and those of the school's governing body – are of **paramount importance and value** and should fully inform all planning and decision-making.



11. Practice should be evidence-based and data-driven

Schools and stakeholders should use existing models of proven best practice, and robust up-to-date data, to inform **planning, decision-making, the allocation of resources** and the **monitoring of outcomes**. The local authority should assume a key role in identifying such practice and in providing and supporting the **interrogation of data**.

12. Strengthening Safeguarding

A significant number of those children experiencing difficulties at school are amongst the **most vulnerable children** in Bedford Borough. It is the **shared responsibility** of all schools and partners to ensure these children are **safe and protected** from potential harm.

All schools and stakeholders must be alert to the risks faced by children who are out of full-time education. **Crime, drug abuse, child sexual exploitation, child trafficking and radicalisation** are dangers from which a child not in full-time education may be at risk.

As part of its general safeguarding duty, the local authority will monitor those children who are out of school or are not accessing full-time education, and in particular will identify those cohorts who may be vulnerable, notably those who:

- **have been excluded from school;**
- **move school on a regular basis;**
- **are electively home educated;**
- **are new to the authority and awaiting a school place;**
- **are accessing alternative provision.**

The local authority, through the **Early Help Offer**, will ensure children who have been excluded from school access their educational entitlement within the statutory timescales prescribed. The **Early Help Offer** will also monitor schools' overall compliance with the statutory guidance on exclusions.

Strategic priorities

1. Maintaining children in suitable, full-time education

It is a statutory responsibility to ensure all children are in full-time education appropriate to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs.

While it **can be** necessary to permanently exclude a child, we should focus on understanding underlying issues to avoid it. Should a school find it difficult to meet the needs of a child, an EHA must be completed to consider appropriate **additional support**.

Schools finding it difficult to respond to a child's behaviour should **never** contact parents/carers to collect the child. If the school's Head teacher considers the behaviour to represent a serious threat to their own or others' safety, the **formal exclusion process must be followed** (Department for Education, 2017).

Parents/carers of children exhibiting extremely challenging behaviour should **never** be advised to consider **another school or elective home education** as an alternative to permanent exclusion.

Managed moves should be part of an **Early Intervention strategy** (see BLISS Graduated Response). They should only be used when all parties believe it is in the **child's best interests** to be offered a fresh start and that the new placement has a good chance of being successful. All parties should adhere to the **In-Year Fair Access Protocol** (Department for Education, 2012).

In **exceptional situations** it may be appropriate to temporarily use a reduced/part-time timetable as part of an inclusion strategy. This strategy must be a **temporary, short-term intervention**. It must have the active agreement of the child's parents, be subject to regular review and benefit the child. It should be implemented in partnership with the **Senior Inclusion Officer** at Bedford Borough.

The local authority has a statutory duty to identify children not in receipt of suitable, full-time education and route such children back into education. We will work closely with schools and partners to ensure this duty is rigorously and consistently fulfilled.

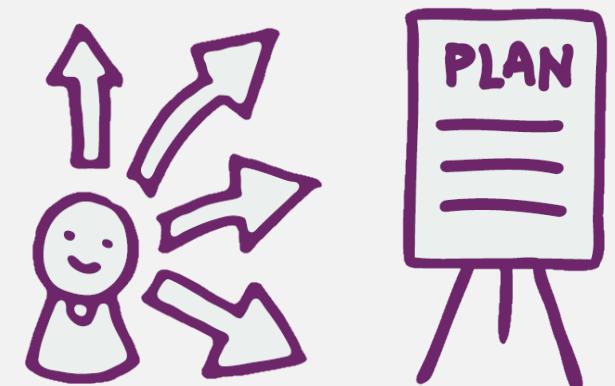
2. Protecting and delivering children's entitlement

This strategy protects, champions and safeguards education entitlement for all children.

All schools and stakeholders should consider the children of Bedford Borough as "**our children**", regardless of where they go to school or the individual complexity of their needs.

Evidence suggests those who cannot access their local school in particular (children with SEND, Looked after Children, children from particular ethnic minority groups) are more likely to be at risk of exclusion than their peers.

It is the **shared responsibility** of schools, the local authority and parents to ensure that the **educational entitlement** of these children is properly and effectively protected.



3. Building capacity within schools

Schools are uniquely placed to identify unmet needs leading to challenging behaviours. They are also best placed to recognise when an individual child is developing behaviours which impact on inclusion. Therefore, schools can identify and implement strategies which best support that child (and their parents/carers).

Continuing to develop **supportive environments**, which reduce the need for exclusions, is imperative. Schools should encourage the **active participation** of children (and parents/carers) in the development of their school's behaviour policy and practice.

Schools should revisit the culture that underpins conduct in their settings, which should take into consideration **Tom Bennetts report: "Creating a Culture"**. They should continue to evolve and improve systems that enable them to identify at an early stage **individual children and particular cohorts** of children who are at risk of becoming disaffected.

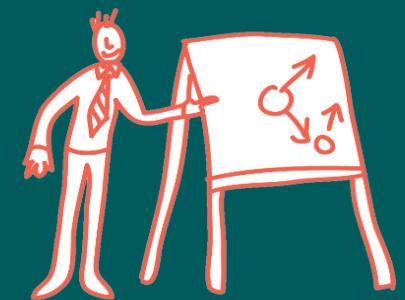
Behaviour management techniques used by schools should be evidence-based and sustainable, ensuring that all staff are offered the opportunity to **enhance their skills** in effective behaviour management (Simonsen et al., 2008, p. 369). The CPD offered through the Council for supporting whole school approaches to inclusion and behaviour will be developed to include opportunities for Head teachers, SENCos, Governors and support staff.

Schools should use local authority officers with behaviour specialisms for advice and support at the earliest opportunity.



4. A strong and effective partnership between schools and local authority support services

This remains integral to securing successful outcomes. Such a partnership can only be achieved if the shared mind-set is one of “we”, rather than “them” and “us”.



The partnership between schools and the local authority must be infused by a spirit of transparency, trust, shared ownership, realism and a commitment to open, joint working. A “**no blame**” approach, underpinned by an ongoing and honest dialogue, is an essential component to such a partnership.

The local authority will offer clear and decisive **strategic leadership and direction**, working collaboratively and communicating with schools. We will **combine support with challenge**, to ensure the educational entitlement of all Bedford Borough children is protected and resources are focused on the most important shared priorities.

Local authority services will clearly identify the type and level of support they can offer to schools and ensure that funding mechanisms, access gateways and threshold criteria, as well as respective accountabilities, are clearly highlighted.

5. Improving outcomes for children with SEND and other vulnerable groups

Some children and young people, who exhibit serious and/or persistent behavioural issues, are likely to have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the form of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties, which may or may not have been formally assessed.

According to government statistics, **one in ten** young people have a diagnosable mental health condition that can result in high levels of **social dysfunction, serious emotional problems** and a range of **challenging behaviours** (DfE; DfH, 2017, p. 3).

In Bedford Borough, this would equate to approximately 3,200 children who, according to the government, are more likely to:

- ***Experience high levels of disruption at school, due to general disengagement, time off, truancy and exclusion.***
- ***Face serious problem in gaining and maintaining employment***
- ***Engage in criminal activity (1 in 4 boys in Young Offenders Institutes)***
- ***End up in prison (20 times more likely)***
- ***Become dependent on drugs (4 times more likely)***



SEMH difficulties and the behaviours they manifest typically require **staged interventions**, proportionate to the learner's condition and capabilities. This is particularly pertinent with SEMH difficulties. Unlike most other SEND, an overly **intrusive or misplaced intervention** may inhibit progress and can have damaging long-term consequences.

Nationally, the first stage response to low-level SEMH concerns usually begins with learners having all their needs met at school through **universal systems, routines and interventions**. Non-educational support is also provided by the services commonly available to all children and families (Department for Education; Department of Health, 2015, p. 94). This global approach generally satisfies the **majority of learners** with emerging issues, including most of those exhibiting patterns of **challenging behaviour**.

Our **SEND Support and Provision Guidance (2019)** outlines different **school-based interventions** and examples of **Quality First Teaching**. Schools should use this guidance to support the development of processes which deal with challenging behaviour, **before** further support is provided by the local authority.

Where schools find themselves less able to cope with challenging behaviour, additional support is likely to be required beyond that of well-planned teaching and regular systems. That said, many mainstream providers nationally have invested to ensure SEMH needs can still be met '**in-house**' through the use of more advanced strategies, e.g. **learning support facilities, one-to-one interventions**. This is particularly in areas of high social deprivation and increased pupil premium funding.

Despite the effectiveness of school-based strategies, there will inevitably be occasions when the SEMH needs of a child become more embedded and detrimental to **the individual and the school**.

At this stage, more **targeted interventions** are initiated, often through an **EHA** that is likely to engage **specialist services**, such as educational psychology, Autism Advisory service, Early Help, children and adolescent mental health services etc. This process might lead to an **EHCP assessment**, alongside measures involving revised timetables and the use of exclusion. Consideration might also be given to placing a learner in **alternative provision (AP)**, including a **pupil referral unit (PRU)**, which would be normal in the case of permanent exclusion.

Severe and prolonged levels of SEMH concerns and challenging behaviour are prone to result in an **EHCP** being completed, which may in the future lead to a learner eventually being placed in a special school. These placements vary according to **need, demand and availability**, with the range extending from local maintained day schools, through to independent boarding facilities.

Where a child or young person has an EHCP, an interim review should be called prior to exclusion. This should include the Senior Inclusion Support Officer, the Manager for SEND or the Headteacher for the Virtual School.

The exclusion rates for some groups of pupils in Bedford Borough is **consistently higher**. This includes Looked After Children and Traveller Children. Statutory guidance states clearly that **every effort** must be made to avoid permanently excluding these pupils and schools must work in partnership and co-operate pro-actively with others to consider the support that is required to maintain appropriate educational provision (Department for Education, 2017, p. 11).



6. Developing partnership work with parents/carers

Parents/carers are key players in helping secure an improvement in a child's behaviour, their active participation at all stages of the process is crucial. Without it, successful and sustained outcomes will remain elusive.

The **EHA** should be used to enable all to understand that the interventions put in place at school are matched by those put in place at home. They should be supported where necessary by the involvement of outside agencies or other support such as parenting programmes. Parents should be able to access **regular, objective information** about their child's behaviour in school and should in turn provide the school with relevant information from home. They should meet regularly with school staff and be actively involved in any interventions which school staff consider necessary.

A particular challenge is posed by parents who may be **hard-to-reach** or find it **difficult to engage** with their child's school. Schools should be sensitive to the needs and views of such parents and should employ a range of approaches to try to bring about a constructive dialogue with these parents. **SEND IASS** is there to offer parents **up to date** and **impartial resources** and information about the **law on SEND**. They can also offer some parents more intensive support where needed including attending meetings with parents, signposting to other services or organizations and supporting with completing forms, documents etc.



Behaviour Support and alternative provision

A number of approaches have been **tested and costed** to look at how we can deliver **behaviour support/alternative provision** more effectively to meet growing demand. In 2018, Head teachers and the local authority commissioned a review of Behaviour Support across Bedford Borough.

A review of Behaviour Support Provision

In the last two academic years, we have assessed the sufficiency of places for excluded pupils. The main source of provision within Bedford Borough for pupils is **Greys Education Centre**. In addition, the council commissions a limited number of places from other local providers. The review concluded there are sufficient places overall to meet demand. In the 2017/18 academic year there was a reduction in secondary exclusions, though the pressure in primary continued with 16 exclusions – **an increase of 60%**. The 2018/19 academic year saw a reduction in permanent exclusions for primary schools by **18.8%**. There was also a decrease in secondary school permanent exclusions by **16.2%**.

Permanent Exclusions

academic year	primary	secondary
2015-16	10	43
2016-17	11	43
2017-18	16	37
2018-19	13	31

Partnership Placements

academic year	primary	secondary	total
2015-16	7	6	13
2016-17	5	7	12
2017-18	1	3	4
2018-19	0	6	6

Greys Education Centre

Greys Education Centre is an **Alternative Provision Academy** with capacity for **54 excluded pupils**, **12** places in Primary and **42** places in Secondary. Some of the places are for pupils who may also have an **EHCP** occasionally naming the school.



HIVE

The **HIVE** provision provides **8** intervention places for primary age pupils with SEMH needs. The places are integrated into the primary provision at **Greys Education Centre**. These pupils would typically have an **EHCP**.

ASPEN

The **ASPEN** provision, established at **Kempston Challenger Academy**, provides **16** places for secondary age pupils with SEMH needs where there is the capacity or developing capacity for the students to be integrated into some mainstream lessons. As with the primary provision, the demand for places from students with long-term SEMH needs with an **EHCP** has out stripped available places. It was also clear that the aspiration to provide assessment places alongside named provision places was educationally and logically impossible within the space available at **ASPEN**.

Autism Units

There are three Autism provisions attached to mainstream schools in Bedford Borough. These provisions cater for pupils across **primary and secondary** and their pupils are all subject to an **EHCP**. At **Goldington Green academy** there is a **12 place** provision, **Lincroft** a **28 place** provision and at **Mark Rutherford** a **16 place** provision.

Provision name	Age range	Numbers
Goldington Green	4-9	12
Lincroft / Federation	9-16	28
Mark Rutherford	13-18	16 10 Secondary 6 Post-16

In-reach Provision

Following the end of the HUB provision, a sum of money was allocated for the **Early Help and Intervention Service** to broker **in-reach support** with the focus on bespoke pieces of work to maintain a student in mainstream school. This provision is for students who are **persistently disruptive**.

Outreach Provision

This service provides **specialist training**, development and support for staff in mainstream schools so they are better equipped to help children and young people with **SEND**.

The service is available to mainstream schools and settings with children whose needs can be described as complex and where a school or setting would benefit from **specialist advice** on how best to support them. This service is for children that have:

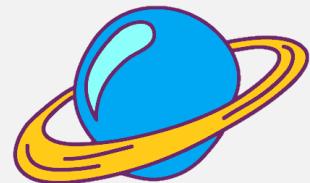
- **Complex needs in the area of cognition and learning**
- **Profound and multiple learning difficulties**
- **Communication and interaction difficulties or diagnosed Autistic Spectrum**
- **Severer and long term physical/medical needs**
- **Severe and long term emotional, social and behavioural difficulties**

IN THE 2018/19
ACADEMIC

YEAR

1120

FIXED TERM
EXCLUSIONS



44

PERMANENT
EXCLUSIONS



Partnership Places

A number of partnership places have been brokered by the **Early Help and Intervention Service**. This includes packages of support for pupils in **Year 11**. This will keep them in their school and receiving bespoke support, enabling them to complete a full range of **GCSE studies** where appropriate, or at very least maintain a timetable of core subjects.

The Way Forward

The changes in the scope of the **SEN Code of Practice in 2014** have led to an **increase in demand** for places in SEN schools. To meet this increase in need, Bedford Borough have been granted a **Special Free school**, which will eventually have **spaces for 200 pupils**. The current scope of the Special free school is for the following pupils:

- **Pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning needs (PMLD)**
- **Pupils with a Severe Learning Difficulty (SLD)**
- **Pupils with Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)**
- **Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

The BLISS Graduated Response sets out the support available at each category of need. Set out below are the services that will be commissioned as part of the BLISS.

This strategy outlines the different types of support that will be offered through the BLISS. This support is presented through the following opportunities:

- **Additional Support**
- **Enhanced Support**
- **Targeted Support**
- **Workforce Development**

Through the offer we will also provide provision for excluded pupils in both primary and secondary education.

The following key principles underpin the way forward:

1. **Provisions should offer access to full-time education;**
2. **Provisions should be cost-effective and offer value for money;**
3. **Provisions should be accessed through transparent referral systems;**
4. **Plans must involve parents;**
5. **Plans must be subject to regular review;**
6. **Plans must involve children in their own learning;**
7. **Plans and provisions must offer personalised learning opportunities which are tailored to meet a child's individual needs, abilities and interests;**
8. **Plans and provisions must include access to a range of vocational opportunities;**
9. **Provisions must offer a range of accreditation;**
10. **Provisions must be delivered through clear and formal contracting arrangements;**

Additional Support

12-hour support per week match funding. This support lasts 6 weeks, with a review at 4 weeks. The purpose is to be clear about the issues and inform a professional of the child's needs.

Accessed through the completion of an EHA, which will be sent to and processed by the Educational Psychology team



Enhanced Support

Bespoke In-reach support to the pupil in school (up to 12 weeks). There is provision for 10 primary and 15 secondary students per term

Accessed through consultation with the Senior Inclusion Support Officer and the completion of the EHA

10 places for secondary age students with bespoke needs who do not have an EHCP

Accessed through consultation with the Senior Inclusion Support Officer and the completion of the EHA

8 part-time places for primary pupils at risk of exclusion who need specialist input from Greys staff for an agreed period of time. We will then aim to provide an integration plan for them back into their home school

Accessed through consultation with the Senior Inclusion Support Officer and the completion of the EHA

Targeted Support

8 primary placements for those with SEMH needs

Accessed through an EHCP - HIVE at Greys, Bromham

16 places for secondary age students with an EHCP who have SEMH needs

Accessed through an EHCP - ASPEN at KCA



Bespoke places for secondary age students with significant additional needs

EHCP determines the placement, according to need

Adolescence Response Team

Accessed through an agreed Multi Agency Risk Assessment/Multi Agency Risk Management



Workforce Development

NOTE: this is in addition to the Early Help Workforce Development Offer

Restorative Justice Approaches

For the behaviour lead from every school



Solution Focus

For pastoral staff from every school

Trauma Informed Schools

For 24 practitioners from schools, Greys and Early Help



Transactional Analysis

101 Certificate for 12 practitioners



Establish geographical clusters of schools, which can be used to share effective practice, develop partnership working and for future EISG cluster bids

For Primary, Secondary and Special schools

Provision for Excluded Pupils

42 places for those excluded in secondary, to include:

- Short term placements for excluded pupils in year 7, 8 and 9 providing target work and education provision with a clear plan for each pupil to reintegrate as soon as possible through the Fair Access Panel
Accessed through the Inclusion Offer
- Longer term placements for those excluded in Year 10 and 11 where inclusion back into mainstream is not possible
To be agreed by Head of Early Help and Intervention

12 places for those excluded in primary

Accessed through the Inclusion Offer



Successful outcomes

1. Reducing permanent exclusions and improving the re-integration rate

Approximately 1% of children and young people who get excluded achieve the five GCSEs that the majority of employers now ask for. Alongside this, exclusions are closely associated with mental health issues and the likelihood of being incarcerated.

Permanent exclusions also need to be addressed to improve outcomes for all children and young people across Bedford Borough. Depending on when a permanent exclusion takes place, there can be a devastating impact on **life prospects**.

Re-integration should be used to reintroduce students to **mainstream education** and avoid future need for permanent exclusions. Education providers and Bedford Borough Council should focus on providing **in-reach support** so that we can keep pupils on roll once they return to school.

Between **2016/17** and **2017/18**, there was a **3.5%** decrease in Bedford Borough, suggesting a move in the right direction. This trend continued between **2018/19**, with exclusions going from **56** in the previous academic year down to **44**. This was a **reduction of 21%**.

To effectively re-integrate, we should review the situation on a **case-by-case basis** and make decisions in the interest of all children and young people. The efficiency of re-integration should not be

compromised in the interest of speed. Depending on the **age of the child**, we must consider the best course of action.

Where schools are reluctant to take excluded pupils back, we should offer **a reward system** to encourage them to. Further to this we should work with mainstream schools to provide **outreach provision**, which should help them handle challenging behaviour. This will equip education providers with the skills to help children and young people with **SEND in a mainstream setting**. Behavioural specialists will also be able to support schools by providing **specialist advice**.



Although, the local authority is responsible for setting the direction of the agenda, we must work alongside schools to support them **delivering the BLISS**.

Our approach will rely on **supporting schools** and **alternate provisions** to deal with challenging behaviour more efficiently. Alongside this we will dedicate time and resources to **helping schools undertake effective assessments of SEND**.

Using early interventions to identify specialist requirements will be fundamental to guaranteeing every child in Bedford Borough **access to their educational entitlement**.

We will consider the volume of fixed term exclusions in relation to their impact on especially vulnerable cohorts, in particular:

- i. gender;
- ii. ethnicity;
- iii. children with SEND (including children with SEND but without an EHC Plan);
- iv. pupil premium;
- v. geographical areas of the county.

To encourage schools to avoid excluding pupils permanently, Bedford Borough will commit resources to schools who are supportive of the BLISS. **This will include rewarding schools which do not exclude and who accept excluded pupils from other education facilities.**



2. Reducing fixed-term exclusions

There is a clear correlation between the number of days spent in school and academic achievement for students. Therefore, the council and schools must commit to keeping all children and young people in education and reducing fixed-term exclusions in order to improve life chances.

In the **2018/19** academic year there was **1120 fixed-term exclusions**, which equated to **2181 days of school missed** for pupils in Bedford Borough. BLISS focuses on reducing the number of **days at school** missed because of fixed-term exclusions by using alternative and specialist provisions.

Like permanent exclusions, fixed term exclusions will be considered in relation to their impact on especially vulnerable cohorts, in particular:

- i. gender;
- ii. ethnicity;
- iii. children with SEND (including children with SEND but without an EHCP);
- iv. pupil premium;
- v. geographical areas of the county.

Included in reducing fixed term exclusions is the need to identify **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** earlier. Education in Bedford Borough needs to become more inclusive to ensure support is accessible.

3. Increase the number of GCSEs achieved from those who are supported to remain on roll at home school

Elective home education can be an effective tool for promoting specific ideological or religious views through a personalised academic agenda. Alongside this, home schooling is sometimes used as an alternative to exclusion, often for parents who feel disaffected with the school. Sometimes it is in the best interest of the child or young person to be home educated, though often removal from a school environment can often have a detrimental impact on outcomes.

Parents or carers who choose to home educate are responsible for ensuring that a child is properly educated. **Elective home education must be suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of the child**, alongside being suited to any special educational needs they may have.

Bedford Borough will continue to **support children, young people and families** who choose to home educate, regardless of whether they are initially willing to engage with us. It is essential that we have support available to people in this group to continue the development of the child.

Home educators are under no obligation to report their schooling experience to the state or local authority. As a result, we will need to quantify the number of children who were off-rolled by their organisation in the previous year. We would then need to review to find out how many of the pupils attended another school and how many of them did not turn up elsewhere.



4. Reduction in the number of children whose parents choose to home educate as an alternative to their child facing exclusion from school

Elective Home Education is sometimes used by parents and carers as an alternative to exclusion. Although parents and carers may do this in the interest of the child, it can still have detrimental effects on their outcomes. Every child has a right to education, so it is important that disagreements between parents/carers, schools and local authorities do not serve as a blocker to this. Every decision made should take a child-centred approach and be made in their interest.

Bedford Borough Council should play a **facilitation role** between schools and families, to ensure that the child remains the priority. Where possible, **exclusion should be a last resort**. When exclusion cannot be avoided, we should work to find alternatives to home education, by ensuring we work with **children, young people and families**. We should always prioritise coproduction and ensure we are upholding our **commitment to service users**: if it's about you, we don't want to do it without you.



5. Increase the number of GCSEs achieved by those who are attending an alternative provision

Alternate provisions are a vital part of providing children and young people with their educational entitlement. If pupils need support, or alternate forms of education, alternative provision can be used as a different way of engaging young people in academia. Alternative provisions such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) can provide behaviour specialists and different approaches that may be better suited to an individual.

To improve attainment in PRUs, Bedford Borough Council have commissioned **more places at Greys Education Centre primary school** to help provide children and young people with the best opportunities at the start of their education.

We will measure success by reviewing the level of GCSEs from the **2018/19** academic year with **2019/20**. Although this will be a good measure of progress for children and young people attending alternative provision, it is important to remember there are **further qualitative measures to consider**.



6. Reduce the number of pupils placed in out-of-borough placements

Evidence tells us that out-of-borough placements do not secure the best outcomes for children and young people. They can be both costly and time consuming, meaning pupils can spend a large proportion of their day travelling between sites, rather than receiving the education they should be able to access.

By commissioning more **support and expertise** in schools to help support with SEND, we will support more pupils in the borough, therefore reducing the need to send them **out-of-borough**. With the actions taken from the previous **peer review**, we should have enough places to **provide the necessary provisions** to support children and young people.

It is important to note that some children and young people will need to **continue to be placed out-of-borough**. The reason for this is that due to their circumstances, they may need to live or go to school in another area. Some **Looked After Children and Pupils with SEND** have to be placed externally for their own protection – we will not aim to keep these children and young people in the borough.



7. Effectively capturing the voice of the child

'If it's about you, we don't want to do it without you' is a core principle of the Children's Services strategy. Therefore, it is imperative that the voice of the children and young people effected by the strategy have their feedback recorded and acted on.

To ensure we are achieving this, we aim to **capture the feedback of 20% of children and young people** effected by the strategy. We will make sure that we are taking actions from the **feedback we receive**, and if we are struggling with implementation, we should have further discussions with children and young people on how we can **coproduce the service** with them.

Alongside this, we will hold **focus groups** with children and young people touched by the strategy, focused on ensuring **BLISS reaches them in a meaningful way**.



In the year following the release of the strategy, we will hold **three focus sessions**. The first will look at **what we are doing and what children and young people think we could do** to tailor it to them better. The second will be to **review the progress** we have made so far and where we can make improvements on our performance.

Finally, we will look at the progress we have made throughout the year and how this has **positively, or negatively, effected children and young people**. This session will look at how we will proceed over the next year.

Further to children and young people, we will listen to and communicate with their **support networks** to ensure we are securing the best outcomes for all involved in the process. This will include **education staff, parents/carers and community partners**.





THE BEHAVIOUR, LEARNING AND INCLUSION SUPPORT STRATEGY

2019-2022