



Department
for Education

School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

| | |
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| AP | Alternative Provision |
| BESD | Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties |
| CAF | Common Assessment Framework |
| CBT | Cognitive Behavioural Therapy |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| EHCP | Education, Health and Care Plan |
| FGC | Family Group Conference |
| FSM | Free school meals |
| FTT | First-tier Tribunal |
| GRT | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller |
| IAP | Independent Appeal Panel |
| IRP | Independent Review Panel |
| LAC | Looked after child/children |
| NEET | Not in education, employment or training |
| NICE | National Institute for Health and Care Excellence |
| NQT | Newly Qualified Teacher |
| PASS | Pupil Attitude to School and Self (scale) |
| PGCE | Postgraduate Certificate in Education |
| PRU | Pupil Referral Unit |
| RCT | Randomised Control Trial |
| SEAL | Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning |
| SEMH | Social, emotional and mental health needs |
| SEND | Special educational needs and disabilities |

Executive summary

In autumn 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned this independent literature review on behalf of Edward Timpson CBE, to support understanding of the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain pupils from English schools, for his independent review of school exclusions. These include, among others, Black Caribbean boys, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children,¹ children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) and those eligible for free school meals (FSM). The DfE has also since undertaken new logistic regression analysis, which will be published alongside this literature review.² The analysis also shows that, when controlling for other factors about their background, children from some groups (such as Black Caribbean children) are more likely to be excluded than White British children, while children from some other groups (such as Indian children) are less likely to be excluded.

This literature review supports the broader review being led by Edward Timpson CBE. Focused on evidence relating to England, we set out to find sources to help explain the continued disproportionate exclusion of these groups of children; the type and effectiveness of any preventative approaches used to avoid exclusion; and pupils' engagement in and experiences of the exclusions review process.

Over 200 sources were found to fit the search criteria and time period (2009 to 2018).³ These were sifted and prioritised according to how well they matched the research questions and the robustness of the methodology.⁴ 115 references are included here. In the six weeks allowed for this literature review, it was not possible to conduct a detailed, systematic review; to maximise transparency, the methods and any perceived drawbacks of the research are described throughout this report. Gaps in the evidence are also highlighted throughout. This includes the fact that the majority of studies that address the questions posed by this literature review are small-scale and of a qualitative nature. It is therefore difficult to draw firm conclusions. Nonetheless, they can provide useful indications.

The literature around potential driving factors and society-level drivers

A limited number of sources focused solely on any one sub-group of children.

¹ For brevity, the term 'child' or 'children' is used to cover all ages up to 18, unless a study is specifically focused on young people aged 13 and over.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/school-exclusions-review-call-for-evidence>

³ This time period was chosen to create a manageable body of literature in the time available.

⁴ Please note that while the literature search covered 2009 to 2018, this report does also include earlier secondary material identified in these sources.

The literature consistently noted that certain vulnerabilities, individually or combined, increased a child's risk of exclusion. These included: SEND, including social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, poverty, low attainment, being from certain minority ethnic groups, being bullied, poor relationships with teachers, life trauma and challenges in their home lives.

The potential drivers of exclusion identified in this literature could be numerous and layered, which could have a multiplier effect.

Schools do not operate in a vacuum. As microcosms of society, some authors suggested that the current patterns of exclusions were perpetuating society-wide stereotyping and discrimination, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender and disadvantage.

Many of the studies reviewed found that social class shaped the parent-school relationship, with poorer or working class parents perceived as being the least effective in challenging decisions. The school-family dynamic was sometimes described as problematic and in general parent-school communication reduced after primary school. In some small-scale studies, parents felt unfairly blamed for their child's behaviour but unable to discuss matters with schools or to advocate effectively on behalf of their child. Research also found the opposite: that parents blamed schools.

A number of small-scale, qualitative studies found that Black pupils⁵ and GRT children experienced differential treatment by teachers in the form of low educational expectations and a variance in reactions to behavioural transgressions.

Less evidence was found around gender and in particular why the permanent exclusion rate in 2016/17 for boys (0.15%) was over three times higher than that for girls (0.04%) and the fixed period exclusion rate was almost three times higher (6.91% compared with 2.53%) (DfE, 2018a). There was some evidence around the behaviour of young men being an outward demonstration of their confusion around what it meant to be 'masculine'. A small body of research looked at gendered norms and how some young people's struggles with their gender identity and sexuality might be expressed through challenging behaviour. Gendered norms were also reported to affect how teachers interacted with girls, when their behaviour was seen as outside acceptable norms for femininity, such as being too 'loud'.

⁵ It should be noted that the exclusion rates (both permanent and fixed period) among Black children and other ethnic groups vary considerably: boys from Black Caribbean backgrounds experience a higher rate of exclusion than White pupils, while Black African pupils (male and female), have lower exclusion rates than White pupils. The literature does not always distinguish between groups of Black children.

Research findings around school-based causes of exclusion

The extent to which pupils felt they 'belonged' in a school was identified as critical in some of the research. This included feeling valued as an individual, having good relationships with peers and teachers, and feeling that their needs were understood and addressed.

The higher exclusion rates of pupils with SEMH and additional needs appeared from the research in this literature review to reflect challenges faced by schools and staff in identifying and meeting these needs. This was said to be aggravated by reduced school funding and limited scope to buy in specialist support.

Teacher training and guidance were discussed in some studies as a school factor. In 2017, just over half (53%) of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who responded to an annual DfE survey felt that their training had prepared them well for teaching pupils across all ethnic backgrounds, and pupils with SEND (Ginnis *et al.*, 2017). Clearly, however, there is room for improvement.

Schools have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as disability or race. 40% of 1,607 teachers who responded to an NFER survey question reported that they weren't sure if their school had informed staff about the requirements of the Equality Act 2012; a further 22% answered that they had not (Smith *et al.*, 2012).

Both bullying and being the victim of bullying were understood within some of the literature to be triggers for exclusion and sometimes bullying had a racist basis.

Marked differentials in exclusion rates between primary and secondary school⁶ were partly explained in the research by:

- different approaches and values across schools and head teachers
- secondary schools' more rigid rules, expectations around conformity and focus on exam results (resulting from competition across schools)
- primary schools were said to emphasise pupil wellbeing and 'belonging'
- poor transition from primary to secondary school
- pupils finding it hard to keep up academically after the transition from primary to secondary

Preventative measures covered by the research

⁶ In 2016 to 17, the rate of permanent exclusions in secondary schools was 0.20 per cent (fixed period rate 9.4 per cent), and 0.03 per cent in primary schools (1.37 per cent for fixed period exclusions). See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2016-to-2017>

Preventative measures were reported to be primarily concerned with supporting the child or young person; adopting whole-family or whole-school approaches; and/or supporting teaching staff to identify and manage behaviour.

The literature review found that interventions varied in terms of their focus, the extent to which they were primarily concerned with preventing exclusions and their use of external agencies and/or developing within-school training and support.

Much of the evidence in this area is qualitative and uses a purposive sampling approach. There was limited evidence on relative impact. However, several pointed to the key features of promising practice emerging:

- create a positive school ethos and culture to guide and support staff in understanding, identifying and managing behaviour in positive ways
- support families and children, using high-quality external provision as indicated
- focus on intervening early before problems become entrenched
- provide some pupils with ‘targeted’ support. This may include some respite from mainstream classes, and/or specialist one-to-one tuition or counselling

Studies on alternative provision (AP)

A wide array of AP has developed in response to the range of excluded pupils’ multiple and complex support needs. There is, however, limited evidence to shed light on the most effective practice. A DfE research report published after this document was finalised, ‘*Investigative research into alternative provision*’,⁷ was expected to help address this gap.

Much of the literature reviewed reflects on the role and added value of AP. In many of the studies included, pupils are positive about AP and the teachers there, and report feeling safer, more engaged and happier than in their previous experiences of mainstream education, even when their academic outcomes were low. There were, however, some research papers in which pupils reported negative aspects of their experience of AP: these included feeling isolated, not having choice around whether to attend AP, not being able to study specific subjects or courses and often low academic outcomes.

The research reviewed found that AP settings often applied a range of key principles in how they ran their provision. These included: allowing children a degree of

⁷ Please note that this literature review was concluded prior to the publication of DfE’s study (October 2018), ‘Investigative research into alternative provision’. See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748910/Investigative_research_into_alternative_provision.pdf

autonomy and choice in their learning and environment; positive and strong relationships between pupils and staff; the involvement of parents and carers; an appropriate behaviour management approach that is applied consistently; a curriculum that encompasses core skills and vocational options; and the opportunity to work in smaller environments with lower pupil-teacher ratios.

A number of recommendations were found in the literature around regulating and standardising AP teaching resources and quality, and improving the development, training and support of teaching staff.

Research findings on managed moves

As managed moves are voluntary agreements, there is no statutory template or guidance governing them. Local authorities were identified by some research to be integral to facilitating the process and ensuring collaboration and accountability across schools.

This overview of the research indicates that managed moves are more successful when: there is a clear agreement between the excluding and receiving institutions; inter-personal relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are prioritised; the process is transparent; all parties involved understand what is happening; and decision-making includes the child's views. Although the implied or explicit threat of exclusion cannot legally be used to encourage or force a managed move, the research reviewed indicates that this does occur in some cases.

Researchers also recommended that managed moves should be based on well-defined protocols; collaboration across schools and other local stakeholders; treating children as central; and focusing on pupils' strengths.

The literature around reintegration back into mainstream

Reintegration back into mainstream school following exclusion was presented as an important process, which had to be undertaken with great care, detailed planning and good communication.

Looking across the research, several factors were identified as necessary to maximise the effectiveness of reintegration: not least matching the individual child's needs, working holistically and across agencies, and developing positive relationships and collaboration across schools, staff and parents.

Phasing the reintegration to gradually increase the time spent in school was found to be helpful in some studies, along with reintegration meetings to help welcome pupils and plan support arrangements.

Timing could be critical and was reported as a difficult balance of many factors, including the pupils' age, their ability and readiness to return to a more structured environment, and how long they had been out of mainstream school. Primary school age children and those who had not spent too long in AP were most positive about returning to mainstream provision.

However, challenges included: a school's willingness to take a child back, and if not, finding an alternative school; and the stigma attached to the child and their exclusion, which could negatively affect how pupils were seen within the (new) school community.

Research around reviewing decisions to exclude

The evidence relating to the role of, access to and views on the two stages that parents can use to challenge exclusion decisions - governing board reviews and Independent Review Panels (IRPs) - was reviewed.

There was less evidence on this process than there was for other topics covered in this literature review. This may be somewhat due to IRPs being relatively new.

The literature documents highly varied experiences of the governing board review and IRP process. Parents' experiences of the process were mixed and could depend on the level of professional support they received.

Whilst some parents praised the panels for their empathy and attempt to engage with them, others felt unfairly blamed, disempowered, overwhelmed by the process, unsupported, or unable to present their child's case properly.

Some of those who had secured professional or legal representation had a better experience, but still found the procedure very stressful and intimidating, and criticised the IRPs' lack of powers.

Numerous recommendations were found within the literature, mainly focused on enhancing fairness. These included providing access to support and advocacy for all parents going through IRPs, to enable their participation to be fair and more effective.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the literature is limited but points to a multiplicity of inter-connected drivers of exclusion, not least pupils' struggles with racial stereotyping, mental health problems and other additional needs, falling behind academically, and increasingly feeling they do not 'belong' at school. At the same time, schools may struggle to identify and meet needs at the optimal time, and some teachers feel they lack

adequate experience and training. Solutions are unlikely to be singular or simple, but many pragmatic recommendations were found in the literature, along with suggestions around promising practice.

Chapter One: Introduction and background

In autumn 2018, the Department of Education (DfE) commissioned this independent literature review to support understanding of the continued disproportionate exclusion of pupils with particular characteristics in England. These groups of children, which include Black Caribbean boys, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children and those eligible for FSM, remain more likely to be excluded, despite schools' exclusion powers and framework applying equally to all state-funded schools across England (DfE, 2018a). The DfE has also since undertaken new logistic regression analysis, which will be published alongside this literature review.⁸ The analysis also shows that, when controlling for other factors about their background, children from some groups (such as Black Caribbean children) are more likely to be excluded than White British children, while children from some other groups (such as Indian children) are less likely to be excluded.

In March 2018, the Government launched an externally-led review of exclusions, led by Edward Timpson CBE. This examination of the literature supports the broader review, and focuses on the potential factors driving exclusions, how they can be prevented, AP and the available routes for redress against decisions to exclude. It covers the period 2009 to 2018 and mainly provides evidence relating to England.⁹

Under these broad topics, we searched for evidence to explain the persistent differential rates for each of the groups disproportionately affected; initiatives to prevent or reduce exclusions for higher risk groups; the use and role of AP; and families' (relatively low) use of the exclusion review system. Where available, the perspectives of children and their families on these matters have been included. The key questions that this literature review set out to address in relation to permanent and fixed period exclusions were:

- the drivers behind the exclusion rates of pupils of different ethnic groups and other disproportionately excluded groups
- what in-school approaches are taken specifically to prevent the exclusion of those overrepresented in exclusions data/to engage these pupils where they are at risk of exclusion in education?
- what evidence is there of the effectiveness of these approaches? How do these differ by school type (mainstream / special / AP) and phase (primary/secondary)?

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/school-exclusions-review-call-for-evidence>

⁹ Please note that while the literature search covered 2009 to 2018, this report also includes some earlier secondary material identified within these sources.

- what multi-agency approaches are taken to specifically prevent the exclusion of those overrepresented in exclusions data / engage these pupils in education? What evidence is there of the effectiveness of these approaches?
- what gaps in support for these groups of pupils have been identified that may be contributing to high exclusion rates?
- what are the differences in how pupils from these groups engage in the exclusion review process following exclusion, and their experience of that process?

The literature review approach and methods

The timeframe available for the literature review was six weeks. In this time, a thorough searching of published, mostly academic, research and ‘grey literature’ was undertaken. The latter mainly comprised studies published by the not-for-profit sector and unpublished PhD theses. A full methodology including search terms and sources is provided in the appendix.

Our first searches yielded the abstracts or summaries for approximately 200 studies that fitted the set criteria. These were prioritised, systematically appraised by three members of the research team and synthesised. The initial weighting and evaluation of studies was based on the degree of relevance to the topic and the research approach, methodology and sample size. This preliminary screening excluded articles and more polemic viewpoint pieces not directly emanating from research.

Full texts of these selections were retrieved, then categorised, and summarised, using a spreadsheet framework. A process of secondary searching, exclusion of irrelevant materials, refinement and checking of additional citations, then followed.¹⁰

About the sources used

Throughout this report, to aid transparency, we summarise the studies undertaken and comment on the methodology and strength of the evidence, sampling and any perceived limitations. Although we tried to prioritise large-scale studies with big samples to support generalisability, there were a limited number available. Some of the qualitative studies especially are based on relatively small samples. That said, in this context, small, well-targeted and geographically bound samples can be the most feasible and appropriate: a school-based intervention will by definition be limited geographically, demographically and numerically. Moreover, excluded children are often sub-groups within other minority groupings. Arguably, some findings based on

¹⁰ Despite being as meticulous and systematic as possible, because of the time available for the review, some valid studies may unintentionally have been omitted. This is most likely where the abstract or summary did not provide enough details to show that the inclusion criteria were met.

small samples could be seen as preliminary and indicative of the need for further research on that issue.

It is also clear from the information presented that, although this literature review set out to focus on the children who are more likely to be excluded, and to find the reasons that apply to each group, many of the issues, risk factors and preventative strategies overlap and apply to more than one group. Simultaneously, many children can be categorised in different ways and can fall under multiple risk factors, for example poverty, ethnicity, challenging backgrounds and SEND.

Chapter Two: Potential driving factors are multiple and linked to society

Overview

This literature review examined the potential drivers behind the disproportionate exclusion of certain groups of pupils.

It was initially presumed that it would be possible to gather discrete evidence around each group that is disproportionately more likely to be excluded. However, whilst numerous potential drivers were identified, it became apparent that there was a limited number of sources focused on single, specific groups of pupils. Much of the literature discusses excluded groups more generically, albeit attempting to explain what created vulnerabilities, or why for example, poverty increased risk.

Of the research focused on one specific demographic, many used small sample sizes. Often potential driving factors or vulnerabilities applied to more than one sub-group at the same time and having more than one vulnerability may increase the likelihood of exclusion.

Categorising potential driving factors

Beyond the individual child's behaviour, which is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, Strand *et al.* (2014) proposed that there were two main strands of factors that may drive exclusions: school policies and socio-cultural factors which occur outside the school. An alternative perspective is put forward by Cole (2015) who presents it as a *social issue*, linked to disadvantage, family and societal difficulties; a *political issue*, as schooling is influenced by national policies on 'standards' and the teaching of social, emotional and behavioural skills; and an *educational issue*, linked to school organisation and staff values and skills.

In this literature review, the sources on potential driving factors have been divided into three constituent strands by the literature review team, building on the work of both Strand and Cole. These strands are examined in turn below, notwithstanding how much they overlap in real life:

- potential driving factors are multiple and inter-related
- schools are microcosms of society and school exclusions mirror wider society
- school-based / educational systems, processes and cultures

As the overlap and interconnectedness may be critical in aggravating a child's risk, that aspect is explored first.

Potential driving factors are multiple, inter-related and layered

The findings of this literature review indicate that what drives exclusion is far from simple and that there may be more than one discrete factor. In other words, for the children in question, inter-related factors can be at play, which can overlap and possibly have a multiplier effect. For example, a child may have emotional or mental health problems. These may stem from additional needs, or aspects of their family life, such as bereavement or family breakdown, and/or bullying at school and racism experienced both within school and outside of school. One of these factors, for example bereavement, may be the final catalyst and the child's emotional state becomes manifest through their behaviour. In turn, this may prompt exclusion from school. In other words, the total effect could be greater than the sum of the parts.

Growing evidence that increasing numbers of children experience intersecting vulnerabilities is noted by Gill *et al.* (2017). These include SEND, poverty, unsafe family environments, mental health, low attainment, gender and being from a minority ethnic background. Alone, each puts them at high risk of exclusion. Menzies (2015) refers to groups of 'pushed out learners', including those with SEND, social deprivation and those from minority ethnic groups. In a review of government policy and guidance documents from 1997 to 2015, as well as some pertinent research from 1997 to 2015, Cole (2015) posits that school exclusion can be the result of mental health, educational, social and political issues combined. He found that pupils excluded or at risk of exclusion faced numerous life challenges, notably poverty, family breakdown, housing shortages, crime and pupils own social emotional and mental health problems.

Paget *et al.* (2018) analysed the Avon longitudinal birth cohort study on children (n=12,727) to help understand the predictors of school exclusion. They focused on the sub-groups of children who had been excluded at the age of eight (both fixed period and permanent) (n=53); or at 16 (n=390 fixed period only), to find contributing factors. The researchers found statistically significant factors associated with exclusion at both time points included male gender, lower socio-economic status, maternal psychopathology, mental health and behavioural difficulties, psychiatric disorder, social communication difficulties, language difficulties, antisocial activities, bullying/being bullied, lower parental engagement with education, low school engagement, poor relationships with teachers, low educational attainment, and SEN.

In a small-scale (n=26), qualitative study on the exclusion process, Kulz (2015) concluded that there is inadequate guidance for schools, review panels or others on how to deal with these complex combinations of vulnerabilities. By the time the decision to permanently exclude is taken, it may be too late to consider how

vulnerabilities such as additional needs, ethnicity, class or gender may have led to this point.

Schools are microcosms of society

Carlile (2009b), borrowing from Bourdieu and other educational philosophers and theorists, describes schools as '*institutions which reproduce the social order*'. In other words, they do not operate in a vacuum and are not distinct or immune from social norms and beliefs in the wider society in which they are situated. Based on this argument, it follows, as posited by Gazeley *et al.* (2015), that factors associated with an increased risk of exclusion such as gender, social class and ethnicity can be to some extent intersecting. For instance, as detailed more fully in Chapter Seven, Kulz (2015) interviewed 26 parents, local authority exclusions officers and head teachers involved in IRPs. Here, some head teachers and exclusion officers felt that race, and/or class discrimination, combined with middle class privilege, played a role in current disproportionate exclusion rates. The majority of parents felt that race, class, gender or SEN played a role in their child's exclusion.

Class, poverty and economic deprivation

The literature review identified a number of studies which provide insights into how social class may influence school exclusion rates, although it must be noted that it is not always made clear in the literature what definitions of 'class' were used and if each group were seen as homogenous. Similarly, the distinctions between being 'working class', 'economically deprived', or 'poor' were also sometimes blurred, although 'poverty' or 'deprivation' were often linked to the entitlement to FSM.

In Kulz's study (2015), a slight majority of head teachers and exclusion officers felt class discrimination or middle class privilege were at least partly to blame for disproportionate exclusion numbers. This was echoed by parents. In the case of the head teachers and exclusion officers, this was most commonly talked about in terms of middle class parents having an advantage in the education marketplace due to their accent, assumed knowledge of the education system and the ability to seek redress. Gazeley (2012) conducted a small-scale qualitative study in one relatively affluent local authority area in England, where there were pockets of high social deprivation. Pupils were predominantly from White ethnic backgrounds. Data was collected primarily from 48 in-depth interviews conducted with 31 respondents, over the course of one academic year. Respondents included professionals working in a wide variety of roles and contexts, and four mothers with longer and complex histories of involvement in the school exclusion processes. The author concluded that social class appeared to shape the parental-school relationship and interactions, including during the exclusions process, suggesting that working class parents are less articulate or powerful than middle class parents vis-a-vis schools. The parents described feeling ineffectual, not respected and that they were blamed for everything

to do with their child; furthermore, they rarely received any appreciation from the school for their input.

Perceptions around the parental interest or involvement with their child also conflicted: these parents reported substantial involvement and contact with the school, despite this being very demanding both financially and emotionally; but the professionals said there was little or no parental involvement. The schools attributed much of the pupils' issues to maternal ill-health, unstable living arrangements and substance misuse. The parents interviewed said the school only contacted them when there was negative news. Overall, it was felt that working class parents lacked the necessary skills to negotiate with professionals and one of Gazeley's conclusions was that parents need good support if they are to interact effectively with schools.

In a later study by Gazeley (2015), schools located in less advantaged contexts were identified by Initial Teacher Education tutors and local authority stakeholders as often having 'a strong ethos of inclusion' and practicing better policies and practice to minimise exclusions, including a high level of attention to individual circumstances and needs. One local authority stakeholder considered that schools located in 'leafier suburbs' sometimes provided fewer alternatives to exclusion, putting young people in these schools at a disadvantage. Strand & Fletcher's large-scale longitudinal quantitative study (2014) found that schools that teach more children from poorer families were less likely to exclude overall, after controlling for other risk factors, but recommend further exploration of the variation in rates of exclusion at school level.

The Children's Society (2018a) reported that children living in poverty often find aspects of school life problematic because of their limited income. Conforming and complying with the rules and expectations set out in school can be challenging, especially when these carry a financial cost, such as uniform and equipment. Not being able to afford to participate can in turn increase the likelihood of being bullied.

Race and ethnicity

The topic of racism featured in some of the literature reviewed, particularly as an explanation for the enduring nature of the disproportionate exclusion rate of Black Caribbean pupils (DfE, 2018a), when overlapping factors such as poverty or additional needs are not controlled for. In particular, racism was considered to influence schools' views on (un)acceptable behaviour and expectations of different sets of pupils. Some of the literature focused on pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds in general; some on Black pupils, both male and female; and a small amount on GRT children.

Drawing on secondary sources, Hamilton (2018) constructed a theory-based argument that schools are '*White spaces*' pursuing a White, ethnocentric, curriculum

in the classroom and school practices. Carlile (2009b) conducted an ethnographic study in one local authority area over three years. She found examples of teachers using negative and charged language to describe pupils, often inaccurately or not based on fact, and that unchecked language resulted in Black and other minority ethnic pupils becoming labelled as problematic.

Black children

It should be noted that the exclusion rates (both permanent and fixed period) among Black children and other ethnic groups vary considerably: boys from Black Caribbean backgrounds experience a higher rate of exclusion than White pupils; but Black African pupils, both male and female, have lower exclusion rates than White pupils. The literature does not always distinguish between groups of Black pupils.

Wright (2010) conducted an ethnographic study across five schools between 1998 and 2000 and interviewed a total of 62 second and third generation Black children and 52 members of the teaching staff. Interviews were also conducted with parents of Black children. The research described incidences where (White middle class) teachers appeared to stereotype Black pupils and view them negatively, which affected practice and set off a chain-reaction. For example, some teachers interviewed did not view these pupils as *'ideal learners'* and as a result tended to exclude them from general learning and classroom activities. In reaction, pupils said they felt under-valued and disrespected, and therefore appeared to act out and seek attention, often resulting in counter-productive behavioural issues. The authors concluded that teacher interactions and views were derived from a worldview of predominantly White, middle class adults being tasked to 'educate' Black, working class children.

An inquiry by the Office of the Children Commissioner (2012) also found that community groups in different locations perceived that certain teachers and school leaders treated certain pupils – Black boys in particular – differently, and were more ready to exclude them. Interestingly, their analysis in 2012 showed that children from the higher risk minority ethnic groups were more likely to be excluded when they were a small minority within a school, rather than if there were a larger number of children from the same ethnic group. The Office of the Children Commissioner expressed concern:

"...that these differentials have been known about and recorded for many years without any specific steps having been taken to address them, either in policy or practice" (p22)

Stamou *et al.* (2014) also discussed institutional racism in schools which, albeit unintentional, can be manifested through discriminatory practices in the classroom, including low expectations and differential treatment of Black pupils, mainly Black

boys and those from Caribbean backgrounds. Rudoie (2014) interviewed staff at an 'alternative education setting'¹¹ in London in 2007/8 and interviewed 16 of the young women who attended it following exclusion from school. All 16 were pregnant or mothers. 13 of the young women were of Black Caribbean or mixed Black Caribbean/White heritage. The Black young women felt that their exclusions were underpinned by racism from their schools and teachers, including differences and inconsistencies in the weighting given to behaviour, a disproportionate reaction to being 'loud' or 'speaking their mind', and/or being categorised as a 'bad' student, rather than a 'learner'.

The evidence review and case studies undertaken by Gill *et al.* for the Institute of Public Policy Research (2017), suggested that unconscious racist stereotyping in teachers' perceptions, especially of Black pupils' behaviour and personalities, alongside inconsistencies in their treatment of challenging behaviour, may help explain the higher exclusion rates of Black pupils. One study¹² cited was primary research in the US testing the reaction of 50 teachers to vignettes of behavioural breaches by fictional students. The more likely the teachers perceived the (pretend) student to be Black, the more they tended to view the incident as serious, part of a pattern of problematic behaviour and likely to lead to future suspension from school.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children

Official statistics show that Gypsy/Roma children are over three times more likely to be excluded from school than the school population as a whole, and Traveller of Irish heritage children are also over four times more likely to be excluded than the school population as a whole (DfE, 2018a). The literature does not always differentiate between the groups, or does not always make explicitly clear if it is referring to all three groups or just one.

A UK-wide literature review by Wilkin *et al.* (2009) posits that exclusion in school is similar to overall levels of social exclusion for these groups. They also make the point that excluding GRT pupils can actually fuel further exclusion, as one of the catalysts underpinning their exclusion is their relatively low school attendance. Low attendance can also affect pupils' ability to keep up with schoolwork and makes them more likely to fall behind academically. These points are echoed by the Children's Commissioner (2012). In other words, punishing GRT pupils by school exclusion directly increased their risk of further exclusion, due to poor attendance and falling behind academically. The researchers make the point that failing academically can aggravate a tendency for this group to be subsequently excluded at a society level, which is already a risk (Wilkin *et al.*, 2009).

¹¹ No further details were provided.

¹² Okonofua, J., and Eberhardt, J., 2015, reported in *Psychological Science*, 26(5):617-624

In their survey of 711 children aged 7 to 12 in Northern Ireland, Biggart *et al.* (2013) explored a range of aspects of experiences of belonging in school and school exclusion among three main minority ethnic groups: Irish Traveller, Chinese/Asian and European Migrant children. The findings indicated that all three groups experience lower levels of belonging and higher levels of exclusion compared to their White, settled Northern Irish peers. The experience of Irish Traveller children was however, the most negative.

In 2012, the Children's Commissioner requested 40 local authorities provide a breakdown of appeals against permanent exclusion by the characteristics of the excluded child, and the reason for exclusion. Authorities were chosen to provide a representative sample of English regions and 28 responses were received. The study found that amongst these authorities, GRT pupils were 100% successful at Independent Appeal Panel (IAP) hearings on their exclusions. This is presumably because, under the previous arrangements, the IAP could direct a school to reinstate a pupil (see details of reviews and appeals in Chapter Seven). The Commissioner's report also makes the point that, given the IAPs found that none of the exclusions had a lawful basis, it could be argued that schools are too quick to resort to exclusion for this group as a whole. The most common reasons for exclusion of GRT pupils were reported to be physical aggression towards peers and/or staff, verbal abuse towards staff and persistent disruption (Wilkin *et al.*, 2009; Children's Commissioner, 2012).

Ureche and Franks (2007) found that 63% (n= 97) of GRT children who participated in their UK-based survey had suffered racial abuse, which ranged from generalised abuse to physical attacks; over two thirds had experienced bullying or physical assault; and fear of bullying undermined school attendance.

The Children's Society (2018a) published their evidence submitted to the Timpson review on school exclusions, which was based on their casework with GRT families. They reported that GRT pupils '*often experience racism, discrimination and isolation from peers and school staff*' and feel that sometimes schools lack cultural sensitivity, such as in relation to the reasons for missing school. Roma parents interviewed by Ofsted inspectors (2014) '*said they were reluctant to state their child's ethnicity for fear of discrimination*' (p5).

Bhopal (2011) conducted an evidence review of what constituted 'good practice' in relation to schools and GRT pupils, and conducted fieldwork within two case study schools. Both schools had relatively high numbers of GRT pupils and had been identified as showing good practice with these communities. This research found that even when the school as a whole had positive, inclusive, 'good practice', this in itself did not change staff beliefs and views. In these case examples, a minority of teachers continued to display negative and stereotypical attitudes, and at times open

hostility towards GRT pupils, and had little empathy or interest in their cultural differences. These tended to be less experienced teachers. Another key finding was that policies aimed to improve inclusion may mark pupils out more and thus inadvertently accentuate the 'otherness' of a minority group.

Wilkin *et al.* (2010) found that schools attributed high exclusion rates and relatively low attainment outcomes for GRT pupils to a tension between schools' aspirations, families' and community attitudes, and limited experience of formal education. However, this is contradicted by Lane *et al.* (2014) who conducted primary research for the Joseph Rowntree Trust. This study was co-produced by researchers at the Anglia Ruskin University and members of the GRT community. Methods included qualitative interviews and focus groups with 127 members of GRT communities across the UK, and interviews with professionals and agencies working with the three communities, politicians, service providers and others. This research found that GRT families value education and feel it is important for their children. Ofsted (2014) found that school staff and local authorities believed that newly arrived Roma children with little prior experience of formal education found it initially difficult to adhere to behavioural norms and routines set by schools, and schools found meeting language and other needs a challenge. However, those who were integrated and had good attendance made good progress. Chapter Three covers more research on teachers and schools' approaches to ethnic diversity.

Sexism, gendered roles and sexual identity

DfE statistics showed that the permanent exclusion rate for boys (0.15 per cent) was over three times higher than that for girls (0.04 per cent) and the fixed period exclusion rate was almost three times higher (6.91 compared with 2.53 per cent) in 2016/2017 (DfE, 2018).

Gill *et al.* (2017) points to the theory that this reflects that young men externalise mental distress through their behaviour (which then gets them into trouble), whereas young women tend to internalise and cause damage to themselves. How gender stereotyping or discrimination was experienced in school life emerged as different for young men and young women. But for both this centred on schools' and teachers' expectations of, and reactions to, behaviour.

A survey of a representative sample of 1600 teachers by Smith *et al.* (2012), for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the Children's Commissioner, found that teachers perceived the three underlying causes for boys' greater levels of exclusion were, in order: that boys' behaviour was worse and more aggressive than girls; they were less interested in the curriculum or lesson; and challenging home circumstances or lack of parental support.

Rudoe (2014) commented that this builds on the gendered norms within the education system as a whole, which sees middle class girls as the hardest working and ideal pupils; a channelling of girls into traditional, more 'feminine' subjects; and varied responses to pregnancy. The 16 excluded young women the author interviewed felt that schools applied different gendered norms to behaviour exhibited by girls, to the extent that they had been judged more harshly than if they had been boys using the same behaviour. Many were pregnant or were mothers at the time of this study and it was reported that the school's inability to cater for pregnant young women or mothers had been a factor in their exclusion.

According to Carlile (2009), reproducing the social order includes perpetrating gendered norms. Pupils may be trying to figure out their sexual identities or sexuality as well as other challenges, and this might be externalised and manifested through their behaviour. The researcher concluded that the focus on the individual prevents schools from examining how they might presume heterosexuality to be the norm across all children.

Carlile's (2009b) two-year ethnographic study in one local authority also found that girls were excluded for aggressive behaviour that was considered inappropriate for young women, with indications that a lower threshold for unacceptable behaviour was applied to girls in comparison to boys. This research also found that teachers were not always accurate in their descriptions of pupils and sometimes used negative, charged language, which resulted in pupils being labelled.

Less evidence was found to explain the disproportionate exclusion of Black Caribbean boys (DfE, 2018a). While just being boys makes them more likely to be excluded than girls, it does not explain why their risk of exclusion is so much higher than for White boys. The research that discusses this focuses on the challenges facing young men, of any ethnicity, their confusion over 'masculinity', and trying to work out their own 'male' identity. For example, Briggs (2010) discusses a complex combination of challenges for the 13 young Black men aged 15 to 16 in his study, who were attending an exclusion unit. The boys described how they had previously liked school, but once problems started in Year 8, the links with school weakened and the attraction of peers and life outside school proved more attractive. In a small-scale study by Craggs *et al.* (2017), the male participants believed that being 'masculine' relied on conforming to what they thought was the expectation for their gender: acting big and tough.

Excluded children's challenging backgrounds

Part of the brief of this literature review was to examine school exclusions for 'Children in Need'. Little specifically was found on this group, per se. This is not surprising for two main reasons: this category overlaps with pupils who have other

defined needs, such as SEN, as well as children taken into the care system. The second reason derives from the fact that the designation 'Child in Need' is somewhat arbitrary, relies on meeting a threshold set by local children's services, which varies over time and place. However, many sources commented on potential driving factors emanating from children's challenging home lives and circumstances, which are presented below.

Many children face harsh challenges in their home lives, which may be multiple and aggravate each other. These include parental ill health and disability, unemployment, poverty and poor housing. Evans *et al.* (2009) conducted a literature review and also interviewed (n=75) and surveyed (n=37) young people aged 13 to 20 who at the time were not in education, employment or training (NEET). They recounted how wider life circumstances had reinforced difficulties in school, including early parenthood, frequent house moves, challenging family circumstances and living in a community with long-term unemployment and a poor infrastructure. In their review of qualitative research with excluded children, Apland *et al.* (2017) noted that all the children discussed challenges in their home lives, which they sometimes linked to their behaviour at school. These encompassed bereavements, violence, abuse and living with family members with mental health issues. Nicholson *et al.* (2018) interviewed staff and 35 pupils, aged 14-16, attending an AP free school. All the young people had been permanently excluded for a range of issues including poor attendance, fighting with peers, bullying, pregnancy and anxiety. Staff described all their family backgrounds as 'challenging' and included homelessness, parental substance addiction and abuse, gang culture and violence.

Some additional factors were noted for certain groups. For example, in relation to looked after children, a PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011) study found that within the Northern Irish context, disruptive behaviour was commonly linked to previous trauma (including those triggering being taken into care), as well as multiple moves, placement instability and successive carers' varying interest in education.

The additional pressures faced by children who experience the imprisonment of a parent or close relative are described by Morgan *et al.* (2013). These include poor attendance, lower attainment and social and emotional difficulties.

Levinson (2016) examined the experiences of excluded children from military families. Frequent moves, because of their parents' work, had played a part in their exclusion, for example by impairing the scope to build peer friendships and positive relationships with teachers.

Chain reaction

Disruptive or challenging behaviour is a common trigger for exclusion, but a number of researchers have linked such behaviour to underlying tensions, including those mentioned above. For example, in Evans (2009) the 75 young people aged 13 to 20 who participated in individual interviews and focus groups identified a number of factors, including poor relationships with teachers, SEMH, anger, boredom, bullying and an escalating cycle of challenging behaviour, truancy and, eventually, exclusion. Briggs (2010) described how a sequence of actions and reactions could lead from disengagement from, and aggression within, the school to exclusion. Wilkins (2009) noted that children and young people from GRT backgrounds tended to have relatively poor attendance and high rates of exclusion, sometimes because of aggression, which included reacting to bullying. In turn, both low attendance and exclusion contributed to lower academic outcomes. PricewaterhouseCoopers (2011) identified disruptive behaviour as the main reason the looked after children in their study were excluded. A large-scale study by Obsuth *et al.* (2017) found that positive relationships with teachers had a major impact on pupils' behaviour. However, this study was not primarily examining the link with exclusions.

Chapter summary – multiple and linked driving factors

Although this literature review sought the reasons behind disproportionate exclusions of specific populations, a limited number of sources focused solely on any one sub-group.

Exclusion can be the result of multiple, interrelated and layered vulnerabilities, which when present can have a multiplier effect.

Vulnerabilities identified included *inter alia* additional needs, SEN/SEMH needs, poverty, low attainment, being from certain minority ethnic groups, being bullied, poor relationships with teachers, previous life trauma and challenges in their home lives, including poor housing, abuse and parental illness.

One source suggested that the available guidance was inadequate in helping schools to prevent exclusions.

Several studies in this literature review emphasise that schools do not operate in a vacuum. As microcosms of society, the current patterns of exclusions were presented as perpetuating society-wide stereotyping and discrimination, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender and disadvantage. Research found that social class can shape parent - school relationships in a variety of ways. For example, middle class parents were seen as more effective in challenging decisions and advocating on behalf of their child.

Numerous studies found that racism particularly affected Black pupils and GRT children, in the form of differential treatment, stemming from (unintentional) low educational expectations, a variance in reactions to behavioural transgressions and a lack of awareness of diversity.

All of these could contribute to low school attendance and physical aggression, which in turn can trigger exclusion, leading to even lower attendance and academic underachievement.

There was less research found to explain the differentials in gender and why boys are more likely to be permanently excluded or receive a fixed period exclusion than girls, or why Black Caribbean boys in particular are disproportionately more likely to be excluded than other boys.¹³

Like other issues, there is unlikely to be one cause and gendered norms were found to play some role as well as boys' struggles with their masculine identity. Girls also suffered from gendered norms, for instance around what counted as (un)acceptable behaviour, even if the numbers involved were much lower.

¹³ Black Caribbean pupils had a permanent exclusion rate nearly three times higher (0.28%) than the school population in 2016 to 2017 (0.10%) (DfE, 2018a).

Chapter Three: Potential driving factors of exclusion linked to school-wide cultures and systems

A number of topics emerged in the literature concerning the possible wider causative factors behind exclusions from school, including:

- Pupils' sense of 'belonging' when at school.
- School policies and practice around supporting SEN and SEMH and pupils' wellbeing.
- Differentials by age, stage, settings, and pressures on schools.
- Teacher training.
- Schools' understanding and application of equality legislation.

Pupils' sense of 'belonging'

The importance of positive relationships between pupils and school staff emerged as a prominent theme, including whether or not a child felt they 'belonged' at their school. In turn, this was felt to partly explain attitudes, behaviour, engagement and attendance. Exploring the parameters of 'belonging' was beyond the scope of this literature review, but in the research found the term seems to incorporate feeling valued as an individual, having friends at school (Craggs *et al.*, 2017), getting appropriate support and having positive relationships with teachers (e.g. Tucker, 2013; Robinson, 2014)

Biggart *et al.* (2013), examining the situations of GRT children, presents 'belonging' as the polar opposite of feeling 'excluded'. A reduced sense of belonging led to pupils feeling disconnected from school and engaging and investing less in it. Sometimes the pull of other relationships, such as with peers outside of school, could then dominate. This issue overlaps with wellbeing, additional needs and SEMH issues, which are examined more closely in the next section. Obsuth *et al.* (2017b) conducted a randomised control trial (RCT) with 644 pupils aged 12 to 15 in London who were at risk of exclusion. Analysis was based on self-reports from the 644 pupils and 685 teacher reports for pupils who were nominated for the study. They found that a pupil's relationship with a teacher or other adults in the school was the strongest predictor of emotional wellbeing. The RCT was evaluating one type of intervention which saw external providers deliver communication and social skills training in both group and one-to-one sessions. The study found primarily null effect with one negative finding, suggesting that short term interventions, like the one evaluated, delivered in school by external providers may not be effective in reducing school exclusions and related behavioural problems.

The sense of 'not belonging' has been reported as often being accompanied by other factors. For example, when pupils felt they were being racially stereotyped and treated unfairly, this made them feel disrespected and isolated and aggravated their

sense of not belonging in the classroom (Wright, 2010; Carlile, 2009b; Gill *et al.*, 2017).

Robinson's (2014) review of UK empirical studies found that the formation of positive relationships amongst and between adults and pupils, together with the absence of bullying, were significant contributory factors in primary pupils' enjoyment of school. Where such relationships dominated, pupils considered that this created a positive atmosphere and contributed to pupils feeling a sense of security within school.

Tucker (2013) conducted qualitative interviews with school managers (n=3), behaviour co-ordinators (n=8) and 49 Year Nine pupils in Birmingham. Half the pupils had been excluded, temporarily or permanently, and the others were at risk of exclusion. The author argues that 'the provision of well-resourced, high-quality pastoral care has the potential to *'turn some young people around'* and save them from *'exclusion and all the negative experiences that inevitably follow'*.

A literature review of approaches to improving attendance of looked after children in Northern Ireland found that they placed a high value on the relationship with teachers and on getting support, praise, reward and encouragement from them (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011).

Jalali and Morgan (2018) conducted qualitative interviews with 13 secondary and primary school children attending three different Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The secondary school pupils were markedly more reluctant to return to school than the primary school pupils and commented on the size of secondary schools, challenges around coping unsupported, difficulties connecting to the school or peers and being overwhelmed. In contrast, both age groups said they felt they 'belonged' at the PRU, and that it felt more like a family. All had SEMH needs and some felt their behaviour was down to being disliked by their peers, feeling unsupported by teachers or unfairly blamed. Some of the pupils who were interviewed reported that their punishment confused them, felt unfair or aggravated their sense of disconnection from the school.

Briggs (2010) conducted an ethnographic study with 20 young people in one south London borough. All the young people were being educated off-site, meaning they had not been officially excluded but were not attending their usual, mainstream setting. The young people described a sequence of actions and reactions, which resulted in their disengagement. Some said they had liked school up to Year 8 and many had performed well in secondary school up until then. However from around Year 8, they started to get into trouble, citing examples such as talking in class, 'back-chat', uniform misdemeanours, disrupting other pupils and 'aggressive' or 'intimidating' behaviours. They also reported that they did not feel respected, did not understand what was expected of them or that pupil-staff relationships had

deteriorated. They had started to get detentions, and often felt these were unfair, but the young people kept their parents unaware of the extent of the problems that were developing. Some had started missing school due to their social lives leading to increasingly late nights, which meant they had fallen behind academically and found it increasingly hard to catch up. This ethnographic study reports that the young people's social lives out of school, especially spending time with boys who were not attending school and involvement in 'urban street culture' provided 'sanctuary' and a sense of 'belonging' to a greater extent than school did. The author suggests that school policy needs to consider how to accommodate rather than seek to eradicate 'street culture' to avoid further social exclusion.

Some of the literature discussed a tendency to 'pathologise' the child or young person, and possibly the family (e.g. Carlile, 2011). In other words, the child and their parents/carers were blamed for not fitting into the school's systems and processes. Apland *et al.* (2017) reviewed 13 pieces of qualitative research which had collected the views and experiences of children who had been excluded, over the period 2007 – 2017. Some of the research reported that children described being labelled as 'bad' or 'naughty' although they felt they were quite capable, and that these labels often stuck for the pupil's entire time at that school. Although some children understood how their behaviour had led to an exclusion, others felt they were victimised and treated unfairly by their teachers.

In Levinson's (2016) study at one PRU in Devon with staff and pupils who had been excluded from their mainstream setting, the children reported multiple school moves. Changing schools had negatively impacted on their ability to form friendships with peers, but they also felt trapped in a bad reputation that affected their relationships with teachers. Once branded as 'troublemakers', they felt the label stuck and their school lives went downhill, although they perceived others getting less punishment for greater breaches (Levinson, 2016).

A small body of literature looks at the comparisons in children's sense of belonging when in primary or secondary school or AP. Some features of creating a better sense of belonging are covered below.

School support for pupils with SEND

Children with additional educational needs and/or disabilities

Official data (DfE, 2018a) and the literature emphasise the high and disproportionate exclusion of children who have SEND, whether or not they have less complex needs that are identified and met by schools ('SEN Support') or a statutory Education,

Health and Care plan (EHCP).¹⁴ This report uses the terms ‘SEND’ or ‘additional needs’ as umbrella terms to describe pupils who face challenges arising from learning difficulties such as dyslexia or dyspraxia; from learning, sensory or physical disabilities; and / or from SEMH needs.¹⁵

Official statistics show that children with SEN represent 14% of the state-funded school population (DfE, 2018b) but account for almost half of permanent exclusions (DfE, 2018a). The same data show that pupils with SEN support are almost six times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than pupils with no SEN and pupils with any type of SEN are around five times more likely to receive a fixed period exclusion.

Exclusion rates vary by type of need. The official statistics show that pupils with SEMH have the highest rate of exclusions and that pupils with Specific and Moderate Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorders also have high rates (DfE, 2018a). This is backed up by Brede *et al.* (2016) at University College London in a study conducted for the National Autistic Society. The researchers interviewed eight White British children (aged 10 to 17) and one young person (aged 18) with diagnoses of autism, seven parents and 19 staff at a specialist ‘hub’. All of the children had been excluded in the past, together with managed moves and many other changes of school and had generally not had their educational needs met. Parents and children reported that over time the child’s sense of engagement waned, they began to hate and refuse school, refused to do homework, got more stressed and began displaying more challenging behaviour. This was attributed to schools not appreciating or meeting their needs.

This echoed Kulz (2015) who spoke to 15 parents of excluded children in London, who felt that mainstream schools frequently lacked the staff expertise, financial resources and time to accommodate pupils with additional needs, which the parents felt increased this group’s likelihood of exclusion. There was criticism of the statutory guidance around exclusion practices and the inadequacy of in-school guidance for staff on how to deal with the complex issues in a meaningful way. The issue of teacher training is discussed in a later section.

Sproston *et al.* (2017) conducted qualitative interviews with eight young women diagnosed with autism and their parents, to examine the factors that had contributed to their exclusion from school. The analysis found a number of key themes: school environments described as ‘impersonal’ and inappropriate for autistic pupils (including problems with the sensory environment, difficulties when placed with inappropriate peers and general pressures of large mainstream classrooms);

¹⁴ 0-25 Education, Health and Care plans replaced statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments under the Children and Families Act 2014.

¹⁵ It should be noted that some terminology around SEND has changed over time, and that older literature in this review uses the category ‘behavioural, emotional and social difficulties’ (BESD) rather than SEMH.

challenges in communication and establishing good relationships with staff or peers; a perception that staff did not understand their needs; and a lack of suitable support, resulting in long-term 'battles' between parents and schools.

Social, emotional and mental health problems

The prevalence of SEMH problems among excluded pupils is high. Ford *et al.* (2018) carried out secondary analysis of the data from two waves of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey (2004 and 2007), which had been conducted with over 5000 families and the teachers the families nominated. The researchers detected statistically significant bi-directional association between psychological distress and exclusion. In other words, those who had emotional and/or mental health problems were at higher risk of exclusion: '*baseline psychopathology was a significant predictor of a child's likelihood of being excluded, despite adjusting for common correlates of exclusion*' (p7). This increased inversely with age: the younger the child was when psychological distress first developed, the higher the likelihood of exclusion. At the same time, the exclusion in itself was also found to trigger or exacerbate emotional and mental health problems among those excluded. This report cites lots of other research and overall indicates that the processes and reactions around pupils' mental health and the relationship with school exclusions is very complex. A literature review by Cole (2015) concluded that it seems feasible that in England, there could be up to half a million children with mental health difficulties at risk of exclusion.

Evans *et al.* (2009) interviewed and surveyed 112 young people, aged 13 to 20, who at the time were NEET and some of whom had been excluded from school. The young people said that a range of factors lay behind their poor behaviour at school, including ADHD, social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and '*anger management problems*'.

An association between impaired language, especially expressive language, and social, emotional and behavioural problems, broader social skills and exclusion was noted in two papers. Clegg *et al.* (2009) found this association in a report of speech and language assessments of 15 secondary pupils at risk of permanent exclusion in an area of socio-economic deprivation, and Obsuth *et al.* (2016) in sub-group analysis of an RCT in London aimed at reducing exclusions. Both papers stress that keeping these pupils in schools requires support, which in turn has implications for teacher training and the availability of specialist input such as speech and language therapy.

Assessment and support factors

How well and how quickly additional psychological, emotional or mental health issues are picked up and formally assessed by schools is pertinent (Mowat, 2010),

but often schools face multiple challenges in trying to implement best practice (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2013).

A failure to look for underlying causes for poor behaviour was noted by White *et al.* (2013), who ran focus groups and interviews with 20 teachers, six local authority staff and two national charities, and also by Holttum (2015) who examined practice across a number of schools. A lack of skills, expertise and training in identifying and assessing additional needs and/or SEMH in time was found by the House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018), Holttum (2015), White *et al.* (2013) and the Children's Commissioner (2013).

Using a 'Q methodological' research approach (which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods) with 47 secondary school teachers for their PhD thesis, Hallam (2014) found that the teachers held differing opinions on behaviour management strategies to prevent permanent exclusions. The reported reasons for the lack of agreement were an inadequate school-wide approaches to pupil wellbeing and insufficient communication and support from senior leaders. The author emphasised the negative consequences of not having a unified approach, and the importance of creating one. This is picked up in the next chapter on prevention.

Alongside a reported training and expertise deficit, participants in focus groups for an Office of the Children's Commissioner project with a total of 20 teachers, six local authority staff and representatives from two charities working with children, identified that inflexible systems and procedures were part of the reasons for disproportionate exclusions of pupils with additional needs, SEMH and looked after children (White *et al.*, 2013). Ford *et al.* (2018) argues that the 2016 statutory guidance¹⁶ places too much emphasis on being authoritarian in response to behavioural issues and that this is probably counterproductive. They hold that a clear framework of rules and promoting positive behaviour, as set out in the 2013 NICE guidance¹⁷, would be more effective in dealing with pupils who display challenging behaviour.¹⁸

Some of the reviewed literature identified reduced school funding as a major barrier to schools' ability to implement early intervention, pastoral support and additional support from teaching assistants, to meet additional or pastoral care needs (House of Commons' Select Committee, 2018; Kulz, 2015; Children's Commissioner, 2013;

¹⁶ *Behaviour and discipline in schools, Advice for headteachers and school staff*, DfE, January 2016
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools>

¹⁷ *Anti-social behaviour and conduct disorders in children and young people: recognition and management*, NICE, March 2013- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg158/resources/antisocial-behaviour-and-conduct-disorders-in-children-and-young-people-recognition-and-management-pdf-35109638019781>

¹⁸ 'Challenging behaviour' is rarely defined and may be interpreted differently by different institutions and professionals. There is possibly some overlap with 'behaviours which challenge' linked to a learning disability and the preferred term for people with learning disabilities. See for example:
<https://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/about-us/what-is-c-b/what-is-challenging-behaviour.html>

Tucker, 2013). The Children's Commissioner (2013) also found evidence of a minority of schools that discriminated against pupils with SEND, including these pupils receiving reduced access to the curriculum.

The Children's Commissioner focus groups mentioned above (2013) reported reductions in local authority or other external sources of support, such as educational psychology; a lack of expertise in commissioning external services and assessing for quality; and an underdeveloped market. Moreover, buying in specialist input from elsewhere was not seen as the best solution in all cases, as professionals come and go, often because of their own agency's funding. This was seen as potentially confusing and counterproductive when providing one-to-one emotional support to an individual.

Coram (2016) examined monitoring data of the 115 exclusion-related calls to their legal advice service between April 2014 and December 2015 from parents, and found that 80% of the children involved, aged three to seven, had suspected or diagnosed SEND. The parents often reported that their children were not being supported by their school. Sometimes schools had told parents that it was too early to assess the child; and some schools had stated that they could no longer meet the needs of the child who had an EHCP. White *et al.* (2013) also found a perception across schools that some pupils would receive more appropriate support elsewhere.

School policies and practices around bullying

Thompson *et al.* (2011) conducted a comprehensive examination of bullying across primary and secondary schools, special schools and PRUs for the DfE. This included 1,378 school questionnaires, 38 case study schools, 47 local authority questionnaires and analysis of 285 bullying incidence records. This also looked at how bullying fitted within other behavioural policies. Sanctions were generally stepped up in accordance with the seriousness and number of bullying incidents, but exclusions linked to bullying were only said to happen in a minority of cases. Head teachers' approaches were identified as being central to the application of sanctions or exclusions.

The literature reviewed contained numerous mentions of exclusions being applied to people who had been bullied, as well as to those who had been physically aggressive to others which might include bullying (e.g. Paget *et al.*, 2018; Craggs *et al.*, 2017; Hodge *et al.*, 2016; Levinson, 2016; Robinson, 2014; Children's Commissioner, 2012; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011). In their interviews with girls who had autism and their parents, Sproston *et al.* (2017) reported that interviewees described being bullied as a factor in their exclusion and had resulted in retaliation or withdrawal.

The studies above which highlight being bullied as a factor linking to exclusion mostly included interviews with children who provided their own accounts of being excluded. These may be subject to self-reporting bias and lack of insight on the side of interviewees, but the range of sources that mention that those at the receiving end of bullying get the exclusion is nonetheless striking.

Differentials by age and educational settings

There was an interest within the literature around the markedly increased likelihood of being excluded in secondary school, in comparison to primary school.

For example, permanent exclusions peak over Years 9 and 10, roughly corresponding to ages 13 to 14; 60% of all permanent exclusions happen in Year 9 or above, with one quarter of all permanent exclusions in Year 10 (DfE, 2018a).

The reasons suggested included different cultures and practice between primary and secondary schools; how transition is managed; and demands of school competition of exam results (e.g. Ofsted, 2009; Farouk, 2017; Levinson, 2016; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018). In turn, published DfE statistics show that most registered pupils in AP (PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools) are in Years 10 and 11 (DfE, 2018b).

Differences in school cultures and approaches

Ofsted (2009) compared 57 infant or primary schools divided into two groups depending on if they had excluded children under age 7. Schools were paired in their local areas, with one school having never excluded children and its pair having multiple exclusions of children under 7. Almost all the schools were sited in socially deprived areas and reported high levels of involvement from local authorities' children's services and other agencies, particularly about child protection, domestic violence and family breakdown. All the schools had similar types and extents of behavioural problems. The researchers found that exclusion rates were mostly linked to the school's philosophy, values and adherence to certain policies, as well as the amount and type of external support from the local authority and other agencies and the degree of effective management of low-level behavioural disruption. There was also a suggestion made that the rise in the rate of exclusions partly linked to head teachers reporting it officially and not pursuing unofficial practices.

Contrast made between primary and secondary schools

Reasons for the different rates of exclusions between primary and secondary school have been explored to some extent, for instance to examine if the differences lay in primary and secondary schools' approaches, or if children's attendance or behaviour

changed over time as dramatically as the exclusion rates. Relatively few primary schools exclude children aged 4 to 7 and even fewer use it regularly (DfE, 2018a).

Farouk (2017) reports that all of the 35 young people interviewed because of their experience of exclusion from secondary schools compared the *'familial and caring culture of primary schools with the impersonal and inflexible nature of secondary schools'* (p20). They felt that secondary schools wanted everyone to fit in and conform more, apply lots more rules and that the teachers did not have time for enough personal involvement with pupils. The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) held that schools' increasing *'zero-tolerance'* behaviour policies were creating an environment where pupils are being excluded for infractions which should be managed within the mainstream school environment.

Levinson (2016) was told by young interviewees at a PRU that primary school had been a positive experience for them, where they felt treated like individuals and some called it a *'refuge'* (p12) from home (and its challenges). In contrast, secondary school was said to be excessively focused on rules, but unfair in their application, and for most interviewees the move to secondary school had triggered or at least coincided with the onset of problems. The researchers concluded that the nature and size of secondary schools makes them unsuitable for all children.

Transition and its impact on exclusion

How transition between schools is managed can affect subsequent issues and enjoyment of school, including exclusion (Farouk, 2017). This literature review did not identify any material on 'middle schools' and it appears that the focus has been largely on the transition from primary school to Year 7 in secondary.

Adoption UK (2017) conducted an opt-in, self-reported, online survey with 2000 parents of adopted children on their experiences of exclusion. In response, 500 parents had experience of fixed period exclusions upon which they could comment. The report attributed a spike in exclusion amongst adopted children in secondary schools to the lack of effective strategies and support at the secondary transition stage.

Menzies *et al.* (2015) discusses difficulties for pupils who are low academic achievers, possibly because of earlier poor education, additional needs or other challenges. This limits their ability to access the curriculum in secondary school, meaning they fall behind more and possibly get disaffected.

Gill *et al.* (2017) conducted a secondary analysis of data and sources, including Strand and Fletcher's 2011 longitudinal analysis of the National Pupil Database. This showed that pupils who leave primary school with the lowest attainment levels at Key Stage 2 were 15 times more likely to be excluded than the highest attaining pupils.

Trotman *et al.* (2015) interviewed 49 children aged 13-14, in Year 9, as well as eight behaviour coordinators in secondary schools and AP. Half of these pupils had been excluded. Unaddressed transitional difficulties were found to have led to some pupils falling behind academically, problematic behaviour and amplified difficulties in the first three years of secondary school (when exclusion rates peak). The researchers also found a conflict between the views of pupils and teachers at the next point of transition, from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 (ages 15-16 for GCSE). These pupils anticipated a fresh start, positive departures from previous behaviour and heading into a world of qualifications, opportunities, employment and adulthood. On the other hand, the coordinators interviewed had quite negative perceptions and did not expect pupils with a track record to change.

Comparisons between mainstream and alternative provision settings

The pregnant young women and staff at an alternative education setting in London interviewed by Rudoie (2014) between 2007 and 2008 felt that this specific AP setting prioritised trying to meet the pupils' emotional and practical needs, but that the limited academic provision in this setting in some cases continued to reinforce an educational exclusion. Similarly, in Trotman *et al.*'s study (2015), children said they valued how a calm and supportive atmosphere was promoted in AP and PRUs.

The 35 young people interviewed by Nicolson *et al.* (2016) liked AP more than mainstream, because of the structure, clarity in teaching and expectations; individualised support; understanding shown of challenges outside school; reassurance and staff's belief in their academic capability. This in turn helped them to believe in themselves. Moreover, in contrast to secondary schools, where they felt continuously criticised, the pupils felt that the AP staff cared and supported them and promoted positive peer relationships, which also helped foster a sense of belonging among pupils. Alternative provision is discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

Potential effect of exam pressures and marketisation

An inquiry by the Children's Commissioner (2013) noted that some head teachers felt the current school accountability system, including league tables and competition across schools, contributed, albeit unintentionally, to the spike in exclusion rates. The report concludes that it would be beneficial to assess and report on schools' rates of exclusion and the practices for preventing them, as much as on exam results. In its 2017 briefing for MPs, the Children's Commissioner presented analysis based on data from earlier years indicating that 89% of mainstream schools would have worse GCSE pass rate if the exam results of the pupils who had been sent to AP or otherwise off-rolled at any time over the Years 7 to 11, were included in their annual results (Children's Commissioner, 2017). Pupils attending non-mainstream

settings tend to have significantly lower GCSE results. For example, in 2014/15 only 1% of children who moved to AP achieved five A* - C GCSEs or equivalent, including English and Maths.

Farouk found that a common perception of the 35 young people interviewed was that their schools' exam performance was treated as more important than their own wellbeing and education and had been a factor in their exclusion (Farouk, 2017).

Sproston *et al.*'s (2017) study with eight excluded autistic young women and their parents found that they had felt under pressure to attend and succeed academically above all else. Parents felt that the educational messages of: '*if you are not in school every lesson, every day, working really hard, you will fail*' had led to their children's poor mental health. This was often unrealistic for autistic pupils and conveyed the impression that the culture was first and foremost exam target driven and that the welfare of children mattered less. Hayden (2009) found a conflict for schools between their requirements to maximise attendance rates and behaviour. In other words, if all the pupils attend, including the usually poor attenders, there may be deterioration in behaviour. Sometimes schools found that permanent exclusion, and thus removing a child from the school-roll, could resolve this tension.

Official statistics show that permanent exclusions within primary and secondary academies are similar to those of local authority maintained schools. There are slightly higher rates of fixed period exclusions in primary academies (1.86 per cent compared with 1.37) and in secondary academies (9.66 per cent compared with 9.40). Although early sponsored academies initially excluded at a higher rate than maintained schools with similar intakes, the demographic profile of the children excluded was the same. The comprehensive enquiry by the Children's Commissioner (2013) found no evidence at that time to support claims that academy schools were less inclusive, excluded more readily or regularly, did not admit difficult or challenging pupils in the first place, or were any more driven by the likely impact on GCSE tables. However, academies' generally stricter behavioural codes, such as around uniform, might lead to more 'transgressions' and therefore indirectly to exclusions. They also expressed concerns that the increased freedoms given to academies and free schools and lack of local accountability may make it harder to identify and address poor practice, and that trends needed to be monitored as it was still early days.

Gazeley *et al.* (2015) and Farouk (2017) attribute the increase in exclusions to the marketisation and competitive political agenda in which schools currently have to operate. The push to be autonomous, or run as businesses, also impacts on the potential and likelihood for collaboration around preventative strategies. Farouk holds that the performance ratings, which largely focus on exam grades, automatically demotes personal involvement with students, and support for those

with additional educational or mental health needs. This internal competition also impacts on a local authority's scope to look at a wide range of schools for managed moves (discussed in Chapter Five).

Teacher training and awareness

Gazeley and Dunne (2013) conducted qualitative interviews with 23 student teachers undergoing Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses, and eight of their tutors, at four different English universities, with a focus on the student teachers' understanding of exclusion and the potential impact on Black young people. The course meant they spent much of the year at (secondary) school being mentored. Most of the student teachers (17) were White British and 16 were female, and the authors quote earlier research showing the low numbers of teachers from Black and other minority ethnic backgrounds. Despite a strong focus on diversity and social justice, the student teachers said they did not get enough time to explore the potential factors behind and implications of differential school exclusion rates, and were unfamiliar with concepts such as institutionalised racism and few had experience of diversity. For those in school placements, training was mainly focused on the processes and procedures to follow to ensure exclusions were processed correctly. In addition, they reported picking up negative attitudes from the school staffroom around the selection for, and process of exclusion.

The course input on diversity was reported to be superficial and the student teachers could choose to focus on either gender or one minority ethnic group. Most of the White student teachers noted they had little prior personal experience of diversity, that it was difficult to ensure diversity in placements and that there was little opportunity to discuss racism or how to teach in a non-racist way. Course tutors felt that this was not the right time to cover exclusion. Little specific instruction was provided on dealing with problem situations, children with additional needs, or poor attendance and nothing on institutional racism. Instead, there was an emphasis on looking at children's needs individually, in other words, not seeing pupils as potentially a part of a group, or the need for any group-wide focus or initiatives.

The Children's Commissioner (2013) identified two problems in terms of teacher training and continuous professional development: low awareness of the material and resources already available; and a low priority given to teacher training around this topic, especially in comparison to subject and curriculum knowledge. In the Foreword to the 2013 report, the Children's Commissioner comments that:

“At present, it is possible to qualify as a teacher in England without ever receiving training in child development, special educational needs or cultural differences” (p4)

The DfE conducts annual surveys among newly qualified teachers (NQTs). A standard question is how prepared they feel to teach children from different minority ethnic backgrounds, or with SEND. This literature review looked at survey reports between 2012 and 2017. In 2017, roughly half (53%) of the 1,639 NQTs who responded felt that their training had prepared them well for teaching pupils across all ethnic backgrounds. The same percentage (53%) reported feeling well-prepared for teaching pupils with SEND (Ginnis *et al.*, 2017). Although the precise wording of questions in earlier surveys was different, that rates have remained broadly consistent since 2012.

An NFER survey was commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner in 2012 to inform the Office of the Children's Commissioner's School Exclusions Inquiry. (Smith *et al.*, 2012). The representative sample of 1700 teachers were asked why they thought pupils from certain ethnic groups were more likely to be excluded. A 'clash of cultures' was the most common reason given (37%); followed by 'schools not adapting to their needs' (17%); 'don't know' (17%); 'home circumstances and lack of parental support' (15%); poor attendance 12%; 'disrupted schooling / poor attendance' (12%). When asked about different practices relating to unofficial forms of exclusion, such as sending a child home if their support staff were not available, and whether those practices are in line with statutory guidance, for each question there was a significant minority (between 16% and 39%) that reported not being sure. Four in ten of the teachers responding reported that they didn't know if their school had informed staff about the Equality Act 2012, and an additional 22% reported that their school hadn't.

Schools attitudes towards and engagement with families

Ofsted (2009) noted that building successful relationships with parents helped minimise exclusions among primary schools. However, the DfE annual survey of NQTs consistently found over the years 2012–2017 that roughly half of trainee teachers (54%) did not feel well prepared to communicate with parents and carers (e.g. Ginnis *et al.*, 2017).

Some of the research points to the tendency for schools to blame the parents for children's behaviour, not perceive the parents as competent, or appreciate what they do (e.g. Wilkin, 2010; MacLeod *et al.*, 2013; Gazeley, 2012). Some of the parents interviewed in a small-scale, qualitative study of 15 parents conducted by Kulz (2015) felt that institutions made judgements of the parents as well as their children. The parents spoken to in this study stated that schools tended to attribute issues at school to problems at home and inadequate parenting. Parents also thought that negative judgements were related to social class.

In a small-scale qualitative study of 24 young people's educational trajectories pre- and post-exclusion, parents often blamed the school for the lack of liaison or cooperation with them (Pirrie *et al.*, 2011). Parker *et al.* (2016) interviewed 35 parents and 37 of their 5-12 year old children who had SEND and who had been excluded (both permanently and for fixed periods). Parents reported being totally aware of their child's needs but felt they had no control over the situation. They had tried to get their child the help they needed, but to no avail. In many cases, the child had several other underlying mental health and wellbeing issues, which aggravated their difficulties in coping at school. Most commonly, these included behavioural problems, but also anxiety, low mood and confidence, obsessive compulsive behaviour and attachment difficulties. Parents saw communication with schools as essential, but felt that schools did not acknowledge or listen to them. In Sproston's study with eight girls with diagnoses of autism and their parents (2017), the parents reported how they '*dreaded*' the phone call from the school because it always meant there had been an issue. They felt that schools did not respect their knowledge of their child's needs, in this case arising from autism.

Gazeley reported on the perspectives of a small number of mothers with experience of school exclusion processes in one local authority in England (2012), concluding that social class was the major determinant of parent-school relationships and that middle class parents are more respected and thus have more impact than working-class parents, who may lack the necessary knowledge, articulacy and skills, or are simply not listened to. Hodge *et al.* (2016) interviewed 21 parents during the process of challenging their children's exclusions at IRP stage. These parents felt the process of the appeal was very stressful and the particular language shared by schools and the review panels made it difficult for them to contribute effectively. In Kulz's study (2015), in which they spoke to 26 parents, head teachers and exclusion officers in London, the head teachers and exclusion officers felt race- or class-based discrimination or middle class privilege were at least partly to blame for disproportionate exclusion rates. Middle class parents were perceived to better navigate and make best use of the current education marketplace and seek redress as needed.

Macleod *et al.* (2013), based on a study with 28 children who had been permanently excluded from either a PRU or specialist provision, comment that although parents are supposed to have 'choice', in practice they are allowed little power or effectiveness and that if they challenge the local authority or school decision, they risk being labelled a 'problem parent'. Gazeley (2012) holds that the school dictates the extent and type of relationship with parents and that the relationship is fundamentally a 'power struggle'.

Schools' application of equalities legislation

The Children's Commissioner (2013) enquiry into school exclusions collated a large body of evidence from a range of sources and stakeholders and conducted interviews and other primary data collection in schools and local areas. They concluded that schools were insufficiently familiar with or mindful of equality legislation, specifically the Equality Act 2010. They stress that, as public bodies, schools must have 'due regard' to the potential of direct as well as indirect discrimination arising from their policies and practice in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, and disability; and are required to advance equality of opportunity. The Office of the Children's Commissioner argued that disadvantage arising from poverty and low income should be treated the same as these other characteristics. It quotes DfE guidance¹⁹:

"Having due regard means that we need to think in advance about the potential implications of our decisions, seeking not just to eliminate negative outcomes but also thinking about potentially positive ones." (p39)

They found that where schools do not understand equalities legislation this can lead to rules being enforced which are indirectly discriminatory. Examples of the discriminatory practices identified in the Children's Commissioner's inquiry included: the exclusion of children for hairstyles commonly worn by Black boys, such as corn-rows; the different application of rules concerning dress and appearance based on gender; and rules that take little account of cultural, ethnic or linguistic differences.

The Commissioner's enquiry also reported that it had found instances of children with SEND or medical conditions being excluded from school, being taught separately from their peers, being banned from extra-curricular activities, having reduced access to the curriculum, or otherwise being singled out for negative treatment that set them apart. Some schools were also found to be failing to offer the provision set out in EHCPs and were preventing children from coming to school on the basis that their needs could not be met.

The report notes:

"It is simply unacceptable that any of this is allowed to happen. It creates still further inequalities for already vulnerable children and young people in the schools where it happens" (Children's Commissioner, p39)

¹⁹ Workbook on equality analysis, updated by DfE in December 2011 and April 2012. www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/policiesandprocedures/equalityanddiversity/a0077522/equality-analyses-equias-workbook

Chapter summary – school-based factors reported

The literature identified the extent to which pupils felt they ‘belonged’ in a school as critical. This included feeling respected and valued as an individual, having good relationships with peers and teachers and having their needs addressed.

Higher exclusion rates of pupils with additional needs and those with SEN may reflect the challenges schools and staff found both in identifying and in meeting these needs. Both bullying and being the victim of bullying emerged as potential triggers for exclusion. Being bullied could result in retaliation or withdrawal. In addition, reduced funding and staff levels as well as cuts to support available from local authorities were noted as limiting schools’ scope to buy in specialist support and the market was not yet sufficiently developed. Schools lacked experience in commissioning and judging quality; external expertise was not always available; and a procurement system was not considered the best way to meet vulnerable children’s needs, as it could entail discontinuity.

The clear differentials in exclusion rates between primary and secondary school and the spike over Years 9 and 10, were partly explained by:

- Different approaches and values across schools and head teachers.
- Secondary schools’ more rigid expectations of conformity, behaviour and dress codes, compared to primary schools’ greater emphasis on individual pupil wellbeing, pupil-teacher relationship and ‘belonging’.
- Secondary schools’ emphasis on exam results, over and above pastoral care, which was attributed to the current competition across schools.
- Poor transition from primary to secondary school.
- Pupils falling behind academically and getting stuck in a rut.

Teacher recruitment and training were criticised on many fronts. Many teachers were found to have little previous or personal experience of diversity and NQTs repeatedly reported that training did not adequately cover diversity, potential racism, or additional needs. In an NFER survey, four in ten teachers attributed the greater likelihood of Black children being excluded as due to a ‘*clash of cultures*’.

Some schools included in the research featured in this literature review were found to be insufficiently aware of equalities legislation, such as having ‘due regard’ to direct and indirect discrimination or advancing opportunity.

Various studies highlighted that the school-family dynamic and communication were problematic. Parents commonly felt blamed and found trying to discuss their children’s needs with schools hugely challenging and the language used obfuscating. Class appeared to be a factor: working-class parents were often reported to have least traction.

Chapter Four: Preventing exclusion

This chapter considers the evidence on approaches to preventing exclusion. It describes the wide range of approaches that are covered in the literature from 2009 and have been employed to prevent exclusion either directly or indirectly. These measures or interventions are often providing support to all children: where initiatives are targeted at a specific group of children then we have reported these separately. Evidence provided on recommendations or learning about practice and what works to prevent exclusion can be found at the end of the chapter.

Much of the literature focusing on preventative initiatives and approaches is based on qualitative evidence, which is limited in terms of its applicability beyond the circumstances in which the study was carried out and the purposive nature of the sample design. As a consequence, the evidence on the impact of these initiatives is limited.²⁰ This was emphasised by Gill *et al.* (2017), whose review of data on exclusions and qualitative research (roundtable discussions and interviews with practitioners) concluded that there is insufficient evidence regarding ‘what works’ in terms of preventing exclusion.

Despite this, the existing evidence does provide some useful learning about the range of approaches and practice related to preventing exclusion in different contexts.

Approaches to preventing exclusion

The literature reviewed described a wide range of approaches employed by schools to prevent exclusion. These preventative measures range from the provision of more generalised support to delivering a specific activity, intervention or initiative which is more targeted at addressing the contributory factors causing exclusions. They may involve the use of external agencies or be developed within school training and supporting staff. As a result, they vary in terms of their focus and how preventative they are.

In general, whole school approaches described in the literature tended to focus on earlier intervention and prevention for all children and on embedding these in the school philosophy, curriculum and culture. Much of the evidence that is reported has focused on secondary schools but there are a number of universal approaches and

²⁰ Within the scope of this literature review it has not been possible to consider more of the evidence base for the more generalised support and universal activities and interventions that have a broader focus and are not just intended to prevent exclusion.

interventions employed in primary schools, which are more tangentially linked to the prevention of exclusion.

We have organised the approaches into those that are *primarily* concerned with supporting the child at risk of exclusion, those that are *primarily* concerned with supporting the whole family, and those that are *primarily* concerned with adopting a whole school approach. As will be seen, some approaches have a broader focus and cut across these groups.

Among the challenges reported in the literature, Gill *et al.* (2017) suggests that a squeeze in public funding since the financial crisis has led to a reduction in preventative services and out-of-school support that could help prevent exclusion. The researchers argue that many schools are responding to their budgetary pressures by reducing the number of support staff who work with vulnerable pupils, and also the pastoral elements of the school. Findings from the roundtable discussions and interviews with practitioners conducted for their study also suggested that increased demand is leading to higher referral thresholds and more children and families being turned away from support from specialist services such as Children and Young People's Mental Health Services. Gill *et al.* (2017) suggest that a lack of workforce development in schools compounds the challenge as teachers lack the training and knowledge to identify and support children with complex needs. Instead, challenging behaviour can often be construed as a moral choice and punished without appropriate intervention. The researchers position this in the context of increased pressure to raise standards and performance presenting organisational challenges that discourage schools from embarking on preventative approaches and provide an incentive to exclude.

Supporting the child or young person

Individual approaches were concerned with providing support or delivering interventions that address the perceived difficulties that pupils at risk of exclusion may be experiencing. They were often delivered in an individual or small group situation and were more tailored in their focus. The literature describes the use of more generalised support like counselling, mentoring and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which may be helping to address a range of issues such as improving their social skills, mental health issues or anger management (e.g. Trotman *et al.*, 2015; Spink, 2011). These approaches are used to support children across a range of issues in mainstream education and may not necessarily be focused exclusively on preventing exclusion.

'Circle Time', for example, is commonly used to promote social and emotional skills development in children in primary school, and 'Circle of Friends' is used for withdrawn, isolated or bullied children with Behavioural, Emotional and Social

Difficulties (BESD) (Cole 2015). According to Cole (2015), these activities and interventions are also beneficial for children with mental health issues who are at risk of exclusion. Trotman *et al.* (2015) also notes that peer support programmes such as peer mediation in primary schools, which involves training pupils as mediators who then mediate the conflicts of other children by encouraging them to talk about their feelings and reach solutions to address the bullying or other problems, could be used to help to prevent a child being excluded.

Cole's work also mentions that an increasing number of schools employ counsellors to support pupils as well as staff being able to draw on *"solution-focused brief therapy or other approaches based on cognitive behaviour therapy. 'Mindfulness' can be used to harness the body's natural defence systems against feelings of stress, anger and other negative emotions. Mental health promoting approaches will involve 'talking and listening' and shared experiences, the bed-rock of relationship building."* There appears to be limited evidence about the impact of these interventions being used to prevent exclusion.

In their response to the Departments of Health and Education's Green Paper, the Children's Society (2018b) cites evidence that children and pastoral care staff view school-based counselling as accessible, non-stigmatising and effective as an approach (Cooper, 2009),²¹ with school management reporting improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour of children who have accessed services (Cooper and Cromarty, 2012). The Children's Society (2018b) also cite evidence of school-based counselling which helped to reduce levels of school exclusion by around 31% (Banerjee *et al.*, 2014).

Research by Barnardo's (Evans *et al.* 2009) found that many of the 34 NEET young people (aged 13-20) who they surveyed felt that poor relationships with teachers, boredom, bullying and an escalating cycle of challenging behaviour, truancy and exclusion had contributed to their disengagement from education. They felt that if lessons had been more relevant to future work prospects, if they had had more support and encouragement, less bullying, fewer rules around behaviour, and support to address bullying, they would have done better and this would have helped to prevent them from disengaging and being excluded from school.

Valdebenito *et al.*'s (2018) systematic review of school-based interventions for reducing disciplinary school exclusion included RCT evaluations of school-based interventions or school-supported interventions in mainstream schools which targeted school-aged children from age 4 to 18, irrespective of nationality or social background. The analysis included 38 effect sizes across 37 studies producing enough statistical information for meta-analysis: these studies represent a total

²¹ Cited in Children's Society (b) response to the Departments of Health and Education's Green Paper (2018).

sample of 31,273 students partaking in completed trials as treatment, control, or placebo groups. Most of the 37 studies included were conducted in the US, with only three from the UK.

The systematic review found that some approaches, namely those involving enhancement of academic skills, counselling, mentoring/monitoring and those targeting skills training for teachers are capable of producing a small and significant drop in exclusion rates. Results were based on impact measured after an average of six months: when tested 12 or more months after intervention, the impact was not sustained. The review concluded that more evaluations are needed to identify the most effective types of intervention, and whether similar effects are also found in different countries (Valdebenito *et al.*, 2018).

Targeted interventions to prevent exclusion

A number of the studies highlight the importance of intervening before problems become entrenched. For example, Evans' (2010) study for Barnardo's focused on positive, timely, interventions to prevent exclusions. The study included case studies of four different types of approach²² to preventing exclusion, two of which were with young people at risk of exclusion. These case incorporated interviews with young people at risk of exclusion (20 young people were interviewed across the four approaches) as well as interviews with parents and relevant teachers, local authority officers, youth offending workers, police officers, mental health specialists and service managers and staff.

One project focusing on young people at risk of exclusion involved a whole family approach alongside a targeted approach with children and is discussed in Section Three. The other project was a training centre which worked in partnership with a zero-excluding local authority²³ to monitor young people identified as being at risk of exclusion at key points during their school journey (i.e. when they moved to secondary school). This project also offered alternative vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 for those struggling with taking academic options (Evans, 2010).

Obsuth *et al.* (2016; 2017b) evaluated an intervention called 'Engage in Education-London' (EiE-L) which aimed to improve pupils' behaviour by developing their communication and broader social skills. EiE-L operated at the individual, school and family level. It aimed to provide targeted support to pupils with issues they were particularly struggling with; and to support teachers in addressing the behavioural and communication needs of students and to assist families to better support their children in school. The intervention consisted of a one-hour long group and one-to-

²² Three of the four services involved in the research were run by Barnardo's and the fourth was a small grass roots charity working in partnership with Barnardo's.

²³ The local authority had no permanent exclusions although there were occasional fixed period exclusions and managed moves.

one sessions with students over 12 weeks. Each group session was delivered by two core-workers who were assigned to a school. The evaluation of the intervention used a cluster-randomised controlled trial (c-RCT) approach with randomisation at the school level. The primary outcome considered in the evaluation was use of school exclusion as a disciplinary measure. This was assessed via student and teacher reports as well as official records. Other, secondary outcomes measured included negative behaviours associated with exclusion (identified from relevant literature) and the mechanisms of change pre-specified by the intervention. In particular, communication and broader social skills were identified and measured (via pre and post-intervention surveys) as the mechanisms of change and key proximal secondary outcomes.

The evaluation included 738 students across 36 schools, with 464 of these students completing both baseline and post-intervention surveys and being included in the complete case analysis for this research.

The results of the evaluation suggested primarily null effects of the intervention with one negative finding (a small but statistically significant increase in self-reported fixed period exclusion following the intervention). The researchers suggest that this could indicate that short-term interventions such as EiE-L, which was delivered in schools by external providers, may not be an effective strategy for reducing school exclusion and related behavioural problems. Additionally, the intervention was not found to foster improvements in school bond, school climate, student–teacher relationships or peer influences, all of which are shown to have important effects on adolescent outcomes (Obsuth *et al.*, 2017b).

Another targeted intervention described in the literature is the use of nurture groups. These have been used in mainstream primary schools for children with BESD at risk of exclusion and seek to promote good mental health by helping children to feel valued; building confidence and self-esteem; teaching children how to make good relationships with adults and with each other; developing communication skills; providing opportunities for social learning; facilitating learning through quality play experiences; and improving school attendance and attainment (Cole 2015).

In a review of policy and guidance documents produced by the government, government agencies' and non-government organisations (as well as 'some' pertinent academic literature), Cole (2015) cites some favourable evidence of nurture groups²⁴ and recommends that they should take the form of a small supportive class of up to 12 children, usually in a carefully planned nurture room in a mainstream

²⁴ Favourable accounts of the nurture group approach in Britain are given in Cooper and Tiknaz (2007), Reynolds, McKay and Kearney (2009), HMIE (2009), Seth-Smith *et al.* (2010); OFSTED (2011), Hughes and Schlosser (2014) and Cheney *et al.* (2014); and in other countries in Cefai (2008) and Couture (2013) (as reported in Cole 2015).

primary school for a time-limited period, prior to the full re-inclusion of the child back into their mainstream class. Cole also reports that secondary schools have experimented with nurture groups but found it harder to adhere to the necessary core principles as laid out by Bennathan and Boxall (2000) in the large secondary school context (Couture, 2013).²⁵

Supporting the whole family

The second group of approaches employed to prevent exclusion are primarily focused on working and supporting the whole family. In their 2009 report, Ofsted presented findings from a survey of two groups of infant or primary schools. This included 30 schools which had excluded several young children and 27 schools, each located near to one of the first 30 schools, in which exclusion had not occurred during the same period. Inspectors also visited a third group of 12 schools which had only excluded one young child in this period, but had done so on several occasions.

As well as inspecting these schools, inspectors visited 10 local authorities in which exclusions from primary schools were at a high level compared to other local authorities. During these visits, discussions were held about strategies used to support schools in managing behaviour effectively and reducing exclusion.

The survey reported that contact with parents was important for preventing exclusions, and that almost all the schools visited worked hard to build positive relationships with parents, particularly with those whose children were the most challenging to manage. Approaches that involved parents were concerned with working with the whole family and understanding the context at home, as well as supporting home-school relationships. This support may be initiated by the behavioural and pastoral support staff in the school, but is often delivered by external professionals such as the local authority educational services, social workers, family support workers, multi-agency behaviour support services or teams, or more recently the 'Troubled Families Programme' workers or key workers. External workers may be employed by or based at the school on a part-time basis. Others operate independently of the school and preventing exclusion may be only one of the aims of the support they are providing (Mowat, 2010; Spink, 2011; Tucker, 2013).

A report by Barnardo's (Evans, 2010) focused on positive timely interventions delivered by or in partnership with Barnardo's with the aim of preventing exclusions. One project involved a whole family approach using family support workers who worked with the young person to 'unpick' the issues that would minimise their risk of exclusion. This was achieved by working with the young person in school as well as other family members (e.g. parenting support for a parent) for, on average, six

²⁵ As reported in Cole 2015

months. They either drew in other services (e.g. social workers, mental health, substance misuse teams etc.) or worked alongside them and liaised with schools to resolve whatever was distracting a young person from their education. The support provided to each family member was tailored to their different needs, which were assessed using a common assessment framework (CAF), and also the Pupil Attitude to School and Self (PASS) scales. One of the school-based workers had a room in the school with an 'open door' policy. Young people could easily refer themselves; alternatively, a concerned teacher or school nurse might refer a child. The family support worker also ran some small groups at school on issues like anger management, bullying, sex and relationships. They got to know those pupils at risk of exclusion or with discipline issues and in turn, they knew they could approach the family support worker directly. This helped resolve issues at an early stage. Other workers were based in multi-agency teams alongside other professionals such as social workers, youth offending workers and mental health workers. Other specialists dropped into the office, including Traveller liaison workers and health visitors. The opportunities this proximity afforded for informal discussions and consultations, short of a full referral, meant that problems were often picked up and dealt with before they could escalate.

In a 2011 doctoral thesis, Spink (2011) conducted a systematic review aiming to explore factors across studies which aimed to reduce rates of disciplinary exclusion amongst at risk pupils. Ten studies describing interventions applied across a range of settings were included after inclusion criteria had been applied. Spink found that across all studies included, multi-agency working was the most frequently used strategy and that a range of factors including involvement of parents and taking a holistic approach appeared to be influential in successfully reducing exclusion. While concluding that support from external agencies has the capacity to bring about positive change, Spink notes that the number of factors contributing to the difficulties pupils and schools experience make it hard to isolate its effect.

The process evaluation by White *et al.* (2016) of the Troubled Families Programme suggested that working in partnership could enable practitioners to collaborate more effectively when working with families, to reduce duplication between services and to share information and data in a secure way. This could help prevent families being able to play one agency off another; and enabled partners to develop new ways to work with family members. This, for example, helped to get children back into school, improve attendance levels and prevent exclusion. However, the impact evaluation found no consistent evidence that the Troubled Families Programme had any significant impact across its core objectives, which included improving school attendance, and by implication preventing exclusion (Day *et al.*, 2016). It should be noted, however, that large-scale impacts would not necessarily be anticipated for the Troubled Families Programme: while this programme was underpinned by a national

framework and outcomes, it was managed through 152 local change programmes, with considerable discretion afforded to local authorities in how they identified, prioritised and worked with their families.

Smith *et al.* (2013) evaluated three therapeutic early interventions, which were specifically intended to prevent school exclusion. Each evaluation involved interviews with children, their families and staff alongside analysis of attendance and exclusions data. While the interventions were perceived to be effective, an impact evaluation would be needed to attribute impact of the project to behaviour, truancy and exclusion. The interventions included:

- 1) The *Care Guidance Support Stages (CGSS)* was evaluated in a secondary school in Cornwall with six families. It provides an approach to managing behaviour in schools and aimed to identify pupils with behavioural issues as early as possible and offer targeted support to address these issues. The CGSS define different 'stages' of support and it is designed to facilitate positive relationships and communication between pupils, schools and parents. The support is managed and delivered by an Intervention Coordinator, with support tailored to the individual pupil's situation.
- 2) *Family Group* was evaluated in two primary schools and one secondary school in Hounslow. It works with the whole family using multi-family therapy sessions (based on the Marlborough model) to address problems rooted in family relationships and dynamics. The project is a highly targeted intervention working with children and parents in school based multi-family therapy groups, referred to as 'Family Groups'. A therapist and a school-based partner run the weekly groups in schools, each attended by up to eight families. The aim is to reduce the risk of exclusion, increase attendance and support attainment, by working with the whole family. Typically, families have complex needs and groups include some extremely vulnerable families.
- 3) *Learning to Learn* was evaluated in a community school in Devon and is underpinned by the THRIVE approach²⁶ which recognises the links between emotions, behaviour and learning. The aim is to enable children to develop their self-awareness, empathy and reflective capacity, express their feelings and take responsibility for their behaviour. It involves delivering creative, therapeutic support in primary schools to children who have been, or are identified as being at risk of exclusion. The project also aims to improve relationships between parents and schools by involving parents in the intervention and joining up with other support around the family including CAF meetings. The project works with

²⁶ For more information, see: <https://www.thriveapproach.com/>

children with multiple vulnerabilities and complex family lives, as well as children with lower levels of need.

All three projects decided to move away from the 'deficit' model to one where children and families are helped to recognise that they have strengths, resilience and skills, as well as areas for development. All of the projects, although different in their approaches, generated positive outcomes. These included children experiencing improvements in emotional wellbeing (such as confidence and self-expression), behaviour (including use of strategies to manage it), ability to learn (by focusing in class) and relationships (with family, peers, school staff); schools increased their understanding of behaviour and their capacity to manage it, and enjoyed fewer disruptions from problematic behaviour; and relationships between children, schools and parents were reported to have improved.

A Family Group Conference (FGC) is a way of bringing a family together and enabling them to plan and make decisions for a specific purpose. It is a time-limited process with the intention of creating a plan to support and improve a specific issue or a problem. FGCs were introduced in the UK from New Zealand in the early 1990s, as a way to encourage professionals to work in partnership with families. They are being used more widely by Early Help Teams to address a number of issues including with school attendance or behaviour problems.

Hayden (2009) compared the use of the FGC alongside the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) in a county in England. They found that FGCs were typically being used for more serious issues than the EWS but there was no strong evidence that they were any more effective than the EWS, as attendance and exclusion did not improve in the FGC group. Despite that, responses to a survey of referral agents and interviews with Educational Welfare Officers and FGC coordinators suggested that they considered FGCs to have a more positive impact on issues of attendance and bullying than on exclusion and behavioural problems.

Whole school approaches

A consistent message from the literature is the importance of adopting a whole school approach, which develops a school culture in which positive behaviour is celebrated and challenging behaviours are not given the opportunity to develop and thrive. This is underpinned by the systems, leadership, policies and procedures that attempt to prevent exclusion. Approaches identified range from the role of teachers and their practice, changing the systems, culture and policy, adapting or reducing the timetable, and the use of space for internal exclusions.

Role of teachers and their practice

Gill *et al.* 2017 reflected on the development and support of teaching staff, including the need to recruit teachers with the skills to work with children at risk of exclusion, and the provision of training for trainee teachers and as part of their ongoing development. The Children's Commissioner's report (2012) of its school exclusions enquiry emphasised the importance of creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. They pointed out that successful head teachers focused on the quality of teaching and learning, alongside clear, consistently applied approaches to behaviour and discipline, which were tailored to the needs of pupils. It was argued that this will result in good behaviour and, by implication, prevent exclusions.

Secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys conducted by Ford *et al.* (2018) recommended that prompt identification and early intervention may prevent future exclusion.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner review into school exclusions reported that the level of expertise of school staff in SEND, cognitive and emotional development and awareness of cultural differences is key to understanding and addressing needs and can help reduce the likelihood of confrontations and disciplinary problems (Children's Commissioner, 2017). White *et al.*'s (2013) eight focus groups with teachers, non-teaching school staff and families recommended intensive training from specialist staff, and training on communication difficulties was highlighted as particularly effective. School psychologists have a valuable role to play in providing staff training on the issues that facilitate or impede re-engagement in those 'hard to reach' students, as they may not be covered during programmes of initial teacher education (Nicholson, 2018).

In a 2017 paper presenting findings from a research project which collected the autobiographical memories of 35 students (aged 15-16 years) who had been excluded from secondary schools in London, Farouk recommended that teachers have a role to play in supporting and providing emotional support for vulnerable adolescents and preventing them from being disproportionately influenced by their peers, especially when their parents are unable to provide the emotional support and guidance they need to help them adapt at key transition points and particularly when they move to secondary school (Farouk, 2017).

Drawing on data from a longitudinal survey of Swiss young people, Obsuth *et al.* (2016) argued that the quality of teacher-student relationships has the power to influence students' behaviour, both positively and negatively, well into adolescence. They highlighted the importance of an inclusive school environment, which would facilitate supportive teacher-student relationships much like fostering parent-child relationships. Nicholson *et al.* (2018) also reported on the importance of staff in both

mainstream schools and AP creating trusting and caring relationships with students, or of allowing students to feel a sense of autonomy and competence.

Mowat (2010) reported on a case study of 69 pupils experiencing social and emotional behavioural difficulties who received an intervention to support them, and concluded that:

“There is no ‘right way’, no panacea, but schools, and teachers within them, with a strong moral sense and commitment to their pupils, do have the capacity to make a difference to the lives of young people and, when the right conditions prevail and the quality of leadership is such that teachers are supported in their endeavours to support the young people in their charge, a great deal can be accomplished.” p18

Holttum’s (2015) review of three studies also highlights the need for teacher training to support teachers’ understanding of mental health and disability to ensure they can support children appropriately to address their behaviour.

Changing school systems, culture and policy

Chapter Three looked at how school-wide policies and practices impacted on exclusions. This section sets out the evidence around recommendations and examples of good practice.

“Research indicates that what is best for a whole-school community also benefits groups of children and individuals at risk of exclusion. In low excluding schools that stress mental health promotion, inclusive values permeate policy and practice at the whole-school level. These values filter down to practice in the classroom and to relationships between staff and individual children, also to between pupil and pupil. This ‘ethos’ requires a ‘critical mass’ of staff to see exclusion as failure. (DfES/Doha, 2004).” (Cole, 2015) p8

Ofsted’s survey of 69 primary schools (2009) reports that effective management of low-level disruptive behaviour was a key feature in all the schools that had succeeded in reducing the use of exclusions with young children or that did not exclude children of this age. These schools had head teachers with strong views about exclusion being a last resort. They placed great emphasis on valuing each individual and were keen to listen to and support children to succeed. The head teachers also knew each family well. They described a wide range of strategies to teach and encourage good behaviour, and a wide range of additional support for children who found it difficult to learn important social and emotional skills or appropriate behaviour. The schools did not assume that young children would automatically know or understand the behaviours they expected. Almost all of these schools placed great importance on using the National Strategy’s social and emotional aspects of learning programme (SEAL), sometimes combined with specific

programmes for emotional literacy. Behaviour policies were carefully structured, with a clear emphasis on rewards. Sanctions were staged and age-appropriate but used sparingly. Senior leaders in these schools understood clearly how break and lunchtimes, if badly managed, could undermine children's otherwise good behaviour, as well as being unpleasant for vulnerable children. These times were very well organised and play equipment was carefully chosen and appropriate to children's ages. Lunchtime supervisors were well trained as play leaders and in how to manage behaviour.

Research carried out by Hallam as part of a PhD (2014) looked at the critical role of the teacher in helping to manage and support children at risk of permanent exclusion in two schools. Hallam explored the views of secondary teachers about the strategies to prevent permanent exclusion of students from school. Their views varied about the options ranging from whole school approaches to individual activities and interventions that were tailored to the needs of the student along with the promotion of earlier intervention approaches and the involvement of parents.

In terms of the specific initiatives Hallam reports on, there was more agreement about the importance of school staff building positive relationships with students and parents; the use of an electronic system to track behaviour; and a whole school reward system. The teachers tended to agree that moving students at risk to a new class would not prevent school exclusion. In terms of their recommendations, the research highlighted the importance of having the support of the senior leadership team to endorse and model strategies to prevent exclusion; teachers having time to pilot strategies and support other staff implementing activities; providing funding; developing more consistency in the school approach to preventing exclusion and promoting existing strategies that have been successful.

Research has highlighted a number of different aspects of a whole school system and culture that can impact on exclusions including:

- The need for a **strong pastoral support** system and team where pupils' learning and emotional needs can be addressed (e.g. Hallam, 2014; Ford, 2018).
- Having a **whole school approach** or programme for staff to follow, such as the SEAL programme used in primary schools to support 'at risk' children to be better motivated and successful learners; to make and sustain friendships; deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly; solve problems with others or by themselves; to manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety; and policies (Cole, 2015).
- The need for a **coordinated behaviour policy** to manage behaviour (Institute of Education & National Foundation for Educational Research, 2014).

- The need for a **whole school approach to minimise bullying**. Thompson (2011) reported on a national survey of schools (n=1905) and their use of bullying strategies. They reported that one school experienced a reduction in exclusions in the year following the introduction of a restorative whole-school approach to dealing with bullying issues. Restorative approaches (RA) were trialled in four schools in Bristol to help prevent exclusions and to aid reintegration following exclusion (Skinns, 2009). Two approaches were tested: a whole-school approach where RAs were incorporated into policies and procedures and used throughout the school and where RAs were used in different parts of the school, for example, in particular year-groups or classes. The actual impact appeared limited as there were reductions in the absolute numbers of full-time exclusions in both the intervention (four schools) and comparison schools (two schools). That said, staff perceived the RA had helped to prevent low-level incidents from escalating to the stage where fixed period exclusions were necessary.

The School Exclusion Trial commissioned by the DfE tested the benefits of schools having greater responsibility for meeting the needs of permanently excluded pupils and those at risk of permanent exclusion (Institute of Education & National Foundation for Educational Research, 2014). The trial operated between 2011 and 2014 in 11 local authorities. The evidence suggested that schools participating in the trial took increased responsibility for pupils at risk of exclusion than did the comparator schools. Other findings included that schools worked more in partnership and employed collective decision making through the use of panels; enhanced quality assurance, accreditation systems and service level agreements for AP providers. Increased collaboration among schools helped to facilitate the transfer of pupils to another school for trial periods and there was an increase in managed moves.

The trial also resulted in revised commissioning procedures; more early intervention programmes to prevent exclusion; the use of time-limited AP (to avoid permanent exclusion); and the closure of PRUs. Schools were also reported to be making more effective use of data to identify patterns of behaviour in order to put in place appropriate support for pupils. Learning support units, inclusion coordinators, and revised school timetables were considered effective in relation to preventing exclusions, improving attendance, attainment and behaviour. There was a change in the pupils designated as at risk during the trial. Schools' judgements of pupils at risk of exclusion were reviewed regularly and adjusted and the provision to support many of these pupils was effective insofar as they were removed from the at-risk list.

Teachers in the trial reported that fewer children on average had been permanently excluded from trial schools than comparison schools. There was no identified difference in attainment between trial and comparison schools. It may be too soon

for this to have occurred, or it may reflect changes in approach, adopted by both trial and comparison schools in response to wider educational reforms. In many trial schools, there had been an increased focus on GCSE attainment, particularly in English and maths, for those in PRUs and AP.

The use of space and school facilities

There is a large body of evidence about the use of space in schools, but most of this is outside the scope of this literature review, which considered how space emerged as relevant to exclusions.

How schools organise their support centres and pastoral units and created welcoming rooms for children to take some 'time out' was highlighted by Gilmore (2012; 2013) and Hallam (2014). Hallam (2014) reported the findings of Barker *et al.* (2010), who explored the geography of on-site areas used for internal fixed period exclusions in one London secondary school. The research involved statistical analysis of data on 'seclusion events' at the school and a total of 29 in-depth individual and focus group interviews (involving 39 respondents) with school staff, parents and students (both those who had and had not been secluded). The researchers found that changes in the students' behaviour tended to be temporary and short-term, and that challenging behaviours returned once students were reintegrated into the mainstream school: they ultimately recommended that students at risk of school exclusion require more in-depth and long-term support to remain in school and achieve academically.

Literature around specific groups

Looked after and adopted children

A number of reports have focused on looked after children. For example, PricewaterhouseCoopers' review (2011) points to the importance of intervening early with behavioural problems to prevent exclusion within the Northern Ireland context. This research involved a literature review of c.60 documents, 25 interviews with stakeholders (including Education and Library Boards, schools, EOTAS²⁷ providers and voluntary organisations) and a collaborative workshop with 19 of the stakeholders interviewed. Evidence from these approaches led the researchers to conclude that while there are a range of approaches believed to be effective in reducing non-attendance of looked after children, early intervention is critical regardless of the approach used. In addition, adult support and/or counselling have been thought to help support their engagement with the school. Good practice guidance by the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2009) for supporting looked after children in schools focuses on building

²⁷ Education Other Than At School

relationships between looked after children and a key person in the school. The guidance is based on evidence obtained from visits to a small sample of 14 primary schools which were recommended by their local authorities as having effective practice in supporting looked after children, and emphasises the need to tailor the approach to children, as they will have individual needs based on their experiences. Pritchard (2009) also refers to evidence from a school-based social work service which indicates that a preventative social work approach contributed to a significant reduction in the need for school exclusions and children needing to be placed on the Child Protection Register.

A survey of parents of adopted children carried out by Adoption UK (2017) received 2,085 responses, each relating to one adopted child. Parents/carers were asked whether they felt as though, during 2015-16, their child's school had worked with them to avoid situations that might lead to a fixed or permanent exclusion. Of 1,525 respondents who had children in school during this period, 752 (49.3%) answered 'not applicable', indicating that such a situation did not arise during the specified period. Of the other respondents, 496 (64%) felt that their school had worked with them to avoid situations that might lead to an exclusion. While the authors note that this is 'encouraging', a further 277 (36%) families answered 'no' to the same question, suggesting that a substantial proportion of adoptive families feel as though their child's school is not offering sufficient support to prevent situations that could lead to a fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

The DfE's statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion (DfE, 2017) notes that two of the ethnic groups with the highest rates of exclusion are Gypsy/Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage. The guidance states that head teachers should consider what extra support might be needed to identify and address the needs of pupils from these groups in order to reduce their risk of exclusion, and suggests that schools might draw on the support of Traveller Education Services or other professionals to help build trust when engaging with families from these communities.

Cromarty (2018) recommended schools should draw on the support of Traveller Education Services, or other professionals, to help build trust when engaging with families from Traveller communities, which could help reduce exclusions. Ofsted (2014) reported that schools who were most successful in engaging GRT children worked with other agencies to support them and meet the needs of this group (e.g. a partnership with the police). Other schools had dedicated GRT staff members who helped to support these families and prevent disengagement from education.

In a study that took place between 2007 and 2009, Wilkin *et al.* (2010) aimed to explore the issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and to offer parents, schools and local authorities a range of possible methods for improving the outcomes for this group. The methodology for this work included national data analysis, progress mapping (via questionnaires were sent out twice during the course of the study to head teachers and governors in primary and secondary schools with relatively high numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils), a literature review and case studies of ten secondary schools, five primary schools and five alternative education providers believed to be demonstrating good practice based on survey answers around maintaining and improving attendance, raising achievement, race equality and inclusion in relation to GRT pupils. The report highlights the importance of an identified key individual in school who was instrumental in building positive relationships with pupils and families, thus facilitating feelings of safety and trust; increased monitoring and analysis of attendance, including first-day absence calls, contact with parents over attendance issues, and rewards for good attendance.

Wilkin and colleagues also called for a more flexible approach to the curriculum; and engaging GRT parents with the school in jointly addressing attendance issues through dialogue and clearly communicated high expectations of good attendance and punctuality.

The Traveller Movement (2016) recommended that schools and local authorities need to place a specific emphasis on community and family learning initiatives and develop a national GRT community mentor scheme. Schools with GRT pupils should form links with relevant local community groups to develop best practice for inclusion and cultural awareness.

Pupils with autism

The Sproston *et al.* (2017) study described in Chapter Three highlighted the importance of staff relationships and smaller classroom environments in supporting their educational journeys.

Children whose parents are in prison

Based on a small qualitative research study in one local authority in England, Morgan *et al.* (2013) made suggestions for how schools might support children with experience of a parent in prison. The authors note that children who experience parental imprisonment have an increased risk of truancy and school exclusion, and highlight the importance of a whole school approach to actively raising awareness of this group of children and their needs. They also emphasise the importance of offering tailored support that is sensitive to individual needs, along with access to a key person who would be available for children and families. They also suggest that

the provision of in-school counselling, and in-school (or across a number of schools) support groups and mentoring schemes could be used to support this group of children. Schools could also work with children and parents to enable children to have approved absences to visit their parent/relative in prison.

Chapter summary – preventing exclusion

This chapter has described the wide range of measures adopted to prevent exclusion, covered in the literature since 2009.

These measures are *primarily* concerned with: supporting the child at risk of exclusion, or involving families and adopting a whole family approach; or adopting a whole school approach; and /or supporting teaching staff to be able to identify and manage children's needs.

Preventative measures ranged from the provision of more generalised support for all pupils, to delivering a specific activity, intervention or initiative, which was targeted at addressing the contributory factors causing exclusions.

Some involve the use of external agencies; others were developed within school training and support. As a result, they vary in terms of their focus and how preventative they are.

Much of the evidence on preventative initiatives and approaches is based on small-scale, qualitative evidence, which is limited in terms of its applicability beyond the circumstances in which the study was carried out and the purposive sample. As a consequence, there is limited evidence on the impact of these initiatives.

A number of key features of effective practice emerge from the literature, including the need to:

- Create an underlying positive school ethos and culture that fosters how behaviour is understood and subsequently managed.
- Support and equip teachers with the skills to do this.
- Emphasise the importance of early identification and intervention before problems become entrenched and provide support for families alongside the children. To support this every school needs timely access to high quality external provision.
- Provide a range of targeted and individual approaches that can be tailored to the needs of pupils vulnerable to exclusion. This targeted provision may at time take them out of mainstream classes and give them respite of some kind or provide them with specialist one-to-one tuition or counselling.

Chapter Five: Alternative provision and managed moves

The preceding chapters discussed the circumstances leading up to an exclusion and suggestions from the research around preventive measures related to this.²⁸ In this chapter we reflect on what happens to pupils of compulsory age who are either at risk of being excluded or have been excluded. Alternative provision (AP) encompasses a wide array of provision for pupils of compulsory school age, commissioned by local authorities and schools, including those who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. In contrast, the practice of managed moves allows pupils to move to a different school, or other setting without triggering a formal exclusion. It is a voluntary agreement between schools, parents/carers and the pupil and often used to prevent permanent exclusion.

This chapter reflects on the evidence related to AP and managed moves, including evidence on the way both practices operate and the evidence for what appears to be key to their effectiveness. Each section ends with specific recommendations, drawn from the literature. There is much less discussion of how this provision is targeted at specific groups of children that are the focus of this literature review.

Relatively few AP programmes are rigorously evaluated and monitored by schools and AP providers (Tate *et al.*, 2017) and there is even less evidence available around managed moves. While there may be good practice principles that can be applied more widely, the applicability of the qualitative research evidence reviewed in this chapter is even more limited than the previous chapters, to the circumstances in which the study was carried out. There also appears to be little evidence on the impact of either AP or managed moves for the groups disproportionately affected. However, as for previous chapters, the existing evidence provides useful learning about the range of approaches and the contexts in which they have been employed.

Understanding alternative provision

Alternative provision is defined as: education arranged by local authorities or schools for pupils of compulsory school age who, because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education; education arranged by schools for pupils on a fixed period exclusion; and pupils being directed by schools to off-site provision to improve their behaviour (Apland *et al.*, 2017). Schools can use AP to try to prevent exclusions or to re-engage pupils in their education: it may be put in place for children at risk of exclusion, for those who have received a fixed

²⁸ Please note that this literature review was concluded prior to the publication of DfE's study (October 2018), 'Investigative research into alternative provision'. See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748910/Investigative_research_into_alternative_provision.pdf

period exclusion of more than five days, and for children who have been permanently excluded (Ofsted, 2016). Children who are referred to AP often have unique educational histories and a range of multiple and complex support needs, including BESD (Nicholson *et al.*, 2018). AP settings may be therapeutic in nature, for example for children with severe BESD, mental or physical health issues (including hospital schools) and may offer vocational learning alongside a standard 'academic' curriculum (Tate *et al.*, 2017).

The range of needs catered to by AP is reflected in the variety of provision types encompassed by the sector. The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) described AP as a broad term that imperfectly describes a wide variety of types of school or educational settings, and noted that it is *"too often seen as a forgotten part of the education system, side-lined and stigmatised as somewhere only the very worst behaved pupils go"*, while Ofsted's 2016 report on schools' use of off-site AP found that providers vary widely in terms of type and make-up. Ofsted's report covered findings from a three-year survey of alternative provision (September 2012 - July 2015), during which inspectors visited 165 schools and 448 of the alternative providers they used. Providers included colleges, workplaces, charities, work-based learning providers, special schools and academies, free schools, independent schools, PRUs and units that were run by a group of local schools for pupils who were in danger of being excluded. Some AP providers were attended by large numbers of pupils from many schools, while other providers catered for very small numbers of pupils. Likewise, some providers had a very specific focus, while others taught many subjects found in the school curriculum (Ofsted, 2016; Apland *et al.*, 2017).

Within the range of provider types described above, Apland *et al.* (2017) identify PRUs as a particularly important form of off-site AP. Pupils may be registered solely with a PRU or be dual registered, attending both their mainstream school and the PRU on a part-time basis (Tate *et al.*, 2017). While PRUs are themselves a form of alternative provision, many pupils who are registered at a PRU also attend additional forms of alternative provision off-site (Ofsted, 2016). PRUs are maintained by the local authority and are attended by a range of pupils, including those who have been temporarily or permanently excluded or who refuse to attend school (Apland *et al.*, 2017). In recent years, many PRUs converted to AP academies and this was encouraged by the DfE,²⁹ and AP free schools were also established. Some providers were part of a chain of providers or multi-academy trust whilst others were small one-off establishments.

²⁹ School-type data: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/> and information on conversion https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219652/pru_20converters_20guidance.pdf

While Ofsted's 2016 survey focused on off-site AP (provision delivered as part of a pupil's regular timetable, away from the site of their school or PRU and not led by school staff), an increasing number of settings are now also developing in-house AP with a view to being able to better meet the needs of pupils and reduce the need to send pupils off site. This in-house AP may involve providing internal isolation arrangements, 'afternoon schools', employer involvement, alternative curricula and careers guidance. These approaches may also be combined in order to meet the specific needs of individual pupils (Tate *et al.*, 2017).

In 2018, the House of Commons Education Select Committee noted that 82% of teachers in all AP providers have qualified teacher status (QTS), compared to 95% of teachers in mainstream schools.³⁰ Experts and practitioners interviewed as part of research by Gill *et al.* (2017) agreed that professional development in AP rarely focused on teaching, assessment or pedagogy, while the most common training in AP settings covers 'positive handling' to reduce behaviour escalation and safe ways to physically restrain pupils. This research involved interviews with leaders across 40 PRUs, AP academies and free schools, though the proportion of these who agreed with the above statement regarding professional development in AP settings is not clear.

Gill *et al.* (2017) also compared the proportion of vacancies in secondary maintained schools and academies in England (0.2% and 0.3% of the workforce respectively) to the proportion of vacancies in the special school and AP sector (0.6% across the special and AP workforce)³¹. The authors suggest that this comparison points to 'particularly acute' staff shortages in the AP sector, and that this could lead to increased dependence on supply teachers and possible damage to relationships and trust between pupils and staff in AP settings (Gill *et al.*, 2017).

Ofsted (2011 and 2016) notes that AP is a largely uninspected and unregulated sector and that, beyond PRUs and other full-time provision, there is no requirement for the majority of alternative providers to register with any official body and no consistent arrangements to evaluate their quality. Ofsted's 2011 survey of providers³² suggested that practice and quality across AP is variable, and found some examples of pupils being taught in poor-quality accommodation (Ofsted, 2011). Thomson *et al.* (in their 2009 review of the scope and nature of provision of alternatives to exclusion in two midlands local authorities) also discussed the lack of

³⁰ Data from the DfE data on the School Workforce in England, November 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2016>

³¹ Analysis based on DfE data on the School Workforce in England, November 2016:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/school-workforce-in-england-november-2016>

³² Between September and December 2010, inspectors visited 23 schools and academies and 16 PRUs to explore their use of AP. The schools and units were located in both urban and rural areas, varied in size and composition, and were only included in the survey if they were providing AP to more than one student in Key Stage 4. At their previous Ofsted inspection none had been found inadequate. The survey visit was followed up with visits to 61 AP placements that were being attended by students from the schools or units surveyed.

available data about the range and type of AP providers and the lack of records they keep to track children's progress. This review took a mixed-methods approach including statistical mapping, 85 transcribed semi-structured interviews with local authority officers, programme directors, programme and school staff, young people and parents/carers; ethnographic case studies and reviews of official documents. The study's findings report that in the two local authorities studied there was a lack of coordinated data about which programmes exist and who attends, and a proliferation of programmes with varying funding sources, costs, entry practices, and qualifications (Thomson *et al.*, 2009). More recently, the Children's Commissioner for England (2017) referred to the lack of accountability and regulation of the AP sector and that too little is known about the kind of education children receive there. In their review, the Centre for Social Justice (2018) concluded that there is too much variability across AP. In addition they stated that there is no clear and commonly recognised framework for assessing what 'good' AP looks like and that some providers escape any meaningful oversight to ensure that basic vital standards are being met (Centre for Social Justice, 2018).

Reflections on alternative provision

Much of the literature reviewed has reflected on the role and added value of AP. The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) summarised this role using a quote from a PRU in Peterborough:

"A good PRU delivers a lot of love and a little magic into the lives of those who have very frequently, and sadly, experienced too little of either." (p25)

A report by Menzies (2015) for The Inclusion Trust drew together key themes arising from a roundtable debate involving 14 practitioners (and three additional interviews) from across mainstream state education and the third sector, representing commissioning, education provision and pastoral care. The debate and interviews covered the importance of having provision outside of mainstream schooling, with practitioners arguing that AP should be welcomed, valued and celebrated rather than treated as a 'necessary evil'. In his 2015 review, Cole emphasised that children can at times feel safer, more engaged and happier in a PRU or small special school after an unhappy and damaging experience in a mainstream school (Cole, 2015).

The Office of the Children's Commissioner School Exclusions Inquiry (2012) collected, analysed and interpreted evidence relating to school exclusions in England, including on various models as alternatives to exclusion. The Inquiry concluded that the best AP can offer a high quality, cost-effective alternative to both permanent and fixed period exclusion. The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018), meanwhile, concluded that going into AP was the best outcome for some children they spoke to, but noted that children had to be excluded or

'branded a failure' to be able to access it rather than being offered it as a positive choice.

The 2016 Ofsted report detailing results of Ofsted's three year survey of alternative provision notes that the 'overwhelming majority' of pupils spoken to had positive comments to make about their enjoyment of AP, what they were learning, how well they were supported, and the impact the provision was having on their behaviour, attitudes, attendance and outcomes. Pupils are reported to have stated that attending an alternative provider had helped keep them on track, allowed them to begin developing confidence and ambition and, in some cases, prevented them from getting into serious trouble. The report also states, however, that not all pupils thought that AP was the best thing for them or that they were doing well. Examples of negative points raised by individual pupils included 'feeling isolated', 'not having a real choice about attending alternative provision' and 'school not telling the placement enough about their special needs' (Ofsted, 2016).

A report commissioned by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and written by Apland *et al.* (2017) used a rapid review methodology to review evidence on the subjective wellbeing of children excluded from school and in alternative provision in England. Thirty-eight studies were identified as potentially relevant, and 15 of these were ultimately retained. Evidence from these reports found that children were generally positive about their experiences of AP: reasons given for this included being able to focus better on their schoolwork when they were away from the distractions of their peers in mainstream school and enjoying a calmer and quieter setting than mainstream schools offered. The literature reviewed, however, also reported that other young people found AP restrictive and stated that it imposed strict rules on them around interacting with their peers (Apland *et al.*, 2017).

Apland *et al.* also note that pupils' experiences of the AP curriculum were different to their experience in mainstream provision in both positive and negative ways. Some young people reported that the AP curriculum was more vocational, diverse, less demanding and provided more autonomy than mainstream provision, with this being reported positively. On the downside, some reported not being able to pursue subjects that they were interested in or at a high enough level meet the academic requirements of colleges they wanted to attend (Apland *et al.*, 2017).

Key elements of effective practice

The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) acknowledged the diversity of the AP sector and stated that it would not be appropriate to set out a one-size-fits-all template for 'good' alternative provision. The Select Committee considered evidence from a wide range of providers, teachers, head teachers and local authorities who talked about providing supportive, flexible environments that

met individual needs and allowed pupils to flourish. None of the provision that they heard from or visited was identical, because individual needs vary and the challenge is providing consistently good AP to all pupils no matter where they are living. Similarly, Gill *et al.* (2017) conducted interviews with leaders across 40 AP settings and concluded that there was no consensus over what success looks like in AP, how to measure it or elucidate what works to help more pupils achieve that success.

While acknowledging the variation described above, the following section of this report reflects on key elements of AP practice that the literature highlights as appearing to contribute to effective provision for pupils in these settings. Much of the research found and referenced below was conducted in single settings, with small numbers of research participants. Nonetheless they provide interesting findings, which might be worth investigating further.

A 2017 literature review by Tate *et al.* included 85 documents (26 peer reviewed journal articles, 39 research reports and 20 Ofsted inspection reports) and identified key elements of practice that appear to be effective in supporting young people in AP to increase attainment at Key Stage 4 and to make a successful transition to post-16 provision. These included: allowing young people a degree of autonomy and choice in their learning and environment; positive and strong relationships with staff; the involvement of parents and carers; using a mixture of rewards and sanctions to manage behaviour in a consistent way, alongside clear guidance about the rules; a curriculum that encompasses core skills, including maths and English, along with a vocational offer encompassing work placements for those who want to follow a vocational programme; the provision of a smaller environment than mainstream schooling with a lower student-teacher ratio, to enable small group instruction and individual attention; tailoring lessons to individual needs, using a facilitative and supportive style; employing a wide range of high quality specialist staff who are well trained, caring and knowledgeable (Tate *et al.*, 2017).

Pennacchia (2016) identified several positive features of AP. This research aimed to explore partnership work between complementary alternative provisions and mainstream schools using data from a 2014 UK-wide study of AP (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014³³). The data consisted of 17 case studies of a range of types of AP, with Pennacchia's paper focusing mainly on two English complementary provisions: data collection at these providers was based on site visits that lasted 1–3 days, and included observation, interviews and conversations with staff and young people, photographs; and the collection of documentary materials.

Positive features of AP identified from these case studies included positive and less hierarchical staff-student relationships; greater independence for young people; an

³³ Reported in Pennacchia 2016

engaging curriculum and pedagogy; skilful staff; and attention to the child's health and welfare, inter-personal relationships and physical space. The research also identified additional practices that appeared to be particularly critical to what they refer to as complementary AP, including: carefully considered and planned transitions; the formation of positive relationships being a learning goal in its own right; and attention to the spatial dynamics of AP, with opportunities for young people to move out of the mainstream setting, or to have a space of their own within it.

In their 2012 – 2015 survey of AP providers, Ofsted (2016) reported specifically on effective induction: that it was underpinned by clear communication between the school and provider, including two-way information about pupils' progress and behaviour from the start. Regular visits by school staff helped to settle pupils quickly and to check that requirements were being met. Visits supported pupils' progress where the same member of staff visited, building a good working relationship with the pupil and staff at the placement. They also reported that the best examples of a balanced and appropriate curriculum was where AP either ran alongside, or incorporated, core studies in English, maths and science, and offered a range of vocational and academic options suited to a pupil's interests or aspirations, and ensured that pupils were able to participate fully in programmes of physical education, religious education, citizenship, and personal, social, health and economic education (Ofsted, 2016).

In a report on research conducted in a PRU in north-west England, Alvarez-Hevia (2018) reflected on the importance of the emotional involvement and relationship of teachers and mentors working with pupils who had been permanently or were at risk of being excluded. The PRU in question was attended by 13 pupils of between 5 and 11 years old who have been excluded from previous schools for their extreme behaviour: the research consisted of a series of 14 semi-structured interviews of 30–45 min each, in the form of focus groups, with mentors and teachers from the PRU, along with the researcher's observation of daily life over the course of three months.

Qualitative interviews by Trotman *et al.* (2015) with 49 pupils (from schools and AP, predominantly age 14 – 15), eight behaviour coordinators and two AP heads found that the practices of PRUs often appeared as positively different to pupil experiences encountered in mainstream schools. Environments and teachers' behaviours that promoted calm were highly valued. Pupils frequently referred to a teacher's ability to use humour and enjoyment as an integral part of their interactions and teaching.

In 2016, Levinson and Thompson conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with five staff members and 10 students (aged 11 – 16) from a PRU in the South West of England catering for excluded students and those with medical (emotional or physical) issues. All students interviewed spoke about the contrast between their past schools and the Centre. Across the age range of those interviewed (11-16)

reference was made to better relationships with teachers at the Centre, more trusting relationships between students, a more flexible curriculum and gentler teaching styles. The report notes that staff from the PRU emphasised that behaviour was dealt with in a manner that might not be anticipated in mainstream environments, and that huge effort is put into avoiding conflict and containing it through calmness or humour. One staff member also reported that his approach was to engage in reciprocal conversations proposed by Attachment Theory, where relationships have a direct bearing on the student's ability to learn: he felt that in mainstream settings (with larger groups) there may not be the same leeway or the will for this to occur (Levinson, 2016).

Research involving semi-structured interviews with 13 children aged 7-16 years by Jalali *et al.* (2018) compared the views of pupils in primary and secondary PRUs in three local authorities. The children attributed their improved behaviour to having time to change, more space and calmness at PRUs. Other factors they identified clear reward systems; extra support; a personalised curriculum and being easier to find their way around as it was smaller. They reported that at the PRU, they began to understand the value of aspects of their education such as GCSEs.

Alternative provision case studies

This section provides examples of AP to illustrate the range and variation covered in the literature.

A number of studies have carried out research into what might be seen as temporary AP or respite AP. Pennacchia *et al.* (2016) conducted secondary analysis of data on 17 case studies to explore complementary AP that works alongside mainstream schools. This was being used to provide respite from the rigidity of the school structure. Different case studies illustrated how links were maintained between the AP and the school. In one case study, senior leaders actively monitored the success of the trial placement of a group of girls attending AP (which was located on the grounds of the school). The school-data showed that the girls had improved according to a range of indicators, including attendance, attainment, and a reduction in negative behaviour. Another example involved a farm providing a one-week residential programme for groups of secondary-aged pupils, to improve their confidence, self-esteem, behaviour and peer relationships. The young people were accompanied by members of staff from their school.

In a study focusing on three Government Office Regions selected on the basis of a relatively high number of permanent exclusions from special schools (as expressed as a percentage of the total population), Pirrie (2011) identified a range of AP and specialist provision put in place to ensure continuity of education, based upon individual needs. These were identified via interviews and other less formal

communications with practitioners such as Youth Offending Team workers, head teachers, attendance officers, educational welfare officers, social workers and child psychologists. Provision highlighted included outreach tutoring, shared placements between school and college, work experience and regular sessions with support workers and/or therapists in the statutory and voluntary sectors. Some of the best examples of successful placements, post-exclusion, were with small specialist units working with low numbers of pupils. Children and their families derived clear benefits from established relationships with a service provider who '*held their story*', who knew them well and had a clear holistic overview of how their needs had evolved over time and their history of engagement.

Nicholson *et al.* (2018) carried out research on an English AP free secondary school (spread across three sites) in order to identify teacher (or other school staff) behaviours that facilitated and inhibited factors associated with re-engagement in their education: in this specific study, these were understood in terms of fulfilment of pupils' psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence. Almost all students at the AP school in question had either been excluded from, or refused to attend, their mainstream secondary school (or other AP provision). This was due to a range of problems including poor records of attendance at their previous school, fighting with peers, bullying, pregnancy and anxiety. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students in order to elicit information about their psychological needs and engagement: these were supplemented by staff interviews and lesson observations. The report identified factors associated with fulfilling pupils' psychological needs including: respect and non-confrontation (from staff and peers); choice and flexibility over aspects of educational provision; a focus on the value of education; clarity in teaching and expectations; classwork support; and demonstration of confidence in pupils by staff. Factors identified as potential barriers to reintegration in education included: attempts to control (including threats and punishments), encouragement of competition between peers; incorrect challenge; level of work; demonstration of irritation by staff; and perceived unfair treatment.

The children involved in this study described how the teaching practices in this AP contrasted with their previous experiences of school and helped them re-engage with education: staff knew children personally and understood how their backgrounds impacted on their behaviour in school, and pupils believed that staff cared and supported them. There was an emphasis on helping pupils form positive peer relationships which, amongst other advantages, fostered a sense of belonging: the report suggests that this is important in the context of developing a classroom 'community' in which children experience meaningful personal connections with others (Baker, 1999).

A minority of pupils attending the AP reported related rejection issues, in which they believed that staff had demonstrated irritation towards them or treated them unfairly.

Clarity in teaching and expectations, classwork support, and displaying confidence in pupils facilitated competence. Staff provided the structure necessary to underpin learning, for those who were unable to self-regulate their learning. This enabled them to progress (Putwain *et al.*, 2016). Pupils reported that staff believed in their academic capability and this in turn, helped them to believe in themselves.

The study conducted on behalf of the charity Barnardo's (Evans, 2010), discussed in Chapter Four, used a case study approach to examine four different models of intervention, two of which related to AP services. One of the AP services highlighted in the report was a small grass roots charity providing respite and reintegration in the form of an inclusive learning programme for young people who found it difficult to remain in mainstream school. This programme lasted one term, and the service also aimed to support young people during their return to school the following term through mentoring and weekly visits. This service had a particular focus on working with Black Caribbean or mixed heritage young people.

The second AP intervention described in the report was a Barnardo's service which worked in partnership with the local authority and aimed to help the most vulnerable Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils (aged 11 to 16) who were alienated from mainstream education to take part in positive activities and to develop good relationships, in order to break the cycle of harmful experiences. In the service, pupils worked intensively with a project worker on a one-to-one basis in programmes that met their needs, such as learning to plan activities or helping them cope with college attendance. Where feasible, the family was involved. The local authority aimed to maintain a zero-exclusions policy, so officially these pupils remained on the roll of a school, although there were indications that they were not able to cope in mainstream education. Because of funding restrictions and limited availability of premises, the provider could not provide the full-time entitlement of 25 hours of education for the young people they worked with. Workers at the project attempted to place young people elsewhere to make up their hours but none of the young people were occupied in a constructive educational activity for more than three days per week and several received even less input. Despite the best efforts of workers to engage these young people, because attendance at the project was voluntary, they did not always attend.

One of the recommendations resulting from this research was that "a range of alternative provision should be available in every area to meet the diverse needs of young people at risk of exclusion. Preventive intervention needs to be offered sooner and more widely to young people at risk of exclusion" (Evans, 2010).

In their 2017 study discussed earlier in this literature review, Sproston *et al.* also investigated experiences of alternative provision. Autistic girls were invited to participate (via PRUs, special schools and charitable organisations in the south east

of England) if they were of secondary-school age (11–18 years) and had experienced exclusion from mainstream secondary education: of those who participated, seven were currently situated in PRUs and one was awaiting placement at an AP due to recent (parental) withdrawal from school. The research found that while smaller or more intimate classroom environments were seen in a positive light by interviewees, this also brought challenges in terms of increased levels of attention on individuals and inappropriate classroom peers. Despite these concerns, the girls valued the alternative opportunities that the PRU offered (e.g. ‘work experience’, ‘animal class’ and ‘offsite activities’) and felt that these would ‘open up opportunities’ for them and help them progress. The girls were also positive about the way that alternative provision was flexible to their needs: for example, one pupil could ‘listen to music to calm down or to concentrate’. Parents suggested that the curriculum in the PRUs, yielded ‘similar outcomes’ to mainstream education, but appeared to be tailored to their child’s needs (Sproston *et al.*, 2017).

Rudoe’s (2014) research with pregnant or teenage mothers within an AP setting reflected on how the AP was a different and a better environment for them, as it was more relaxed than school. The research included semi-structured interviews with 16 pregnant and parenting young women aged 16-20 as well as with staff members at the AP setting in question. Evidence from the interviews reported that these young women felt that their emotional and practical needs were prioritised at the alternative educational setting (unlike at school), allowing them to feel supported.

Conclusions from the literature on alternative provision

The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) concluded that the quality of AP is far too variable and that even the best teachers may be lacking in suitable training and development, which impacts on the support that children receive. They made several recommendations to enhance the AP sector, including the recruitment of more high-quality teachers, and supporting and developing teaching staff more effectively (also recommended by Gill *et al.*, 2017). They suggested that all trainee teachers should be required to undertake a placement outside of mainstream education, for example in AP or a special school.

The Committee stated that AP should be seen as part of a suite of options that schools had at their disposal to ensure there are supportive, flexible environments to meet individual needs. They also recommended that all organisations offering alternative provision should be required to inform their local authority of their offer, and that the local authority should then make the list of alternative providers operating in their local authority available to schools and parents on their website: they suggest that this would allow schools and local authorities to make more informed decisions about placing pupils in AP.

A further recommendation made by the committee was that PRUs and other forms of AP should be renamed in order to address issues of stigmatisation and parental reluctance to send their children to them (Education Select Committee, 2018).

Evans (2009) recommended that there should be a range of AP available in every area to meet the diverse needs of young people at risk of exclusion. Menzies *et al.* (2015) recommended the need to raise the quality of AP and improve and emphasise their educational value. They discussed moving away from silos and improving the partnerships across different educational providers (i.e. schools, AP and universities) to build a shared understanding and responsibility by, for example, working as a multi-academy trust, alongside links to additional services such as mental health, social workers and substance misuse teams. They include a quote from the roundtable debate they conducted with 14 practitioners:

“It would be wonderful from an Alternative Provider perspective to not be the outsider from education but to be part of the solution ... to be commissioned to be part of a group of academies or a cluster of schools where we would be their preferred provider to enhance those young people that are not quite fitting within the jigsaw.” (p23/24)

Nicholson *et al.* (2018) also endorsed the need for a tailored approach to meet the individual needs of students. In their discussion of research on risk factors contributing to pupils' drop-out from education Stamou *et al.* (2014) highlight the Office of the Children's Commissioner's assertion that good practice in AP should include tailored provision to meet individual needs and that it also meant dealing with 'underlying issues', in some cases through counselling provided by expert staff or other restorative approaches. The report also asserts that good practice in AP involves maintaining strong links with mainstream schools and providing AP in well-equipped and attractive learning settings.

The Centre for Social Justice (2018) made a number of recommendations about AP including the need for schools and local authorities to maintain data on AP use and the time pupils spend there; for schools to remain responsible and accountable for the pupils they exclude and for devolved funds spent on commissioning support for children with complex needs, and on limiting avoidable exclusions, to be ring-fenced. The Centre also called for the introduction of a system for detecting poor practice early and a light-touch registration scheme to be introduced for currently unregistered providers (recognising that the full force of an Ofsted inspection framework would not be suitable for many of these providers).

Other recommendations from the Centre for Social Justice report covered teacher training and continuing professional development, possibly including peer to peer approaches, citing a need for teachers to be equipped to identify the proxies that

tend to be attributed to pupils at risk of exclusion (such as SEND, mental health conditions, family breakdown, domestic abuse and social and emotional challenges) and for greater 'cross-pollination' between the mainstream and AP sectors so that intelligence about complex needs can be integrated into mainstream environments. They advocated that AP should be more highly respected, and that best practice should be shared and trainee teachers supported to build experience in AP.

Managed moves

This final section sets out the evidence about managed moves. Managed move systems operate in many parts of England as an alternative to formal exclusions. Managed moves take place when a school decides it can no longer educate and support a child: in these cases, the current or 'home' school can make a voluntary agreement with another school or an alternative educational setting for the child to move there. This avoids a formal exclusion appearing on their record (Children's Commissioner, 2012).

Managed moves are voluntary agreements across the two education settings, the parents and the child, sometimes with local authority involvement. There is no statutory guidance directing when they should be used or around processes and procedures, but the DfE's statutory guidance for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion states that managed moves must occur with the consent of all parties involved (including the parents and the admission authority of the school), and that a pupil must never be forced into a managed move via the threat of exclusion (DfE, 2017a).

'Systems and practice vary enormously. In some cases the move is negotiated informally between head teachers ... Whereas in others, there is a more formal and closely monitored process' (Children's Commissioner, 2012, p25). Managed moves can involve moving to a new school or college with an amended learning programme; attending part-time at the current school, with an individual learning and therapeutic programme elsewhere; full-time attendance at a PRU with a view to the pupil returning to the current school or moving to a new school or college; part-time attendance at a PRU combined with a home and community learning plan; home-based learning to cater for the pupil's SEN. As managed moves are voluntary agreements, there is no statutory scheme governing their use and no governmental guidance on how the process should work. There is also no right of appeal against such a move, meaning it is difficult for any injustice to be addressed (Children's Commissioner, 2012).

Reflections on managed moves

A number of studies have focused on managed moves. This literature review had to prioritise those to include here because of time restraints.

In 2013, White *et al.* (2013) conducted a research study focusing on illegal exclusions and inequalities in education: this involved conducting four focus groups with teachers and four group interviews with non-teaching professionals who work with schools and/or young people and their families in order to investigate their views and experiences of these issues. In total, the researchers interviewed 20 teachers, six local authority staff and two national organisations working with young people at risk of exclusion and with the families of disabled children. These interviewees reported that schools used a range of approaches as an alternative to formal exclusion: in addition to preventative strategies and the use of AP, 'inclusive' measures included the proactive and planned use of managed moves or transfer of pupils to another school, often brokered and managed via a Fair Access Protocol or arrangement in the local authority. These were generally seen to provide pupils with positive opportunities for a fresh start or to provide a setting that would better meet their needs.

In their systematic review of managed moves, Messeter *et al.* (2018) argue that the principle aim of a managed move is to collaboratively problem solve between the school, child and their families and agree a strategic move to new provision. Referring to statutory guidance (DfES, 2004), they state that the key difference between a managed move, a referral to AP and an exclusion is that it should be a voluntary agreement between all parties. A carefully designed transition from one education setting to the next is at the centre of the process to prevent a pupil being permanently excluded. The process should be flexible, allowing for issues to be responded to by schools or external agencies and should be facilitated by someone impartial. Unlike exclusion, with a managed move, significance is placed on planning so the child is included in the process and helping to develop a pastoral and personalised support plan.

Gazeley *et al.* (2015) used a small-scale qualitative study in a single (relatively affluent) local authority in England to explore inequalities in the rates of exclusion. Drawing on findings from 48 in-depth interviews conducted with 31 respondents (including parents of pupils with a history of involvement in school exclusion processes, school-based professionals and other practitioners involved in the exclusion process), the authors reflected on how a managed move can provide a pupil with the chance to make a fresh start and avoid the poor outcomes known to be associated with permanent exclusion. It was noted that managed moves were not always appropriate or successful, however, and that they require well-defined

protocols, close co-operation between stakeholders, ongoing monitoring and the commitment of resources and support.

A further concern raised was that while families have some rights of appeal when it comes to permanent exclusions, they found challenging decisions more complicated and nuanced in the case of managed moves. While it was noted that the parent/carer and young person must consent, it is difficult to know if consent is freely given when permanent exclusion is the only alternative (Gazeley *et al.*, 2015).

Rose *et al.* (2018) describe how a partnership of primary schools developed more inclusive systems, called 'Transferred Inclusion' (TI), through 'temporary' managed moves, to support students previously given fixed period exclusions in response to unacceptable behaviour. Instead of being sent home, a pupil would be sent to another school for between one and five days, to work in isolation with a behaviour support worker. The researchers conducted 10 interviews and six questionnaires with head teachers of schools implementing TI, as well as monitoring the number of TIs and FTEs in participating schools between 2007/8 and 2010/11. The study reported that participation in the TI project appeared to result in a reduction in FTEs, over this period, which therefore increased the numbers of students included within their mainstream lessons when they previously might have been excluded. Where TI was used, it was seen as a useful deterrent to further poor behaviour because pupils felt socially excluded. The researchers note that this raises the question of how truly inclusive such a system can be and recommend that schools need time to work together to see improvements.

In addition to TI, all head teachers spoke about how understanding the context (family life) of a pupil can help act as a preventative measure. Head teachers described aiming to be proactive, rather than reactive, when it came to addressing behaviour and working hard to involve and engage families before problems escalated. They worked with a number of organisations to do this effectively.

Craggs and Kelly (2018) conducted a small-scale, in-depth, study involving interviews with four pupils who had undergone managed moves, and had attended their receiver schools for periods ranging from six weeks to one year. The researchers highlight the importance of listening to children, involving them in their managed move and supporting their sense of 'belonging', as this has a powerful effect on their emotional, motivational, and academic functioning, as discussed in Chapter Two. They criticise the lack of effort made to listen to students' views on school belonging, or to seek their opinions on how best to promote same during a managed move. Despite pupils being positive about the opportunity to have a 'fresh start' they needed more clarity about their 'trial' periods at the receiver schools, as they experienced a lot of anxiety about the move.

Conclusions from the literature on managed moves

Evidence drawn from literature in this review indicates that it can be beneficial for children to be allowed to make a 'fresh start' in a new environment, without the stigma of a permanent exclusion. In the course of the Children's Commissioner's school exclusions inquiry (2012), a number of elements emerged as good or promising practice in managing moves between schools and maximising their effectiveness.

Where practice was good, there was a formalised and closely monitored system (usually through a fair access or managed move protocol) in place which set out clearly the responsibilities of all concerned. Good practice also involved co-operation between schools, with strong relationships between head teachers based on mutual respect and both 'excluding' and 'receiving' schools sharing responsibility for the child who was moving until the point where they fully transferred and settled in the new environment. The report also noted that local authorities often act as brokers and critical friends to agree appropriate protocols and responsibilities

Further elements of good practice identified by the Children's Commissioner report included the involvement of children, young people and their parents in the necessary decision making and decisions being made collaboratively in the best interests of the child: this involved all parties being given the opportunity to express their views and have those views taken into account (Children's Commissioner, 2012).

In a case study report of four interventions aiming to prevent exclusions, Evans (2010) recommended that exclusions and managed moves should not be considered for a pupil unless adequate, properly resourced AP is already in place. Where managed moves are possible, local authorities and schools must regularly review each case and the excluding school should continue to monitor the child in their destination school, to ensure that the placement does not break down and a child does not attend. They also recommend the use of a CAF approach or holistic assessment of a child's needs to ensure that underlying needs are addressed through the managed moved process.

For a managed move to work, Gazeley *et al.* (2015) argued that they need to be based on well-defined protocols; and close cooperation and collaboration across schools and other local stakeholders to share resources and support. Also, having a local authority wide policy was found to help overcome different schools having different levels of tolerance to behaviour which challenges. Some research considers Local authorities to be integral in providing a neutral coordinating role and ensuring accountability across schools (e.g. Children's Commissioner, 2013).

Messeter *et al.* (2018) recommend that there should be clear guidelines on the managed move process provided by the local authority or academy trust; children should be central to the process, with a focus on their strengths; a personalised or pastoral support plan should be co-constructed between professionals, the child and their parents; good communication should be promoted to foster positive relationships; and parents should be offered support from external services during the process.

Chapter summary – alternative provision and managed moves

This chapter has reflected on the evidence around AP and managed moves and provides useful learning about the range of approaches and the contexts in which they have been employed. There is however, limited evidence in relation to what works.

Alternative Provision

A wide array of AP has developed in response to the children who present with unique educational histories and a range of multiple and complex support needs.

Much of the literature reflected on the role and added value of AP. Some small-scale studies with children and families noted that children reported feeling safer, more engaged and happier in AP and that they were often positive about their experience and their AP teachers.

Key principles of effective practice highlighted in the literature include: allowing children a degree of autonomy and choice in their learning and environment; positive and strong relationships with staff, the involvement of parents and carers; an appropriate behaviour management approach that is consistently applied; a curriculum that encompasses core skills along with vocational options; the opportunity to work in smaller environments with a lower student-teacher ratio.

Recommendations from the literature on AP included regulating and standardising the quality across AP and providing more robust development, training and support of teaching staff.

Managed moves

As managed moves are voluntary agreements, there is no statutory framework or guidance governing their use or processes.

Some research considers Local authorities to be integral in providing a neutral coordinating role and ensuring accountability across schools (e.g. Children's Commissioner, 2013).

Managed moves were found to be more successful when there is a clear agreement between the excluding and receiving institutions; where relationships are developed; transparent, and all those involved are aware of what is happening; children are fully included in the decision-making process, and there is no implied threat of exclusion.

Recommendations were made for managed moves to be based on well-defined protocols; close cooperation or collaboration with schools and other local stakeholders to share resources and support. Children should be central to the process with a focus on their strengths.

Chapter Six: Reintegration

Reintegration was defined by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2004; as cited by Levinson, 2016) as efforts and strategies put in place by local authorities, schools, and other stakeholders to return pupils to mainstream education after a period of absence, exclusion or otherwise. One of the main purposes of AP is considered to be the provision of a period of respite to pupils with the view of enabling their reintegration back into mainstream or special school where appropriate (Levinson, 2016, Jalali *et al.*, 2018).

This section covers: factors affecting reintegration from AP into school; evidence around the type of supportive mechanisms put in place by schools to support positive reintegration experiences; pupils' views on the process and challenges to successful reintegration.

The literature on this area indicates that numerous strategies and interventions are used by schools in order to help reintegrate pupils into the school community after attending AP or following an exclusion. Amongst these strategies, supportive reintegration processes were highlighted as being vital: where these were not practiced, it was reported that students were left at heightened risk of another exclusion (Thompson *et al.*, 2011; House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018).

Factors that affect reintegration

Evidence from across the literature reviewed indicates that both the age of the pupil and the time spent within AP appear to influence children and young people's overall views of school and their desire to return to mainstream or special school.

Age

In a 2018 study, Jalali *et al.* conducted 13 in-depth qualitative interviews with pupils aged 7-16 years across three PRUs. The researchers reported that the primary school-aged pupils interviewed generally had a desire to return to mainstream education and that this contrasted with the pupils of secondary school age. This was further observed by staff in a PRU in South West England (Levinson, 2016). Staff in this PRU reported reintegration rates of around 90% for primary school aged children, which decreased as children got older, falling to around 75% for children in Years 7 and 8, around 50% for children in Year 9 and falling as low as 10-15% for those in GCSE years.

Jalali *et al.* (2018) speculated that this apparent trend may be due to previous school experiences: for example, some primary school pupils interviewed in the study attributed their dislike of school to a single, individual school and tended to

acknowledge that their AP was temporary. Jalali *et al.* suggests that this gave these children a sense of hope about their educational future. Conversely, the secondary school-aged pupils interviewed appeared to dislike educational establishments as a whole, rather than one specific school. This was related to their perceptions of high expectations and pressure within mainstream school environments, which made pupils identify as inadequate and failures, consequently affecting their sense of belonging within the community (Jalali *et al.*, 2018). As observed in a study by Lawrence (2011; as cited by Levinson, 2016), this could have long-lasting effects and had a negative bearing on their views of returning to mainstream education, as well as on their perceived self-esteem and self-worth.

Levinson (2016) also speculates, however, that this pattern of reintegration rates decreasing with age may be due to the length of time children spent in AP and the familial atmosphere within these settings. This is discussed in more detail below.

Variations in levels of flexibility and support for pupils between AP and mainstream schools

As discussed in Chapter Five, AP enabled a flexible package of support to be built up around the pupil. However, Pennacchia *et al.* (2016) noted the possibility that perceptions of AP settings as less punitive and less structured than mainstream schools could serve to hinder young people's reengagement with more rigid mainstream systems (citing Slee, 2011).

Jalali *et al.* (2018) described pupils experiencing a sense of belonging within the PRU environment. Pupils in the three case study PRUs reported a high degree of connectedness to its staff and fellow pupils, especially after a prolonged period of attendance. Pupils likened the support to a close-knit unit like a family which they did not want to leave in order to return to mainstream education. Levinson's work (2016) makes similar points, reporting that unlike in mainstream education pupils felt there was always someone looking out for and supporting them. It was also reported that the longer pupils attended AP, the more engrained this culture became in students and the more critical they grew of the perceived rigidity of mainstream education.

Supportive mechanisms

Overall, mainstream schools studied in the literature appeared to have made efforts to ensure that pupils felt welcomed back into the school environment, including implementing various strategies to support positive and successful reintegration. These included: phased introductions back into school; reintegration meetings including parents, children and multi-agency services; support planning; additional dedicated support; facilitating positive pupil-staff relationships and communication with parents.

Phased reintegration

A phased or gradual return to mainstream education where children increased the amount of time spent at the school over a course of weeks or months was seen as a useful technique for a successful and positive reintegration (Thompson *et al.*, 2011). This strategy was successfully used in Northern Ireland with looked after children returning to mainstream education after a period of prolonged absence and was reported to help build their confidence (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011).

There are also some reports in the literature that this strategy has been found to work well with pupils who had been excluded or were at risk of exclusion. Evans (2010) reported on a range of Barnardo's projects, one of which was the Leeds Reach Partnership – an AP for Year 9 students who were at risk of exclusion from mainstream school which the researchers found had a reintegration rate of almost 100% within two terms of being placed in that AP. After ten weeks on the programme, pupils began to attend mainstream school two days a week and by the end of the programme this had increased to three days, before they started full-time in mainstream school the following term (Stamou *et al.*, 2014). A phased reintegration approach has also been used for pupils with autism who had been excluded: Brede *et al.*'s case study of an Inclusive Learning Hub found this approach to be successful in helping autistic pupils to readjust to full-time education (Brede *et al.*, 2016; Brede *et al.*, 2017).

Reintegration meetings and child-centred planning

In her study of an urban local authority, Carlile (2011) reported that where children had been out of mainstream school, reintegration planning meetings were the first step to welcome children back into the school community. Similarly, Rose *et al.* (2018) reported that one partnership of 18 primary schools used reintegration meetings after periods of transferred inclusion, in which children at risk of exclusion were sent to another school in the partnership for a set number of days.

Within reintegration meetings described in the literature, senior staff members welcomed the pupil back into school and emphasised their value within the community; this was thought to be particularly important in creating a positive relationship between the school and pupil from the outset (Rose *et al.*, 2016; Brede *et al.*, 2016; Brede *et al.*, 2017). Lawrence (2011, as cited in Levinson, 2016) argued that guidance on the reintegration process and what would be expected of a child needed to be clearly explained by staff from both the PRU and the new school. Reintegration meetings can offer a good opportunity for this, and can also provide opportunities to bring pupils and parents together with the school and multi-agency representatives, especially any already working with the child such as social workers, educational psychologists, or Youth Offending Team staff, to help plan

targets and put further support in place (Carlile, 2011). Ewan-Corrigan (2013) stressed the importance of planning centred on the individual child and enabling children to be fully involved in their transition planning. Messeter *et al.*'s (2018) systematic literature review also reported that this planning was felt to be integral to the managed move process and to ensuring consistent and appropriate support for the pupil.

In the local authority studied by Carlile (2011), the extent to which the agreed support was put in place within appropriate timeframes was found to be variable: the research report notes that it is therefore important for agreements made in reintegration meetings to be put into practice in a timely manner to enable children to have a positive reintegration.

Dedicated support

Thompson *et al.*'s study (2011) suggests that pupils may need dedicated support put in place to help them with the transition back into mainstream school and recommended pupils be supported by a dedicated behavioural support assistant.

In their study of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) children, Wilkin *et al.* (2010) found evidence that the use of dedicated support for these pupils after a period out of education was particularly effective; namely, behavioural support assistants, teaching assistants and buddies or mentors.

Relationships with staff

Based on interviews with a small group of post-excluded young people, Pirrie *et al.* (2011) report that transition between placements was made easier when children had positive relationships with staff members: this included both new relationships and familiar individuals taking on new roles and providing a level of continuity. Strong and trusting relationships between teachers and pupils was highlighted in various studies as something children, parents and school staff agreed was important for reintegration (Evans *et al.*, 2009; Pirrie *et al.*, 2011; Messeter *et al.*, 2018; Nicholson *et al.*, 2018). In some cases, this was thought to be crucial to the success or failure of reintegration (Muir, 2013 as cited in Messeter *et al.*, 2018)

In a study of a group of children with autism reintegrating back into school, it was found to be helpful when pupils were purposefully matched with a member of staff to support them, based on mutual interests and personalities (Brede *et al.* 2016; Brede *et al.* 2017). This helped to build rapport, trust and a positive relationship.

Research from Evans (2010) and Stamou *et al.* (2014) noted how previous positive relations could help to support a positive reintegration experience. Within the Leeds Reach programme (Evans, 2010), tutors that worked with young people in AP

became mentors for pupils upon their reintegration into mainstream school. These mentors visited the pupil at school at least once a week to support their progress within their new environment, and allowed them to talk through any problems or difficulties with a familiar face.

Involvement of parents

A number of qualitative studies have reported that the involvement of parents within the reintegration process is of vital importance. Open lines of communication were considered necessary to enable parents to feel equal partners within the decision-making processes, in tracking their child's progress and intervening early in any problems (Bagley *et al.*, 2016 as cited in Messeter *et al.*, 2018). Evans *et al.* (2009) reported the importance of parental encouragement and suggested this could only be achieved when parents were readily informed and communicated with. According to Wilkin *et al.* (2010), this strategy was particularly important for successful reintegration into primary school and school staff reported conducting home visits. Ensuring parents were involved was seen as the school's responsibility, though there were mixed views regarding the optimal methods and frequency of communication (Messeter *et al.*, 2018).

Whilst involving parents was considered helpful for positive reintegration, Levinson (2016) noted that this could be challenging as parents frequently had negative experiences of their own time at school: in these cases, encouraging parents to engage could be difficult and could bring up painful memories from their own experiences.

Key challenges to reintegration

School-based challenges

The House of Commons Education Select Committee (2018) noted that some schools held up reintegration processes or, in some cases, refused to accept children trying to move back to mainstream education from AP. The Committee suggested that there was an overreliance in some schools on individual head teachers' morals and values for inclusivity in reintegration decisions. In instances where schools refused to accept pupils, there was felt to be no accountability or scrutiny of their decisions or the processes that led to these decisions (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018).

Within the Committee's call for evidence, it was further stated that this system relied on local communities of professionals to work together and there were no

accountability mechanisms in place. Consequently, the Fair Access Protocol³⁴ was not always felt to work well in practice as there were no or minimal consequences for schools who refused to admit children from AP (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018). In light of this, the Committee recommended that the Government issue clearer guidance on Fair Access Protocols and consequences for schools that do not comply.

Timing of reintegration

As noted above, Levinson (2016) found an association between time spent out of mainstream school and likelihood and / or desire to return. In research involving interviews with young people and staff at a PRU in the South West of England, reintegration was portrayed as a precarious process by some respondents in the PRUs studied. Levinson states that timing had a bearing on the likelihood of successful reintegration and that finding the ‘tipping point’ where return and reintegration was possible was considered crucial. This was reported to be dependent upon a number of factors including the time needed to allow the child to develop the social and emotional skills required to cope with mainstream education.

AP staff in the PRU reported that it was necessary to consider young people’s views and their level of acceptance of returning to mainstream school. Staff were described by Levinson as mindful that there needed to be a balance between the young person’s needs and the length of time that had passed to help identify a window of opportunity for reintegration. From their perspective, there was also no specific formula to follow and each case had to be approached on an individual basis.

Adapting to more structured environments

Levinson (2016) identified further challenges surrounding reintegration stemming from the mainstream education environment, which was perceived as rigid and structured in comparison to AP. Staff from the AP setting involved in this study noted that reintegration required pupils to adapt to less flexible and less supportive communities, which could be difficult after attending AP. In order to account for this adaptation, it was suggested by the research participants that staff in mainstream schools needed to respond more flexibly to behaviour issues (Levinson, 2016). Children in the study were reported feeling that staff in mainstream schools often overreacted to poor or disruptive behaviour and their reaction could escalate events. They suggested that if they were able to leave the room to calm down, then situations were likely to de-escalate – however, they also reported that leaving the room was not normally an option within mainstream schools. Levinson concluded

³⁴ Local authorities are required to have a Fair Access Protocol system in place, developed in partnership with local schools. This system is designed to quickly find school places for pupils to ensure their time out of school is minimised; this includes those who do not have a school due to exclusion or those in AP (House of Commons Education Select Committee, 2018).

that staff should approach situations with more tolerance and flexibility where students were trying to reintegrate.

Potential stigma

Where children were reintegrating back into their previous school, according to Kulz's qualitative study of AP in an area of Greater London (2015), there were often negative feelings present between parents, children and schools. When children returned to school after being reinstated by an Independent Review Panel (IRP) specifically, parents described their children as being seen as still guilty of the behaviour that led to permanent exclusion. In Kulz's study, parents and pupils reported feeling unwanted within the school and continued to feel stigmatised, despite the exclusion being overturned. Pupils reported that they were not given the support or resources to catch up on the work they had missed during their period out of education and did not receive appropriate support, including where the exclusion took place in the lead up to exams (Kulz, 2015).

Chapter Summary – reintegration

Overall, the research reviewed suggests that reintegration back into mainstream education could be a precarious process which should be undertaken with great care, detailed planning and good communication in order to be most effective. This chapter summarises the research around some of the factors that may influence pupils' views of reintegration, including their age and the length of time attending AP.

The literature generally concurs that reintegration should be child-centred, holistic and have a multi-agency approach to encourage positive reintegration experiences, and notes that schools may need a variety of strategies in order to focus on individual children's needs.

Research with groups of pupils such as GRT children and those with autism indicates that phasing reintegration to allow pupils to gradually increase the time spent in school was felt to be effective in aiding successful transitions back to mainstream. Similarly, reintegration meetings helped welcome students back into mainstream school and plan support arrangements. Positive relationships with staff and communication with parents were also reported by a number of studies to be crucial for successful reintegration.

However, there were a number of challenges for reintegration. Some schools were more willing than others to accept pupils from AP. Therefore, finding a school to reintegrate a child into could prove problematic.

Getting the timing of reintegration right was at times reported as being a difficult balance: the right time for the individual pupil was dependent on the views of the pupil, their ability, readiness and desire to return to a more structured environment and how long they had spent in AP.

The older the child and the longer spent out of mainstream education, the greater the challenges might be for reintegration. This could be due to the attitudes of the excluded pupil and/or those of the prospective placement school. Some reports noted that reintegration could be undermined by the stigma attached to the child and their exclusion, which in turn affected how pupils were seen within the (new) school community.

Chapter Seven: Reviews of exclusion

This Chapter provides an overview of research on parents' right to appeal against a decision to exclude their child, and pupils', parents' and professionals' views and experiences of these processes.

After receiving the formal written notification from the school that their child has been excluded, there is a two-step process for parents to use to challenge the school's decision. The school's governing board has a duty to consider parents' representations about an exclusion and consider the reinstatement of an excluded pupil. The governing board can either uphold the school's decision to exclude, or direct reinstatement of the child at school. If unhappy with the outcome from the governing board's review, parents can apply within the legal time frame to have an Independent Review Panel (IRP) review the governing board's decision not to reinstate the pupil. Parents can attend the hearing and may make written or oral representations to the panel.

Very little research was found on this topic and most concerned the IRP stage. Some literature discussed governing board reviews and governors' roles on the IRP. However, the amount on IRPs was still low, possibly due to their relative newness as they were established in 2012. We could not find statistics about the use of governing board reviews and IRPs by the groups of children at disproportionate risk of exclusion. Most of the research located was qualitative and used small samples.

The findings presented in this chapter are largely taken from four research reports: by the Children's Commissioner (2012), Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014), Kulz (2015) and Hodge *et al.* (2016). All of these studies were based upon qualitative interviews or focus groups with a range of stakeholders, including school staff, head teachers, local authority staff, parents and children. The Children's Commissioner (2012) also integrated a range of fieldwork visits, oral evidence and calls for evidence and was based upon a wide range of findings. Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014), Kulz (2015) and Hodge *et al.* (2016) were based on much smaller samples. It must be noted that these studies are not generalisable due to the small sample sizes and self-selecting nature of the participants, and thus the potential bias to negative experiences.

About the Independent Review Panel

IRPs were introduced in 2012. Therefore, there is a less comprehensive research base in comparison to other aspects of the exclusion process. The available research examined the experiences and views of school staff, local authority staff, parent and pupils.

Official statistics show the number of reviews lodged to IRPs and their predecessors since 1997/98. Since their introduction in 2012/13, the trend in the number of independent reviews lodged has been in line with trends in permanent exclusions, accounting for around seven per cent of permanent exclusions. In 2016/17, of the 560 independent reviews lodged, 45 children were reinstated (DfE, 2018a).

The local authority (for a maintained school) or academy trust (for an academy) must arrange for a panel to review the exclusion decision where this is requested by parents within 15 days from the date they are given notice of the governing body's decision to uphold a permanent exclusion. Parents also have a right attend this meeting.

As explained in Chapter Five, decisions around managed moves cannot be challenged under the IRP, which are for permanent exclusions only. There are three different outcomes from IRP meetings: to uphold the permanent exclusion, to recommend the governing body reconsider reinstatement; or to direct the governing body to reconsider reinstatement. IRPs can only recommend or direct schools to reconsider their decisions but cannot direct a school to reinstate the pupil. As such, a decision can only be quashed if it violates legality or has significant procedural inadequacies. Hodge *et al.* (2016) conclude that in theory this weakens the position of parents as they do not have a legal basis to compel the school to reinstate the pupil, even in circumstances where the IRP view the decision as unjust or unfair. There have been calls from wider stakeholder groups for IAPs to be reintroduced (see e.g. Children's Commissioner, 2012; Kulz, 2015; Coram, 2016; Traveller Movement, 2016).

The research showed that IRPs can take different formats, but normally explore events leading up to an exclusion, evidence supporting the exclusion, the processes gone through by the school and the apparent validity of the decision. Decisions by the panel are made according to the civil standard of proof, which is the on the balance of probabilities.

There are some differences in the support available for parents of children with SEND (Hodge *et al.*, 2016). These parents have the right to request that a SEN expert appointed by the local authority (or academy trust) attends the IRP, regardless of whether the school acknowledged their child to have SEND. Within this, the role of the SEN expert is to communicate with the panel regarding any SEND issues that have been or are relevant to the exclusion process. Parents of children with SEND also have access to the First-tier Tribunal, in addition to the IRP, in cases where they feel that exclusion has resulted from discrimination. The First-tier Tribunal has greater powers than the IRP, whereby it can opt to directly reinstate pupils if it reaches the decision that the pupil was unfairly discriminated against.

Views and experiences of IRP meetings

The majority of the summarised research in this section stems from individuals' experiences of the IRP process; including pupils, parents, local authority officers and school staff (Children's Commissioner, 2012; Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014; Kulz, 2015; & Hodge *et al.*, 2016). The main themes emerging from the research were:

- concerns over schools following the correct exclusion processes;
- the right to appeal being a key motivator for parents;
- the power imbalance felt by parents in IRPs;
- the emotional and psychological impact on the whole family; and
- the need for support and advocacy for families.

Schools following due process

There is very little research specifically on the IRP process and, as such, some of the points below refer to its predecessor, the IAP system, which was the appeal process in place prior to 2012. Some of the characteristics of (and issues pertaining to) the two systems are similar, but not identical and the literature quoted focuses on processes and points relevant to the new appeal structure.

Research by Briggs (2010) on IAP aimed to examine families' low use of IAPs. Among the findings was the feedback from one head teacher that many schools didn't follow due process, for example not following the full legal procedure, not sending parents formal written notification that their child had been excluded, or not informing them of their right to appeal to the school governors or to the IAP, because of a lack of knowledge about the Education Act 1988. As a result, the children and parents in this study were confused as to their status and did not always know if an exclusion had taken place.

From its examination of school case files for successful appeals in the IAPs from 10 randomly selected local authorities, the Children's Commissioner (2012) raised concerns about a minority of schools acting unfairly and not following the correct processes. This led to the Children's Commissioner questioning if families and children were being given a fair chance to exercise their right to redress, if for example they were not formally notified of the school decision; or were not informed of their rights for representation, or of the strict time limits involved; or if the school had not followed the statutory guidance in some other way. Furthermore, a tendency among parents and children to presume that their school was acting fairly and legally, which also made them less likely to challenge decisions, was also noted. Nevertheless, the evidence on this is mixed as the same report notes that in a sample of 2,000 young people, only one in seven felt schools acted fairly in exclusions.

A further concern raised by the Children's Commissioner (2012) research related to how fully schools followed the stipulated process. Anecdotal evidence emerged of schools sending children home for periods of a day or much longer, without recording or notifying parents that this was an exclusion.

The right of redress through IRPs

According to Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014) and Hodge *et al.* (2016), the right to redress and to right a wrong was the primary motivation for parents among a sample of 21. A small-scale qualitative study (Kulz, 2015) reported that many parents felt the system awards too much power to head teachers. Oral evidence given to the Children's Commissioner's Social Exclusions Inquiry (2012) suggested fears that head teachers may be more likely to exclude pupils in 'borderline' circumstances when they knew their decisions would not be overturned by IRPs. However, it was also noted that this was mostly a concern raised by participants and did not stem from direct observation or statistical evidence.

Hodge *et al.* (2016) reported that parents did not feel that the process leading up to exclusion was fair and felt all the blame for an exclusion was levelled at the child and / or their parent. For example, they believed that head teachers failed to consider the problems children were facing, which might explain their behaviour. In the study by Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014), it was noted that some parents believed that the school's lack of clear behavioural policies was partly at fault, especially where exclusion followed a first, one-off incident, or where the school had not met the child's needs or put in place previously agreed support.

Parents interviewed by Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014) and Hodge *et al.* (2016), said that the IRP was the only means to seek any level of reparation for their children. Some parents simply wanted the recognition and acknowledgement that an exclusion was considered unfair by the IRP and did not expect anything further. However, Hodge *et al.* (2016) argues that since the most an IRP could do was to compel a school to reconsider their decision, but not award reinstatement, parents are now disempowered from this form of address. Some parents wanted to make a point and get the head teacher's attention (Kulz, 2015; Hodge *et al.*, 2016).

The perceived power imbalance on governing board reviews and IRPs

Various studies highlight concerns about the power imbalance felt by parents and children facing the array of professionals sitting on the governing board or IRP and the school representatives (Kulz, 2015; Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014; Hodge *et al.*, 2016).

Research by Kulz (2015) raised concerns over the objectivity of some governors' decisions within both governing board reviews and IRPs. Parents among the 15 interviewed by Kulz (2015) expressed views that Governors tended to take the head teacher's account as truth and consequently 'rubber stamp' (p32) the head teacher's decision, rather than robustly and objectively scrutinise the evidence presented. In support of this view, some research participants cited the one-sided questioning of parents and pupils and minimal questions directed towards the school to challenge exclusion decisions. In the same study, some of the six exclusion officers interviewed shared parents' concerns over the objectivity of decision-making and agreed that it could be problematic for governors to be critical of head teachers for fear of damaging professional relations. Instead, the relationship between governors and head teachers was felt to influence decisions and reduce reinstatements. To support governors to be more objective and a 'critical friend' (Kulz, 2015), research participants recommended increased guidance and possibly compulsory training.

Some parents described IRPs, which involve a re-examination of a pupil's behaviour and the events leading up to the exclusion, as like putting their child on 'trial' for their behaviour (Kulz, 2015). One likened it to a 'witch hunt' (Hodge *et al.*, 2016, p9). The expectation to reveal private and family matters to these professionals can cause further distress for parents and children (Hodge *et al.*, 2016). The Children's Commissioner (2012) concluded that IRPs do not offer sufficient safeguards against unfair exclusions.

Other concerns noted in the literature include that the IRP meetings were very formal and were unfamiliar to parents; in addition, IRPs were often viewed as intimidating and favouring the voice of the school over the parents (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014; Hodge *et al.*, 2016). In his interviews with head teachers, exclusion officers and parents participating in IRPs, Kulz (2015) reported that a common theme from the exclusions officers and parents was that this process was 'weighted in the school's favour' (p96). Parents felt that they were at an instant disadvantage before the IRP began as they entered a format they were unfamiliar with, in comparison to professionals on the panel who did this on a frequent basis. Some of the parents interviewed reported that proceedings were conducted in unfamiliar language and jargon, which they did not understand and could not challenge. Even the three parents in the sample who had extensive experience of working in schools and/or a good knowledge of the education system, described the IRP as a stressful and nerve-wracking event. Many parents felt that they and their children were stereotyped, often on racial and/or class grounds. However the sample size for this study is not large enough to draw robust conclusions (Kulz, 2015).

Gazeley's study (2012) with professionals in one local authority in England reported that middle class parents who attended IRPs were viewed by the professionals involved as more powerful, engaged, knowledgeable and able to exert more

influence, in comparison to working-class parents. Kulz's (2015) sample comprised of many parents going through IRPs who identified themselves as 'working class', came from ethnic minority backgrounds, and possibly did not speak English as their first language. Kulz (2015) goes on to note that in these cases the predominantly White, middle class professional panel might be alienating to parents or make engagement even harder.

The notion of blame is discussed in a number of the studies reviewed, both on the IAP and the IRP systems. Parents were reported as feeling they were being blamed for their child's needs and behaviour and that these meetings were felt almost like a punishment for their parenting abilities in a small-scale qualitative piece conducted in only one local authority in England (Gazeley, 2012). This is reported to have led to significant tensions between parents and the professionals sitting on the IAP (Gazeley, 2012). One head teacher interviewed by Kulz (2015) commented that parents did not know how to respond to these situations. Some parents appeared confrontational, whilst others showed 'almost too much professional respect' (Kulz, 2015, p73) and did not challenge important decisions.

On the other hand, the majority of parents interviewed by Wolstenholme *et al.* (2014) felt the meetings were fair and that they had been given time to convey their points to the panel. Similarly, in both of the studies by Kulz (2015) and Hodge *et al.* (2016) some parents found the IRP process supportive. A number expressed appreciation of the IRPs efforts to make them feel comfortable and to engage them in the process (Kulz, 2015). Some of those parents interviewed by Hodge *et al.* (2016) described their panel members as empathetic, supportive and understanding.

The emotional and financial impact of IRPs

The research suggests that IRP processes were often demanding and intimidating for parents and concerns were noted that these processes place families under increased stress and anxiety (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014; Hodge *et al.*, 2016). Some parents who had gone through this procedure reported that it was incredibly stressful and it could feel like a 'second job' (Hodge *et al.*, 2016). The time and emotional investment were reported as significant for some parents and included preparing for the case, lost time from work, the possible financial expense of hiring legal support and the perceived blame put upon them for their child's actions (Hodge *et al.*, 2016).

Parents also noted that it was a very lonely process (Hodge *et al.*, 2016). For some parents this could lead to mental health issues: one case was cited where parents were prescribed anti-depressants to help them cope (Hodge *et al.*, 2016). Some parents also reported their children developing anger and / or depression and becoming withdrawn after exclusion and the IRP processes (Kulz, 2015). Furthermore, it was reported that some children appeared to lose faith in the

education system, felt shame around their exclusion and questioned “*what’s the point of doing education?*” (Kulz, 2015, p90). They started to self-identify as failures, which served to further ostracise them from society, which in turn had a negative impact on their self-confidence and self-efficacy (Kulz, 2015).

For schools, preparing for and attending IRPs also involved time and financial commitments for school staff and head teachers (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014). Staff time accounted for the main cost, with financial costs to parents and schools being relatively low in most cases (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014). This included both preparing for the IRP in terms of collating documentation and attending the IRP meeting which could last a full day. One head teacher reported that for each IRP, a head teacher was needed for half a day to a day, a SENCO was needed for two days and a school governor was needed for a day (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014).

Access to independent support and advocacy

There is no universal system of free support or advocacy for parents and children going through the review process. Some parents received support from the parent partnership service, the local authority, or Coram, as well as local parent organisations in a small number of cases (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014). Yet experiences of support were mixed: some parents found it invaluable whilst others thought they would have needed more. Around a quarter of the 30 parents interviewed noted a lack of any support, which they felt had made the process far more difficult (Wolstenholme *et al.*, 2014). Hodge *et al.* (2016) also stresses that accessing support was problematic for some, even if they were given contact details.

Some parents in the research paid solicitors for legal representation. Some of the interviewees who had help from an advocate reported a more positive experience (Kulz, 2015). One of these parents described how difficult it was to deliver a coherent argument, in such an unfamiliar complex situation and under such pressure. The advocate helped them to navigate the engage in the process and understand what to expect at each stage. According to Kulz (2015), one parent valued their advocate for their specialist knowledge and professional standing. Parents working with advocates felt this helped to decrease the power imbalance and they noticed a substantial positive shift in how the panel professionals treated them when they had professional support present, compared to attending alone or only with other family members.

However, such expertise, advocacy or legal support is not easy to access (Hodge *et al.*, 2016) and this research found that many parents wanted such support but financial barriers prevented this. Not all families can qualify for Legal Aid support for advice, advocacy or representation at governing board reviews or IRPs. Many parents, school and local authority staff included in the various research studies cited

in this chapter thought there was inadequate support for parents going through the IRP process. According to Hodge *et al.* (2016) parents felt they should get support through the review process, and that this would help them feel less intimidated, support them and their children with the emotional aspects, help present their case as fully as possible, ensure a fair hearing, broaden the range of options considered and provide a reasonable chance of a positive outcome.

The Children's Commissioner report (2012) refers to Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights and recommends that in order to get a fair hearing and ensure equality, parents should be provided with independent legal support to enable them to meaningfully participate in IRPs and help them to navigate the complex systems involved. This point is also supported by Gazeley (2012), Kulz (2015) and Hodge *et al.* (2016). Gazeley (2012) stresses that advocates need to be skilled, experienced and well-trained, though this research is on the previous, IAP, system of appeals. According to Kulz (2015), provision of these external support structures might increase parents' confidence in the system. The most striking finding was the number of agencies calling for IAPs to be reintroduced, but mainly because they want the review body to have the power to overturn a school's decision and direct that a pupil is reinstated. These include the Children's Commissioner, 2012; Kulz, 2015; Coram, 2016; Traveller Movement, 2016; House of Commons Education Committee, 2018).

Chapter Summary – challenging exclusion decisions

This chapter presented the evidence around the role of, and views on, the two stages and fora parents can use to challenge an exclusion decision (governing board reviews and IRPs).

As IRPs are quite new (having been introduced in 2012), there was less evidence on this process than there was for topics covered in the preceding chapters. Most of the findings from this chapter are based on four qualitative studies with very small sample sizes (being almost anecdotal at times) and would require further investigation to test their generalisability in the wider population.

The literature reviewed documents highly varied experiences of the governing board and IRP process. Parents' experiences of the process were mixed and could depend on the level of professional support they received.

Whilst some parents praised the panels for their empathy and attempt to engage with them, others felt the process was unfair, felt unfairly blamed, disempowered, overwhelmed by the process, unable to present their child's case properly and unsupported.

Some of those who had secured professional or legal representation had a better experience, but still often found the procedure stressful and intimidating.

Numerous recommendations were found within the literature, mainly focused on enhancing fairness. These recommendations included providing access to support and advocacy for all parents going through IRPs to enable their participation to be fair and more effective; and expanding the IRPs scope to include reinstatement.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

It should be noted that whilst this literature review was initiated on the basis that it would be possible to gather discrete evidence around each group of children who are disproportionately more likely to be excluded, a key finding was that in fact, a few sources focused on single sub-groups of pupils. Instead, much of the literature discusses exclusion factors more generally, albeit attempting to explicate what makes a child more vulnerable to exclusion and why certain groups remain at such higher risk despite numerous attempts over the years to address this.

This chapter returns to the initial key questions set for the literature review.

Drivers behind exclusion rates of disproportionately excluded groups, and what gaps in support for these groups potentially contribute to their higher exclusion rates

The headline answer to this question is that the factors driving exclusions are far from simple. For many children multiple, layered and inter-related factors, at individual, family and school levels, are at play and may have a multiplier effect. This has implications for the preventative and supportive interventions required, as well as for the training and the guidance required by school staff, review panels or others to address the likely multifaceted combinations of vulnerabilities.

The literature set out in the early chapters of this report identified that multiple vulnerabilities and other forces can be at play and overlap. These include low income, deprivation, additional educational needs, emotional and mental health problems, challenging home lives, bullying and other challenges; and how these interacted with a school's culture and values, unintentional racism and capacity to meet the child's needs; teacher recruitment and training; tensions between exams pressures, school performance and pupil wellbeing; transition to secondary school, academic achievement; and how much a child feels they 'belong' at that school. For any one child, these can interact in distinct and complex ways, and this individuality of that complexity has ramifications for determining the optimum interventions.

From the research reviewed, the link with class and deprivation seems to impact in three main ways: deprived children often experience numerous other challenges in their lives, such as high local or family unemployment, ill health and homelessness; low income limits a child's ability to comply with school uniform and other cost expectations; and social class was said to be the strongest determinant of parental - school interactions. Working-class parents especially were perceived to lack the familiarity or articulacy to effectively advocate on their child's behalf.

The topic of racism featured too, especially as an explanation for the enduring nature of the disproportionate exclusion rates experienced by Black Caribbean and Gypsy

Roma and Traveller (GRT) children which can co-exist with additional vulnerabilities, such as poverty, or SEND. Some of the research identified for inclusion in this literature review concluded that institutional racism, albeit unintentional, resulted in differential treatment and discriminatory practices, and shaped schools' and teachers' views around (un)acceptable behaviour and expectations. One study highlighted that 37% of 1,285 teachers who answered the survey question thought that the disproportionate exclusion of certain minority ethnic groups reflected a 'clash of cultures' (Smith *et al.*, 2012). A finding that within the local authorities included, GRT children were 100% successful in overturning exclusions at appeal stage may indicate the widespread nature of practice and presumptions about these children. A strong message repeated across numerous studies was the need to improve teacher recruitment and their training around diversity, discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity, especially as just over half of NQTs responding to DfE's annual surveys in 2012 and 2017 have consistently felt prepared to teach pupils from different ethnic backgrounds or with SEND since 2012 (Ginnis *et al.*, 2017).

In cases in this literature review where teachers did not behave appropriately, a chain reaction could be observed: when the child was stereotyped and viewed negatively, they were reported to have felt under-valued, disrespected and that they did not 'belong'. For some this could trigger counter-productive behavioural issues.

Significant points are made about the specific racism and isolation commonly experienced by GRT children. Moreover, excluding GRT pupils may perversely fuel further exclusions, as one of the catalysts underpinning this group's exclusion is their relatively low school attendance. The findings around racial abuse and bullying by other pupils and teachers, and that schools do not always address the racism directed at GRT children, indicates another key area for improved training and guidance.

The literature review found much less material on unique factors, apart from racism, which could explain why Black Caribbean boys had such a high risk of exclusion. Possibly all the other potential vulnerabilities, in addition to racism, is all the explanation needed. A small body of literature pointed to the link with all young men's general difficulty in defining their masculinity and feeling that this relied on appearing tough. Either way, this phenomenon deserves further exploration and may benefit from a longitudinal study.

The importance of positive relationships between pupils and school staff and the pivotal importance of the child's sense of 'belonging' at their school clearly emerged as dominant themes. A child's relationship with their school was reported as paramount. Conversely, a reduced sense of belonging could lead to a pupil feeling progressively disconnected from, and engaging and investing less in school. How other factors contribute to this concept of belonging is interesting as it seems to be

the link and culmination of all the other vulnerabilities and risk factors. This body of literature makes salient points about: what children want from teachers (e.g. friendly, respectful and good listeners); the school environment, culture, ethos, approaches and school and class size; and the need for support, especially if they have SEND. The conclusion drawn is that addressing specific individual needs would help tackle the disproportionate number of exclusions for these pupils.

Overall the literature seems to suggest that a degree of pupil disaffection and behavioural issues could be avoided if aspects of secondary schools' culture and values were re-examined, especially the stark differences noted between primary and secondary schools. Pointers include the tension between pupils' wellbeing and exam results, and the level of support offered through transition and afterwards, particularly if they showed signs of struggling at secondary school, either academically or in other ways.

Schools' attitudes towards and engagement with families was another aspect of the school environment frequently highlighted. Interestingly the building of successful relationships with parents was seen as one explanation of fewer exclusions among primary schools. Here again, there are key implications for teacher training in that some surveys found that teachers lacked confidence in this area.

It was surprising to find mentions in the literature of exclusions being applied to children who had been bullied, sometimes racially. Most of the accounts of how being bullied triggered exclusion were based on children's own accounts, which sometimes included how they subsequently retaliated, which may have been the headline reason given for their exclusion.

Preventing exclusion

This literature review set out to explore preventative approaches taken to specifically avert the exclusion of the over-represented groups of children. In addition to in-school and multi-agency approaches, it tried to locate evidence around the effectiveness of these approaches.

A focus on prevention was a common theme arising in the literature reviewed, with practitioners interviewed across a range of studies reporting that prevention is preferable in the short and long-term, for all parties concerned. Although some promising outcomes were reported from the available data on a range of both targeted and generalist interventions, the mainly small-scale qualitative studies, using purposive samples, limits the scope to extrapolate or generalise from these and make useful recommendations for policy.

More than anything, this literature review highlighted the evidence gaps around the relative effectiveness and impact of different measures, in different situations and for

different target groups, and on the scope to share good practice across schools, other agencies and local authorities.

Alternatives to exclusion

Many interesting themes emerged in the literature around alternative provision (AP), including a range of studies in which pupils reported positive experiences of AP. Constructive aspects of AP were largely attributed to differences from mainstream settings in terms of environment, approach and ethos: in various studies, children reported enjoying the individuality, sense of belonging, calm environment, safety, small size, focus on wellbeing, mutual respect, autonomy and the range of subjects on offer in AP settings. The literature also highlighted some negative aspects of AP, including a small number of cases in which children felt that the academic options on offer in AP settings could undermine their future educational and career options.

Although AP settings were reported in many studies as being valued in supporting those who might be otherwise excluded from education, it was also clear that there was a lack of consistency in quality and practice across different AP settings. Overall, the lack of robust systematic evidence makes it impossible to specify precisely what counts as the most effective AP practice in relation to exclusions.

The literature available on managed moves suggests that they are commonly used despite remaining outside any statutory framework. This can mean that pupils and parents have no formal avenue to challenge decisions. The literature highlighted some benefits of managed moves, including that pupils are given the chance to make a fresh start in a school that suits them better and so avoid exclusion. The literature provides some recommendations for good practice in relation to managed moves: however, there is a lack of data on the extent of the prevalence and effectiveness of these.

Reintegration

While reintegration might be seen as a positive outcome, it was reported that it could be a very delicate process, contingent on many factors. Overall, various strategies were found to be employed by schools to help reintegrate pupils following AP or an exclusion. While planning, support and parental involvement were identified in a number of the (qualitative) studies as vital, sometimes best practice was not followed, which risked a further exclusion. The main variables reported to influence reintegration included pupil age and school stage, timing and pupil readiness, how long they had attended AP, the pupil-staff relationship and the school's flexibility around behavioural issues.

Scope to challenge decisions to exclude a child

A right to challenge decisions made by public authorities and to have a fair hearing are central planks in the UK legal system. The studies examined showed that families' experiences of challenging their children's exclusions through the governing board reviews or IRPs were mixed.

Small-scale qualitative studies highlighted some predominantly negative experiences of the process, including feeling disempowered, blamed, unsupported and that their child was being put 'on trial'.

Nevertheless, some parents praised the panels for their empathy and attempt to engage with them.

Schools' approaches and cultures

The literature repeatedly stressed the importance of a school's overall approach and culture, around for example behavioural management and exclusions, and the need for policies which supported positive behaviour support, pastoral care, inclusive school environments and supportive teacher-student relationships. Within that, head teachers' were identified as central to establishing value systems, policies and procedures to support pupils' wellbeing.

On the other hand, findings that a number of teachers may be unfamiliar with the Equality Act 2010, and what counts as discriminatory practice were disconcerting. Overall the literature described a tendency to blame the child, rather than examine the school's systems and processes. In addition, difficult relationships between schools and families, predominantly at secondary school stage, undermined parents' scope to discuss their child's needs.

Teacher training

Another concern emerged around teachers' limited initial teacher training and preparedness in relation to numerous factors, found to be pertinent to pupils' potential vulnerability to exclusion, not least diversity, cultural awareness (Smith et al, 2012), assessing and supporting children with SEMH and SEND (Ginnis et al, 2017; Smith et al, 2012), managing challenging behaviour in a positive way, or engaging with parents in a collaborative way (Ginnis et al, 2017).

Resources and fragmentation

Some of the reports suggest that schools lack the financial resources and time to adequately accommodate pupils with SEND, thus increasing their likelihood of exclusion. Timely delivery of pastoral care, early intervention and, if needed, external specialist support, such as counselling, may be crucial, but limited if resources are

inadequate. Local authorities were seen as being ideally placed to coordinate collaboration and the sharing of expertise, information and resources across local schools and help prevent exclusions. Several examples were provided of local authorities supporting a number of schools to provide external professional support or help coordinate managed moves. However, this can be diluted if schools operate independently. Furthermore, researchers cautioned that the increased freedoms given to schools and a lack of accountability at a local level may make it harder to identify poor practice and monitor and address trends timeously.

Gaps and recommendations around the literature

Many recommendations were made in the literature and covered to some extent in earlier chapters. In addition, the process of conducting this literature review found some gaps in the available data. For example, there appears to be a need for more detailed recording around the reasons for exclusions. 'Persistent disruptive behaviour' may be one of the commonest criteria used, but given the evidence presented here, it actually tells us very little about the issues which may underpin the exclusion, such as a child's vulnerabilities. The Centre for Social Justice (2018) recommend that schools be required to provide fuller, more detailed, reasons.

The lack of comparable data around prevention, AP and managed moves is discussed above, and highlights the need for robust and systematically collated data to compare evidence around what works. More monitoring data on the demographics of families attending governing board review and IRP hearings and their outcomes would be helpful to ascertain how well these panels are functioning.

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Appendix: Methodology

Approximately 200 potential references were originally found to fit the broad criteria. The following sets out the search criteria and the processes employed to locate, prioritise, sift, assessing and summarise the literature. We end with a brief analysis around quality and fit.

Search criteria

The key questions set for this literature review were:

- Why are some groups of children disproportionately at risk of exclusion from school and what are the primary ‘drivers’ for this?
- In particular, what drives the disproportionate numbers of boys from certain ethnic groups being excluded?
- Why (and how) exclusion is used differently for different children?
- What is the evidence around ‘what works’ in relation to exclusion? For example to reduce/ minimise/ avoid exclusions; or support high risk groups (e.g. use of peer mentors, buddying, other projects or school programmes).

Period of search: 2009 – 2018

Geographical reach: priority given to literature about exclusions from English schools, but a wider geographical base was occasionally included when the report was judged to be highly relevant and comparable.

Type of study included in the search

This search included all published literature and ‘grey literature’, mostly in the public domain. The latter included studies published by the not for profit sector, including charities and unpublished theses at PhD level.

Search terms

Official permanent and fixed-term school exclusions, in England, and:

- ‘Vulnerable’ children - especially:
 - Travellers of Irish heritage (priority)
 - Gypsy/Roma pupils (priority)
 - Black pupils
 - Black Caribbean boys (priority) and White and Black Caribbean Mixed heritage pupils (priority)
 - Other Black and minority ethnic pupils
 - Pupils eligible for free school meals (over the last 6 years – as current definition of pupil poverty) /child poverty/deprivation, low income
 - Children in Need

- looked after children
- Gender - boys were the priority, as they are much more likely to be excluded and literature was sought to help provide reasons for this
- Pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) (ignoring absence from school because of ill-health, asked to leave formally, e.g. because of disciplinary or behavioural issues)
- Pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD)
- Pupils with SEND (both with EHCP and on SEN support)
- Variations in use of school exclusion and school, pupil and family perspectives
- Teacher training and expertise
- Head teachers' use of exclusion
- School exclusion and safeguarding
- Parents views of school exclusion
- Parental use of and involvement in the review process post-exclusion
- Teacher access to specialist advice (e.g. on challenging behaviour or mental health)
- Preventing exclusion from school:
 - school exclusion prevention programmes/ initiatives/approaches/ strategies;
 - use of peer mentor support and school exclusion;
 - pastoral care and preventing school exclusion;
 - School systems of pastoral care and school exclusion
 - schools use of behaviour management, behaviour policies and 'behaviour strategies to avoid exclusion
 - use of alternative provision and exclusion from school;
 - buddying and school exclusion;
 - multi-agency approaches around preventing exclusion
 - the Independent Review Panel 'IRP' and school exclusions
 - use of the IRP review system
 - families/ pupils' use of the review process by
 - take up, low take up, reasons for low take up
 - pupils' or families' experiences of the review system

Not included in this search

- Unofficial or 'informal' exclusions
- International studies of education systems, studies on non-English education systems (unless seen as highly relevant and directly comparable)
- 'Social exclusion' only
- Articles about adults' exclusion from education

- Studies where no methodology was provided as to how, when or why data gathered, or there is no information about the sample,
- Studies where bias or conflicts of interest seemed possible/ likely (e.g. school promotional materials);
- Articles which not directly reporting on research, e.g. polemical pieces

Originally, we excluded studies with very small sample sizes. However, on a second sift we re-included some of these (e.g. less than 10 pupils) for compelling reasons.

First search

Using Boolean/Phrase search modes, the initial search resulted in over 101 discrete pieces of literature meeting these criteria, from:

- British Education Index Result 60 items
- Education Abstracts
- Educational Administration Abstracts
- ERIC
- These were searched concurrently using EBSCO

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Web of Science | Results 61 |
| De-duplicated total | 101 |

Search of the grey literature

General Google search and Advanced Google searches were conducted, followed by searches of:

- ETHOS (British Library) and
- OATD (Open Access Theses and Dissertations) open access repository of theses and dissertations on the subject of “*school exclusion*” and post-2009 and:
 - “*vulnerable*”
 - “*Traveller*”
 - “*Gypsy*”
 - “*Roma*”
 - “*GRT*”
 - “*Ethnicity*”
 - “*Black*”
 - “*Caribbean*”
 - “*deprivation*”
 - “*free school meals*”
 - “*pupil premium*”
 - “*looked after children*”
 - “*children in care*”
 - “*adoption*”
 - “*children in need*”
 - “*gender*”
 - “*boys*”
 - “*girls*”

- *“males”*
- *“females”*
- *“mental health”*
- *“SEMH”*
- *“SEND”*
- *“additional needs”*
- *“support”*
- *“disciplinary issues”*
- *“behaviour”*
- *“EHCP”*
- *“Statement”*
- *“special educational needs”*
- *“parent perspectives”*
- *“pupil perspectives”*
- *“pupil voice”*
- *“parent voice”*
- *“safeguarding”*
- *“head teacher”*
- *“variation in trends”*
- *“at risk groups”*
- *“prevention”*
- *“interventions”*
- *“support”*
- *“pastoral”*
- *“mentoring”*
- *“multi-agency”*

Additional searches of children’s charities and VCS websites using “school exclusion” in the search bar of individual websites, including:

- Barnardo's
- OCC
- Ambitious about Autism
- Traveller Movement
- NCB
- OPM
- NSPCC
- Children's Society
- Coram
- Adoption UK
- YoungMinds
- EEF
- Lankelly Chase
- Action for Children
- Save the Children
- JRF

The initial grey literature search resulted in many thousands of results, which had to be further refined. Eventually a list of 80 were put forward for sifting and the prioritisation stage.

Sifting, prioritising and summarising

Sifting and prioritising

Abstracts or summaries for all the sources found were retrieved and then systematically reviewed by two of the research team, using the main criteria:

- Relevance to topic and key questions
- Potential to answer any of the key questions – i.e. as opposed to re-stating known statistics
- Report of a primary research study, versus an opinion piece
- Clear methodology
- Sample size - as stated above, we generally excluded samples of less than 10. However, in exceptional cases these were included, sometimes at the next stage, for example if this was the only study looking at a particular demographic

In practice sometimes the methodology, sample or relevance was not clear from the abstract and the full text had to be reviewed in order to decide.

A limited number of large-scale studies were found. Many of the studies available, especially qualitative studies concerning the targeted sub-groups, e.g. Irish Travellers or Black Caribbean boys, or an issue, e.g. pupils in alternative provision, or families' views about IRPs, or governing board reviews, reintegration, were relatively small-scale. This is quite understandable and often qualitative methodologies offer the only and/or best way to explore variable situations, experiences and viewpoints and views of sub-groups in any depth. Moreover, many of these issues and settings involved small groups of children in any one area, school or other setting; and working through gatekeepers can make recruitment difficult.

To an extent this process was iterative, as sometimes studies, which originally did not seem to fit the criteria, were later included as there was little other data on that group or issues. Conversely, some initially included studies were excluded on reading the full research report, if they were found to not meet the criteria after all. Some secondary searching was done, based on citations and further references made in the found studies. A degree of saturation was reached, in that many of the same finds re-emerged and similar issues and points were made.

The report explains the research used as well as caveats about methods and sampling for transparency, and any resultant limitation to any generalisability.

A total of 115 reports were included.

Summarising the research

The full texts of the prioritised literature were retrieved and then summarised using a framework spreadsheet approach. The main headings in the framework followed the key questions, i.e. driving factors, prevention, use of AP, take-up and use of the IRP system. Managed moves was added as they emerged so often in the literature. The framework also included the methodology used, sample and sample size.

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