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The Excluded Initiative

Final Evaluation Report



Centre for
Evidence and
Implementation



JOHN LYON'S CHARITY



The London
Community
Foundation

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- Understanding and making sense of the evidence base
- Generating evidence through trialling, testing, and evaluating policies, programmes, and services to drive more effective decisions and deliver better outcomes
- Applying research-informed implementation methods and processes to get high quality evidence implemented and sustained in policy and practice
- Building cultures for evidence use

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Glossary of Key Terms and Abbreviations

Alternative Provision Alternative Provision (AP) refers to suitable full-time education that is arranged for a pupil from the sixth school day (or earlier) of a suspension or the sixth school day (or earlier) after a permanent exclusion. In other circumstances, alternative provision may refer to education arranged for pupils who are unable to attend mainstream or special school and who are not educated at home, whether for behavioural, health, or other reasons. Alternative provision includes Pupil Referral Units, alternative provision academies and free schools, and hospital schools, as well as a variety of independent, registered, unregistered and further education.

CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CFIR The Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research provides a menu of constructs arranged across five domains that can be used in exploring implementation. It is a practical framework to help guide systematic assessment of potential barriers and facilitators. This information can help guide tailoring and adaptation of implementation strategies, and to explain outcomes.

DfE Department for Education

Internal Alternative Provision (IAP) Provisions on school site to support students at risk of exclusion and/or those with persistent absence.

LA Local Authority

Managed Move A managed move is the transfer of a pupil from one school to another permanently. Managed moves should be voluntary and agreed with all parties involved, including the parents and the admission authority of the new school. Managed moves should only occur when it is in the pupil's best interests.

Off-rolling Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from a school roll without using a permanent exclusion. Off-rolling happens when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This includes pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school roll. Off-rolling typically means that schools are failing to comply with legal requirements.

Permanent exclusion A permanent exclusion is when a pupil is no longer allowed to attend a school (unless the pupil is reinstated). The decision to exclude a pupil permanently should only be taken:

- in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy; and
- where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others such as staff or pupils in the school

Schools' use of permanent should be set out in their behaviour policy.

Persistently absent Defined by the DfE as students missing 10% or more of possible school sessions.

RE-AIM RE-AIM stands for Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance. It is a planning and evaluation tool developed to support the implementation of interventions in human services.

SENCOs Special educational needs co-ordinator's

SEN-D Special educational needs and disabilities

Severely absent Defined by the DfE as students missing 50% or more of possible school sessions.

STATA Stata is a statistical software package developed by StataCorp for data manipulation, visualisation, statistics, and automated reporting.

Suspension A suspension is where a pupil is temporarily removed from the school. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year). The use of suspensions should be set out within a school's behaviour policy.

Executive Summary

The Excluded Initiative provided funding to eight schools across Greater London from 2020 through to 2024 with the aim of reducing exclusion rates. When they applied for funding, all eight schools had high rates of exclusions and/or suspensions when compared to averages across London and nationally. The eight funded schools were given autonomy to design and implement interventions and to adapt them based on early learning.

1.1. Who did the initiative reach?

The Initiative reached 500 of the most marginalised children in the eight funded schools. Over half (55%) were eligible to free school meals compared to 36% of all students in the eight schools, and a third (36%) had a SEN-D compared to 16% of all students in the eight schools.

1.2. How was the initiative implemented?

The eight schools designed and delivered interventions that differed, responding to different contexts within schools and local areas. Key aspects of the ways in which interventions worked were:

- **Consistency in relationships** - A key aspect of all interventions was the strong relationships built between intervention staff members and students. Honest conversations and transparency helped to build stronger relationships with students, as did being patient and understanding what sat behind behaviour experienced as challenging.
- **Restorative conversations between teachers and students** - Intervention leads typically facilitated conversations between students and teachers after times of conflict, allowing both parties to be heard by each other, generating mutual trust, transparency, and a sense of fairness.
- **Intensive support adapted to individual needs** – Intervention staff worked closely with students to understand their behaviour and needs and provide intensive support, sometimes involving external agencies.
- **Increasing students' self-regulation and confidence** - Interventions worked with students to help them to emotionally regulate during challenging times and become more confident, which meant students were more resilient within mainstream learning environments.
- **Regular and positive parental engagement** – Intervention staff developed stronger parent-school relationships, with more parental support for their child's learning, and also helped to resolve family conflicts which were influencing students' ability to work.

Key aspects of implementation were:

- **Degree of blendedness** – The degree to which interventions were blended with the mainstream school environment varied, with different approaches to how much time students spent in mainstream classes, the involvement of mainstream teachers, the amount of delivery of the curriculum, and the geographic location

of the intervention. At one end of the spectrum were Excluded Initiative interventions that were highly blended, with students spending all or most of their time in mainstream classes. At the other end of the spectrum, interventions operated with a high degree of separation and independence from the wider school environment. Both approaches had benefits and disadvantages, but over time there was a shift to more blended approaches.

- **Approaches to re-integration** – Approaches to re-integration were an important part of the Excluded Initiative intervention design, and particularly so if students spent more time away from mainstream learning environments. Strategies included phased returns, planning re-integration with students and mainstream staff, providing advice to mainstream teachers, restorative conversations between students and teachers, involving other staff such as pastoral leads and SENCOs, and intervention staff keeping in touch with students. The process was seen as aided when mainstream teachers had some involvement in teaching in the Excluded Initiative interventions.
- **Wider staff buy in** – Securing the buy in of the wider staff body across the school was important, and key to securing mainstream teachers' time to teach in the Excluded Initiative intervention or set work to be supervised by intervention staff. It also supported re-integration, creating space for restorative conversations between students and teachers and ensuring that students were given the opportunity to have a fresh start.
- **Adaptability throughout** – Being able to adapt provision to local contexts and evolve the interventions in response to the changing needs of students, and through trial and error, were seen as very important.

1.3. What difference has the initiative made?

We compared the rates of suspensions and exclusions in the eight schools receiving funding with a closely matched group of schools that had not received funding in Greater London, using DfE data.

Our analysis shows a clear picture of, on average, higher suspension rates for the Excluded Initiative schools than the control schools before Excluded Initiative was introduced, with rates much closer after the Excluded Initiative. This suggests that the Excluded Initiative has overall had a positive impact on suspensions. Similarly, there were on average much higher exclusion rates for the Excluded Initiative schools than the control schools before Excluded Initiative was introduced, with Excluded Initiative exclusion rates much closer after the Excluded Initiative was introduced. The patterns are even more pronounced if one outlying school is not included in the analysis.

We also looked at how individual students' trajectories changed after their time in the intervention. Although there are limitations to the data, this showed decreased likelihood in three schools of Excluded Initiative students being suspended after their time in the intervention, and across all schools very few students excluded after their time in the intervention. There were strong and consistent perceptions among students and staff of improvements in attendance; attainment; behaviour; students feeling involved in and valued by the wider school environment, and students' relationships with staff, peers and family.

There were also positive impacts on schools as a whole, including teachers having a better understanding of how to support students and ensure inclusive classroom environments, reaching out to intervention staff for early advice, and teachers feeling more positive about teaching as a result of improvements stemming from the Excluded Initiative.

1.4. Key Recommendations

Practice recommendations:

1. **Blended provision:** More blended approaches are beneficial in supporting children's engagement within the school community and catalysing changes that embed a wider ethos of inclusion.
2. **Reintegration strategies:** Effective reintegration involved consultation with and support for students and mainstream teachers; the involvement of wider specialist staff in the school; work to restore relationships before reintegration; commitment from mainstream teachers (and students) to specific strategies to be used in the classroom; phased returns; a degree of constructive flexibility in the application of behavioural policies and standards; continued support from the inclusion provision for students and mainstream staff; and monitoring of progress by provision staff.
3. **Parental engagements:** Effective parent engagement is also a core aspect of successful provision.
4. **SLT support and involvement:** SLT support was essential to take the initiative forward, demonstrated through e.g. an SLT member acting as sponsor or line manager of the initiative lead; SLT involvement in referral decisions; SLT involvement in whole-school celebration events; SLTs visiting the intervention space; expectation that mainstream teachers to teach in the space, and SLT involvement in reviewing data about the initiative's use and successes.
5. **Having sufficient mainstream staffing capacity:** Having sufficient mainstream teaching capacity available to teach in the intervention was also critical and was an important facilitator towards more blended and inclusive models of delivery after their time in the provision.
6. **Building a culture of inclusion:** Finally, effective provision both required and reinforced positive inclusion cultures. This meant a culture which embraced inclusion, where school staff had training on issues such as attachment, trauma and contextual safeguarding, where parents were seen as informed partners, and where relationships were centred.

Policy recommendations:

1. **Provide more funding to schools for specialist inclusion provision and evaluation:** Whether as part of main school budgets or through specific funding routes, more funding is needed for specialist inclusion provision along the lines of that funded by the Excluded Initiative.
2. **Develop further guidance relating to inclusion provision:** The DfE should develop clear guidance on quality features of and quality standards expected in inclusion provision.
3. **Support improved school data collection:** To ensure there is a clear picture relating to risks and student needs, policymakers should work to increase consistency and transparency of reporting.
4. **Ensure sufficient wider support:** Policy makers also need to ensure sufficient and timely wider support in education, mental health and social care.

1. Introduction

The Excluded Initiative was a £1.2 million initiative aiming to reduce exclusions across eight London schools with disproportionately high rates of suspensions and exclusions. The fund sought to provide schools with resources to develop and implement inclusive provision.

This report presents findings relating to impacts on exclusions, suspensions and other key outcomes for the schools, as well as the experiences of individual students who received support and expert perspectives of staff implementing the Excluded Initiative. The evaluation drew on schools' administrative data and qualitative interviews with children and staff at three timepoints.

Our report re-affirms the critical role that secondary schools can play in supporting children to thrive through inclusive approaches. We hope that this report makes a useful contribution to building the evidence base for schools and policy makers to promote inclusivity in secondary school contexts.

1.1. Why inclusion matters

Schools can play a vital role in supporting children's wellbeing, protecting and diverting those at risk of crime and exploitation and enabling them to thrive^{1,2}. Children excluded from school face very significant risks. The most common uniting factor of young men in the criminal justice system is the experience of school exclusion - almost 90% of young men in youth offending institutions have been excluded from schools at some point in their young lives³. Excluded children are often the most vulnerable children and in need of support. They are twice as likely to be care experienced, four times more likely to be living in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need or disability, and ten times more likely to have diagnosable mental health problems, compared with children who are not excluded⁴.

Overall, looking across exclusion and suspension, students eligible for free school meals (FSM), those with special education needs (SEN), male pupils, children in need or looked after, and students from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, particularly those from Romani/Roma and Irish Traveller communities, are more likely to experience exclusion and suspension⁵.

¹The Home Office. (2013). Preventing youth violence and gang involvement Practical advice for schools and colleges. [Online]. [www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/4181). Last Updated: 2013. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/4181 [Accessed 29 September 2023].

²Maxwell, N., Wallace, C., Cummings, A., Bayfield, H., Morgan, H. (2019). A systematic map and synthesis review of Child Criminal Exploitation. [Online]. www.cardiff.ac.uk. Last Updated: 2019. Available at: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/131950/1/Child%20Criminal%20Exploitation%20Report%20Final.pdf> [Accessed 29 September 2023].

³Ministry of Justice. (2014). Transforming Youth Custody. [Online]. www.consult.justice.gov.uk. Last Updated: 2014. Available at: <https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-youth-custody/results/tyc-impact-> [Accessed 20 September 2023].

⁴ <https://www.ippr.org/publications/making-the-difference>

⁵ Gill K, Brown S, O'Brien C, Graham J and Poku-Amanfo E (2024) Who is losing learning?: The case for reducing exclusions across mainstream schools, IPPR and The Difference. <http://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

1.2. The current context

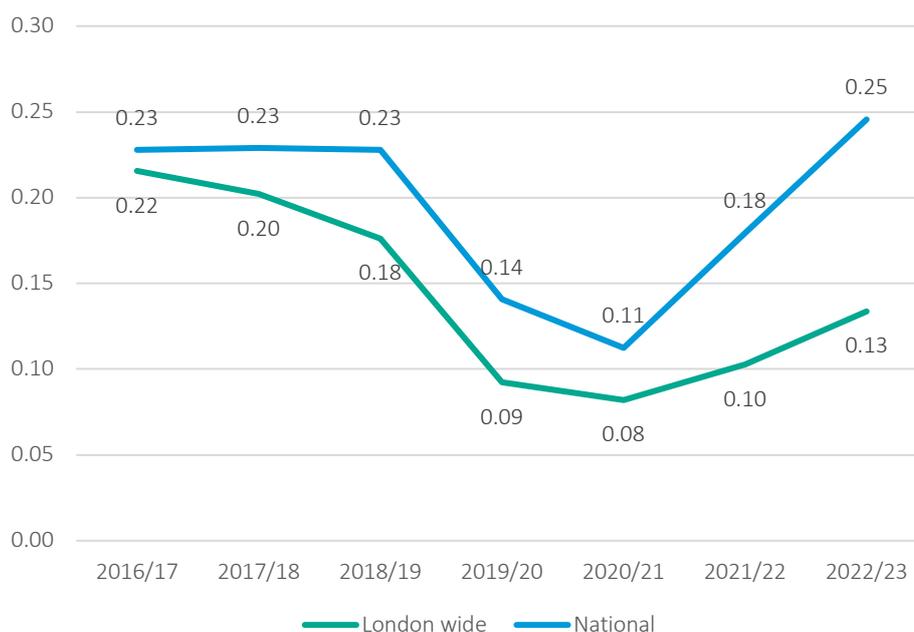
The current landscape of suspensions and exclusions within secondary schools highlights the pressing challenges faced by students and educational institutions and sets the wider context within which the Excluded Initiative interventions were implemented.

Suspensions and exclusions

Suspension and exclusion rates in London and nationally fell during the Covid years (2019/20 and 2020/21) and have since risen, with exclusion rates in London, and suspension rates in London and nationally, now higher than they were before Covid.

Department for Education (DfE) data show that during the 2022-23 academic year there were a total of 8,054 permanent exclusions across state funded secondary schools, increasing by 42% from 5,658 in 2021-22, reinforcing the trend observed since schools reopened after Covid and surpassing the national rate prior to Covid. This trend was also reflected in suspension numbers, which increased by 37% from 498,120 in 2021-22 to 685,930 in the last academic year, marking the highest recorded annual figures for both metrics⁶.

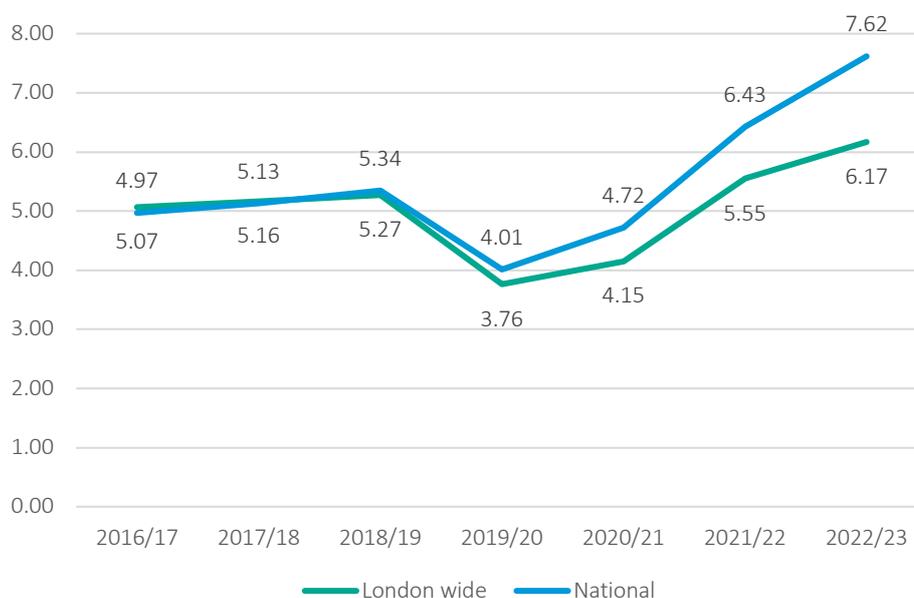
Figure 1. Permanent exclusion rates in state-funded secondary schools in London and nationally



Source: Data provided by the DfE. The permanent exclusion rate is calculated as the number of permanent exclusions divided by the number of pupils (x100).

⁶ Department for Education (2024) Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England: Academic year 2022/2023. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england><https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions-in-england> [Accessed 01 October 2024]

Figure 2. Suspension rates (students with one or more suspension) rates in state-funded secondary schools in London and nationally



Source: Data provided by the DfE. The suspension rate is calculated as the total number of suspensions, divided by the total number of pupils (x100) The rate is calculated for students who have experienced one or more suspensions from school

Attainment

Suspension is strongly correlated with poor academic outcomes, regardless of individual factors such as gender, ethnicity, or eligibility for FSM. Furthermore, children placed in alternative provision are even less likely to achieve good GCSE outcomes, or even participate in the exams⁷. A recent report indicates that students with just one suspension typically fail to achieve a standard pass in GSCE English and Maths, while those who experience multiple suspensions are, on average, a year behind their peers who are not suspended⁸.

Several factors may contribute to this relationship. Missed educational time due to suspensions can significantly hinder a student’s learning progress, leading to gaps in knowledge and skills essential for academic success. Additionally, the experience of being suspended often leads to disengagement from the school environment, making it difficult for students to reintegrate and maintain motivation. Many of these students may already face academic or behavioural challenges that not only lead to their suspensions but also subsequently negatively impact their educational outcomes⁹.

⁷ Gill K, Brown S, O’Brien C, Graham J and Poku-Amanfo E (2024) Who is losing learning?: The case for reducing exclusions across mainstream schools, IPPR and The Difference. <http://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

⁸ Joseph, A. & Crenna-Jennings, W. (2024) Outcomes for young people who experience multiple suspensions. Education Policy Institute. Retrieved from: https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/EPI_Suspensions_Report_FINAL.pdf

⁹ Noltemeyer, A. L., Ward, R. M., Mcloughlin, C., & Vanderwood, M. (2015). Relationship Between School Suspension and Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. *School Psychology Review*, 44(2), 224–240. <https://doi-org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/10.17105/spr-14-0008.1>

The need for inclusive school approaches

Recent evidence ^{10,11} highlights how punitive behavioural response within UK school systems is in tension with children’s right to education. This has been particularly highlighted by the disproportionate representation of children with SEN-D in national exclusion and suspension rates. It has been suggested that the growing issue of exclusion of children reflects a growing level of need; decreasing level of resource; a wider shift across society to be less inclusive and more disciplinarian; and fragmentation of the education system where schools, local authorities and the DfE are not aligned on realistic aspiration¹².

Schools are increasingly establishing ‘Internal Alternative Provision’ or ‘IAP’ ^{13, 14, 15}. This umbrella term includes the types of provision developed within the Excluded Initiative. The hallmark of IAP is a separate space from the mainstream learning environment within the school site. Commentators emphasise that IAP should be inclusive and not punitive or rooted in isolating children with challenging behaviour¹⁶.

1.3. The Excluded Initiative

The Excluded Initiative funded eight secondary schools across London to help drive down permanent exclusions. John Lyon’s Charity and The London Community Foundation delivered the programme, each managing the fund in four schools. The eight schools were selected for funding on the basis that they had exclusion rates above the national average of 0.2% of students and/or suspension rates of 10% of school roll. At the point of funding, permanent exclusions across the eight schools were on average four times the national average and suspensions were over two times higher. The following eight London schools were involved and received up to £160,000 under the Initiative.

Table 1. Excluded Initiative schools’ start and end dates

School name	Start Date	End date	Managed by
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¹⁰ Ferguson, L. 2021. “Vulnerable Children’s Right to Education, School Exclusion, and Pandemic Law-Making.” *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26 (1): 101–115. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1913351.

¹¹ Thompson, I., A. Tawell, and H. Daniels. 2021. “Conflicts in Professional Concern and the Exclusion of Pupils with SEMH in England.” *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26 (1): 31–45. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1898769.

¹² Thompson, I., A. Tawell, and H. Daniels. 2021. “Conflicts in Professional Concern and the Exclusion of Pupils with SEMH in England.” *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26 (1): 31–45. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1898769

¹³ Institute for Public Policy Research & The Difference. (2024). Who is losing learning?: The case for reducing exclusions across mainstream schools. [Online]. www.ippr.org. Last Updated: September 2024. Available at: https://ippr-org.files.svcdn.com/production/Downloads/Who_is_losing_learning_Sept24_2024-09-06-1036 [Accessed 24th September 2024].

¹⁴ Education Endowment Foundation. (2023). Understanding the use of internal alternative provision for students at risk of persistent absence or exclusion – School. [Online]. www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk. Available at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/understanding-the-use-o> [Accessed 26th September 2024].

¹⁵ Close the Gaps. (2023). Setting up an internal provision. [Online]. www.closethegaps.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.closethegaps.co.uk/updates/blog-post-title-three-d2yfx#:~:text=> [Accessed 26th September 2024].

¹⁶ Close the Gaps. (2023). Setting up an internal provision. [Online]. www.closethegaps.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.closethegaps.co.uk/updates/blog-post-title-three-d2yfx#:~:text=> [Accessed 26th September 2024].

Duke's Aldridge Academy	Nov 2020	Dec 2023	The London Community Foundation
Beacon High School	Sep 2020	Jul 2023	The London Community Foundation
Kemnal Technology College	Sep 2020	Jul 2023	The London Community Foundation
Our Lady's Catholic High School	Jan 2021	Dec 2023	The London Community Foundation
Friern Barnet School	Dec 2020	Aug 2024	John Lyon's Charity
Hendon School	Sep 2021	Aug 2024	John Lyon's Charity
Kingsbury High School	Sep 2020	Aug 2024	John Lyon's Charity
Phoenix Academy	Sep 2020	Aug 2024	John Lyon's Charity

1.4. Theory of Change

During the first year of the initiative, the eight schools collaborated with University College London (UCL) to develop Theories of Change (ToC). This work focussed on schools developing individual ToCs for their specific interventions and established a collective ToC across the fund as a whole. The ToCs were used to shape the evaluation, and the collective ToC was revised drawing on evaluation findings. Both the original ToC developed by UCL and the refined ToC are shown in the Appendix (8.1 & 8.2).

1.5. Summary of schools' Excluded Initiative provision and school context

The following provides a short summary of the inclusion intervention in each of the eight schools that participated in the initiative. In all schools, the intervention evolved since the initiative began, and our summaries capture the form and operation of the intervention at the end of the funding period for each school.



Beacon High School

As part of their approach to create a more inclusive school environment, Beacon High School ran an initiative called Pathways. Pathways aimed to support students identified as being at risk of exclusion, primarily through 1-to-1 mentoring sessions. This intervention was run by the Pathways Coordinator and Intervention Manager. Students who met the Pathways criteria (i.e., being at risk of exclusion) remained in mainstream learning environments for the majority of their learning but were taken out of their classes intermittently for one-to-one mentoring sessions and character development sessions for 6-12 weeks. Students in Pathways received a bespoke timetable.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 428; Location: Islington, NW London
Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	All year groups
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular 1-to-1 mentoring• Weekly character development sessions• 6-week placement relating to future education (offered once a year)• Contribution to a local community project (run twice a year)• Parenting programme (run twice a term)
Duration of time in intervention	6 - 12 weeks
Arrangements for Teaching	All mentoring and Pathways support was delivered in the Pathways intervention space, however students attended mainstream lessons for the majority of their school time.
Re-integration approach	There was no need for a re-integration approach for this intervention as students remained in mainstream learning environments for the majority of their learning but were taken out of their classes

intermittently for one-to-one mentoring sessions and character development sessions.



Duke's Aldridge Academy

Duke's Aldridge Academy ran School within a School, which was a 6-week inclusion intervention. School within a School focussed on respect for authority and building stronger relationships between students and teachers. The School within a School delivery team consisted of School within a School Manager, as well as mainstream teachers and teaching assistants. Achievement Coordinators identified students who may benefit from being taken out of mainstream lessons and met with their parents or carers to discuss the School within a School initiative. If the guardian(s) consented, then the student was taken out of mainstream classes for 6 weeks. Students received Maths, English and Science classes through School within a School, as well as vocational sessions matched to their interests.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 1046; Location: Haringey, NE London
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Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	Years 7-9, but first cohort in Nov 2020 was only Year 8.
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Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily 1-to-1 mentoring• Community projects• Daily therapeutic art, music & PE sessions• Daily small group English sessions• Daily small group Maths sessions• Daily small group Science sessions• Therapeutic art, music, PE, cooking & photography sessions
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Duration of time in intervention	6 weeks
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Arrangements for Teaching	All teaching was delivered in School within a School
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Re-integration approach	Students were placed back into mainstream learning environments following six-week intervention period. The placement back into mainstream learning environments happened immediately across all subjects and students no longer remained engaged with School within a School provisions.
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Friern Barnet School ran an Inclusion Hub which is within the main school with its own dedicated building. The purpose of the Inclusion Hub was to improve students’ self-esteem, re-engage them in school activities, and ultimately support them to become inspired and independent learners. The Inclusion Hub was run by the Hub Inclusion Manager (supported by a qualified teaching assistant) and overseen by the Deputy Head. Students who met the Inclusion Hub’s criteria (at risk of exclusion, including with poor attitudes to learning resulting in disengagement within mainstream environments) received focussed interventions in the Inclusion Hub during specific periods in the week. Students in the Inclusion Hub received Maths and English classes, as well as bespoke, individual sessions matched to their needs. The time that students were placed in the hub was informed by individual needs – some students continued to attend some mainstream lessons if that was felt to be appropriate, whereas others solely attended the hub during the delivery period of one term.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 726; Location: Barnet, NW London
Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	Years 7-11, with a focus on KS3 early intervention
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily personal development sessions • Daily bespoke provision personalised and specific to need • Daily core sessions (inc. English & Maths) • Daily therapeutic art, music & PE sessions • Weekly 1-to-1 mentoring
Duration of time in intervention	One term
Arrangements for Teaching	Some students were taught entirely in the Hub, others were in mainstream learning environments for some subjects.
Re-integration approach	Where students remained in mainstream learning environments, there was no need for re-integration. Other students transition into mainstream lessons with phased re-integration, and a graduation ceremony when they left the intervention.



Hendon School

Hendon School ran Steps to Success, an initiative which advocates the idea that support should never be completely withdrawn from students. Students were typically identified and referred by mainstream teachers. Students could also self-refer to Steps to Success or come back and visit whenever they felt there was a need. The Steps to Success delivery team consisted of an Intervention Lead and two mentors, as well as mainstream teachers. The intervention was also open to other schools as well, to offer students respite care for a week at a time.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 1244; Location: Barnet, NW London
Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	Year 7 – 9
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily family breakfast • Therapeutic cooking, art, music, PE and outdoor sessions • English sessions (twice per week) • Weekly 1-to-1 mentoring • Weekly anger management and emotional literacy sessions
Duration of time in intervention	Minimum of 6 weeks
Arrangements for Teaching	All teaching was delivered in Steps to Success
Re-integration approach	Personalised re-integration depending on student needs, returning to some core subjects as a priority with ongoing check in from intervention lead.



Kemnal Technology College

Kemnal Technology College partnered with the Football Beyond Borders programme to develop an internal inclusion intervention. This was a weekly intervention that took place over 2 hours (one hour of theory-based session on topics such how to be a good role model, followed by an hour of practical football where students tried to demonstrate what they had learnt in the theory session). Sessions ran for students in all years on anger management, self-esteem, conflict resolution and friendship. Kemnal took a whole school approach, which marks a different delivery model in comparison to the majority of the other initiatives.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 583; Location: Bromley, S London
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Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily mindfulness and reflection time • Daily restorative conversations • Daily small group English sessions • Daily small group Maths sessions • Weekly 1-to-1 mentoring • Diagnostic testing as required
Duration of time in intervention	Minimum of half a term
Arrangements for Teaching	Teaching of majority of subjects provided by intervention leads within Article 28. Core subject specific mainstream teachers (Maths, English, Science) delivering lessons within Article 28 for students coming to GCSEs.
Re-integration approach	Phased reintegration into mainstream lessons. Students had an exit interview/conversation where they are asked how they were feeling about reintegration.



Our Lady's Catholic High School

Our Lady's Catholic High, an all-girls school based in Hackney, had a High School Engagement Space for students who were at risk of exclusion. The school employed a restorative approach, and this initiative focussed on building stronger relationships between students, parents and teachers. The High School Engagement Space delivery team consisted of a Social Worker, as well as mainstream teachers and teaching assistants. Students attending this intervention attended core lessons (Maths, English and Science) but were taken out of other classes to have smaller socio-emotional sessions matched to their age and needs.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 658; Location: Hackney, NE London
Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	Year 7 - 11
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily small group Science, RE & PE sessions • Daily group sessions focused on a key personal skill • Weekly 1-to-1 mentoring
Duration of time in intervention	6 weeks

Arrangements for Teaching	Teaching was delivered via mainstream lessons (for English & Maths) and the High School Engagement Space
Re-integration approach	The intervention was adapted to offer support alongside mainstream lessons. The extent to which students remained in mainstream lessons is informed by personalised need.



Phoenix Academy

The Phoenix Academy ran an inclusion initiative called Aspire. The purpose of Aspire was to support students to take ownership of their behaviour and to understand that every action has a consequence. The initiative focussed on consistency, trust and security. The Aspire delivery team consisted of a fully qualified intervention lead and was supported by teaching assistants and subject specialist teachers (as required). If a student was presenting behavioural challenges and was at risk for exclusion, they would be referred to Aspire. Once a student had been referred, they were taken out of mainstream lessons and received targeted support for core subjects, as well as behavioural management.

School Context	No. of Pupils: 539; Location: Hammersmith & Fulham, NW London
Year Group(s) Eligible for Initiative	Years 7 - 10
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily reading and fitness sessions • Daily core curriculum subject sessions (inc. English, Maths, Science, History & Art) • Targeted literacy (LEXIA) and numeracy (SPARX) interventions • Weekly 1-to-1 mentoring • Weekly target cards and weekly celebration assembly
Duration of time in intervention	4 - 12 weeks
Arrangements for Teaching	All teaching was delivered in Aspire
Re-integration approach	Re-integration following intervention period but informal check ins with intervention lead throughout.

2. Methodology

2.1. Introduction

To understand both the impact and implementation of the Excluded Initiative, a mixed method approach was taken. We drew on data on exclusions and suspensions published by DfE, further administrative data provided by schools, and qualitative data in three waves of fieldwork with school staff and children.

2.2. Research questions

We used the RE-AIM framework to shape the following specific research questions (RQs)¹⁷
¹⁸.

RQ1 - Reach: Which young people have been supported by the interventions? How do they compare to the wider school population?

RQ2 –Effectiveness: What is the impact of the Excluded Initiative on student exclusion, attendance and if possible, attainment across all eight participating schools both collectively and individually?

RQ3 –Effectiveness: How do staff and children within school settings perceive and experience change as a result of the initiative? Do the interventions catalyse change in the wider school environment and local area?

RQ4 – Implementation: Was it feasible to implement the interventions as planned? How and why have the initiatives evolved and changed over the course of delivery and how do these shifts relate to the individual and overall theory of change?

RQ5 – Implementation: What have been the key barriers to and facilitators of successful implementation and delivery? How were they addressed by schools?

RQ6 – Maintenance: To what extent are the individual inclusion interventions likely to be maintained after the end of the funding period?

2.3. Quantitative data approach

2.3.1. Demographic data

As part of how we assessed the reach of the Excluded Initiative, we explored how the demographic characteristics of students using Excluded Initiative interventions (we refer to

¹⁷ Holtrop, J. S., Estabrooks, P. A., Gaglio, B., Harden, S. M., Kessler, R. S., King, D. K., Kwan, B. M., Ory, M. G., Rabin, B. A., Shelton, R. C., & Glasgow, R. E. (2021). Understanding and applying the RE-AIM framework: Clarifications and resources. *Journal of clinical and translational science*, 5(1), e126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cts.2021.789>

¹⁸ <https://re-aim.org>.

these as 'Excluded Initiative students') compare with the school population as a whole. This analysis is based on demographic data provided by the schools. We asked schools to provide information for Excluded Initiative students and for the school as a whole, relating to ethnicity, gender, free school meal (FSM) status and Special educational needs and disabilities (SEN-D) status

2.3.2. Outcomes data

We used published DfE data to examine trends in permanent exclusion and suspension rates across the eight Excluded Initiative schools, compared to average trends in a set of closely matched comparison schools (n=30). Comparison schools were selected to match the characteristics of the intervention schools using the following criteria:

- Were located in the same local authorities as the intervention schools (Hackney, Islington, Barnet, Bromley, Brent, Hammersmith and Fulham, or Haringey)
- Were State-funded secondary schools
- Had a headcount of >400 at the first time point (2016-17)
- Matched the types of schools in the intervention condition (voluntary aided school, community school, academy converter or academy sponsor led¹⁹)
- Had a non-selective admissions policy
- Matched the range of % FSM in the intervention schools (24.8-65.9%)
- Matched the range of % SEN in the intervention schools (5.71-40.47%)
- Matched the range of baseline rates of suspension observed in the intervention schools (defined as equal to or greater than the lowest rate of suspension in intervention schools $\geq 5.1\%$)

Data were extracted from the years 2016-17 to 2022-23 (the latest available DfE dataset available at the time of writing) to explore trends before and after introduction of the Exclusion Initiative.

2.3.3. Data on Excluded Initiative student journeys

Specifically for students who received support from the Excluded Initiative, we compared student outcomes on key metrics in the years prior to, and after, their engagement with the Excluded Initiative. For this analysis, we asked schools to provide detailed data from their own datasets, including the pupil ID for Excluded Initiative students and the start and end dates of their time in Excluded Initiative provision. Our analysis compares rates of suspensions, exclusions, managed moves (where these data were available), attendance and behaviour data before and after they had been in the intervention.

2.4. Qualitative Data Approach

Qualitative interviews were used to understand key implementation barriers and facilitators and to explore perceived impacts and their drivers. Our inquiry and analysis is

¹⁹ I.e., excluding city technology college, foundation school, free schools, university technical college and voluntary controlled schools

shaped by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR^{20 21}), an evidence-based framework for understanding implementation. CFIR describes five 'domains' of influences on implementation.

- **Intervention characteristics** – Features of the inclusion interventions that make it easier or more difficult to implement it.
- **School or 'inner settings'** – How the school environment impacts on implementation of the inclusion intervention, such as school culture, staff-student relationships, the school strategy and priorities, staff retention and whole school buy-in.
- **Outer setting** – How the education system and wider support systems influence implementation. Initial conversations with key delivery staff across the eight schools suggest that CAHMS waits, social services provision, and student family dynamics all have a significant role on the delivery of the interventions.
- **Characteristics of individuals involved** – The beliefs, skills, professional norms, training etc. of the people who deliver the interventions or who are part of the wider school are likely to play a pivotal role in implementation.
- **Implementation process** – Features of the approach taken to implementation, such as how schools approached the design of the inclusion intervention, planning, staff engagement, leadership, evaluation, consultation etc. will also be relevant.

In addition, the interviews explored perceptions of the impacts of the inclusion intervention on individual students as well as on teacher-student relationships, school culture, and other wider school changes.

We carried out a total of 72 interviews: 27 with children, 22 with Excluded Initiative delivery staff, 8 with members of SLT, 15 with mainstream teachers. Some members of staff were interviewed at multiple time points throughout the evaluation. Interviews took place in April and May 2023, October 2023 and March 2024. See Appendix 8.5 for a detailed breakdown of the interviewee numbers and timepoints.

2.5. Workshops with schools

Our approach to the evaluation positioned Excluded Initiative leads in schools as shared knowledge creators. Three collaborative workshops were held during the evaluation to draw on the expertise held by intervention leads in interpreting our findings. Workshops were held in February 2023, June 2023 and December 2023.

²⁰ Damschroder, L. J., Aron, D. C., Keith, R. E., Kirsh, S. R., Alexander, J. A., & Lowery, J. C. (2009). Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice: A consolidated framework for advancing implementation science. *Implementation Science*, 4(1), 50-6

²¹ Damschroder, L.J., Reardon, C.M., Widerquist, M.A.O. et al. (2022). The updated Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research based on user feedback. *Implementation Sci* 17, 75. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-022-01245-0>

3. Who did the initiative reach?

3.1. Which young people have been supported by the interventions? How do they compare to the wider school population?

In this section we first look at which students were supported by the Excluded Initiative interventions and how their demographic profile compares with the whole school population. We show comparisons for all eight schools combined, and then individually. These analyses are based on the administrative data provided by the eight schools. We then discuss how schools identified and referred students to the interventions, drawing on the qualitative data, and consider perspectives on whether any pupils were missed during provision.

3.1.1. Combined profile of students supported by the interventions

Free School Meals, SEND and Gender: All Schools

The figure below shows the profile of those students who engaged with the interventions (N=500), compared with the combined school populations across all eight schools (N=10537).

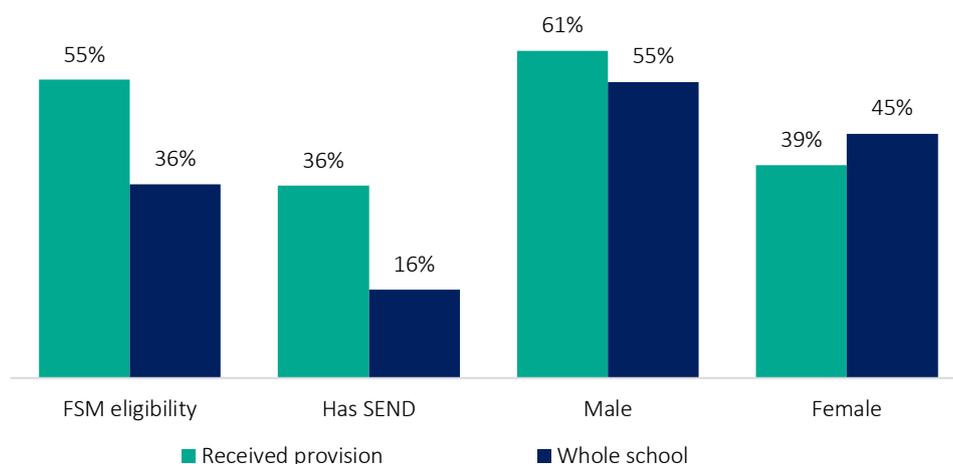
For four schools (Phoenix Academy, Hendon School, Kingsbury High School and Friern Barnet School) we calculated the wider school population by using data on all year groups and academic years since the inception of the intervention within the school through to 2023-24. For two schools (Beacon High School and Duke's Aldridge Academy) the same approach was taken through to the 2022-23 academic year when Excluded Initiative funding was ended. For Kemnal Technology College, data were available for year groups 7-9 in 2020-21 academic year (inception), year groups 7-10 for 2021-22 academic year, and all year groups for 2022-23 when funding was ended. For, Our Lady's Catholic High School, data were available for all year groups but only for the current 2022-23 academic year.

There was an overrepresentation of students within the intervention who were receiving free school meals and with SEN-D when compared to the wider school population. This is in line with wider evidence about the additional support needs of these groups and their greater risk of exclusion^{22 23}. The overrepresentation of these children within the interventions demonstrates that schools have been using interventions to provide targeted support to students with additional needs. It also re-affirms that on a systemic level, schools are struggling to ensure that mainstream environments do not lead to heightened risk of exclusion for those children with additional needs.

²² Thompson, I., A. Tawell, and H. Daniels. 2021. "Conflicts in Professional Concern and the Exclusion of Pupils with SEMH in England." *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26 (1): 31–45. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1898769.

²³ Ferguson, L. 2021. "Vulnerable Children's Right to Education, School Exclusion, and Pandemic Law-Making." *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties* 26 (1): 101–115. doi:10.1080/13632752.2021.1913351.

Figure 3. Profile of Excluded Initiative students compared with whole school population across all eight school (weighted averages)



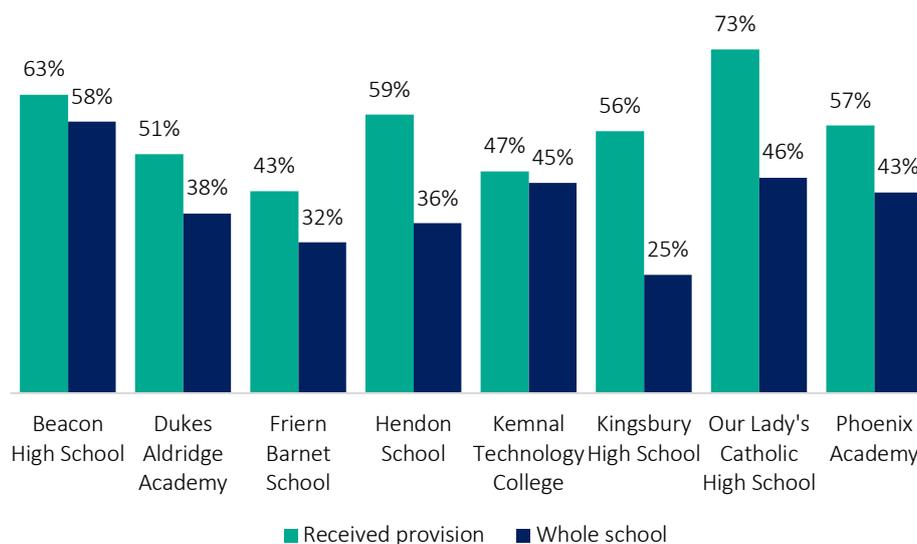
Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers. * The sample size for pupils in the intervention in Hendon school is lower (44) than the sample that received the intervention (51), because the data on demographics was provided for 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years. Hence, some pupils were not found in the data. ** The whole school analysis of demographic characteristics excludes the pupils who received the intervention. The demographic characteristics for whole school are averaged across all academic years of data provided since the school started delivering the intervention. Pupils are not double counted across years and only new pupils from subsequent years are added to the analysis. Exception to this is when same continuing pupils' status change (for example, their FSM or SEND status) in subsequent years, they are counted again. Base: Intervention N = 500, Whole School N = 10537

In relation to gender, 61% of those engaging with interventions were boys compared to 55% across the wider school population (Our Ladies was excluded from this analysis as it is a girls-only school). The overrepresentation of male students within the interventions resonates with wider evidence highlighting their disproportionate risk of exclusion.

Free School Meals, SEND and Gender: Individual school profiles

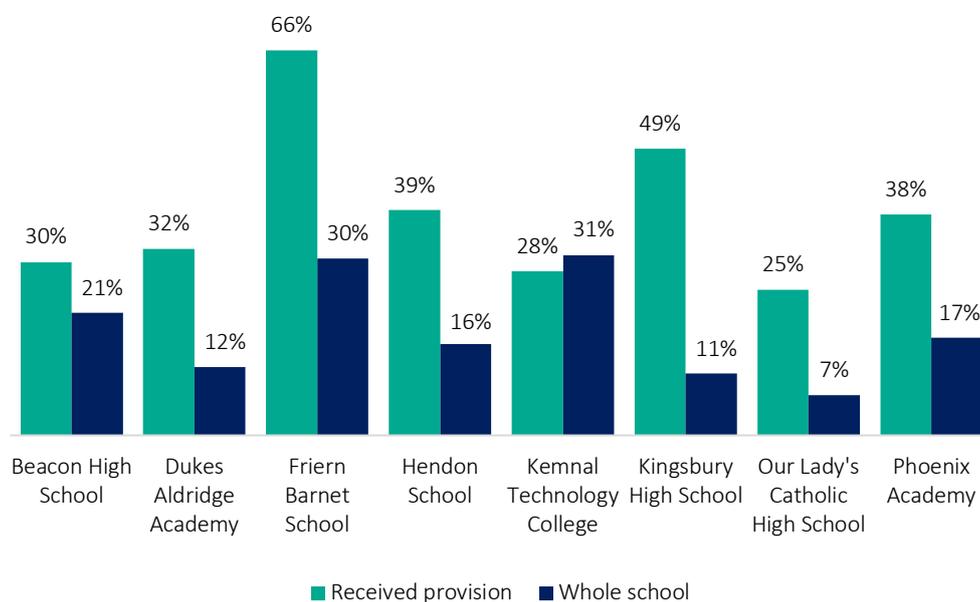
In all eight schools, higher percentages of students with FSM status and (except in Kennal Technology College) with SEN-D engaged with Excluded Initiative interventions compared with the school as a whole, which can be seen represented in Figures 4 and 5 below.

Figure 4. Percentage of students with Free School Meal status in the intervention compared with the whole school (weighted averages)



Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers.

Figure 5. Percentage of students with SEN-D status in the intervention compared with the whole school (weighted averages)

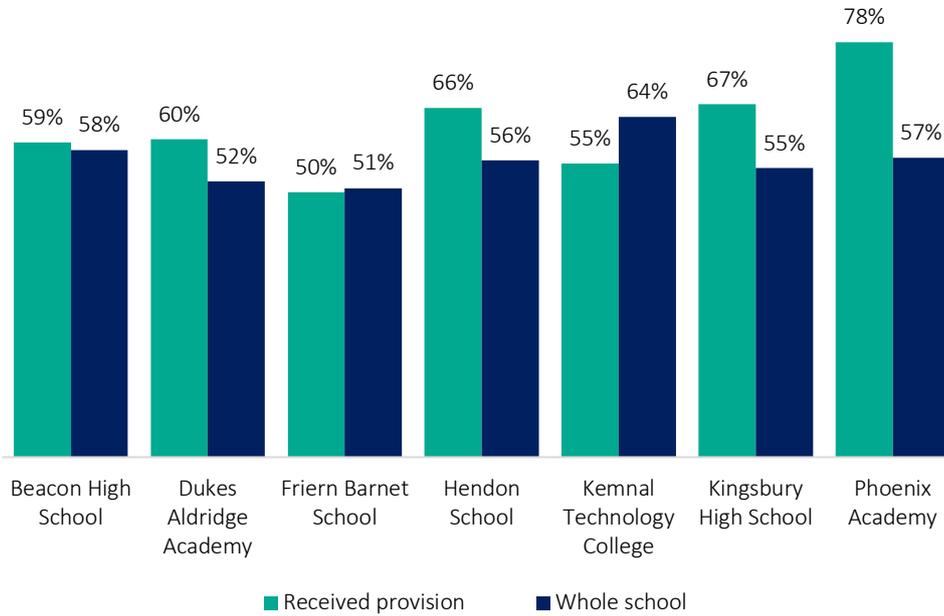


Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers.

In terms of gender, across the mixed gender schools boys were over-represented in the Excluded Initiative interventions in four of seven schools. In Friern Barnet School and Beacon High School, the gender profile is in line with the whole school gender split. In

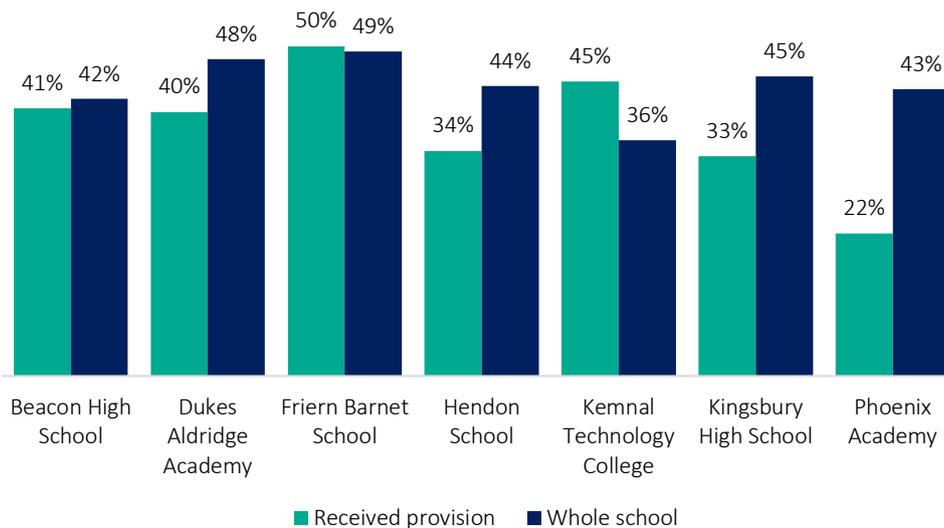
Kemnal Technology College, female students are overrepresented among Excluded Initiative students. These trends can be seen depicted in Figures 6 and 7 below.

Figure 6. Percentage of male students in the intervention compared with the whole school (weighted averages)



Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers. Notes: Our Lady's Catholic High School is a single gender school so is therefore not included in the study.

Figure 7. Percentage of female students in the intervention vs the whole schools, in each of the schools (weighted averages)

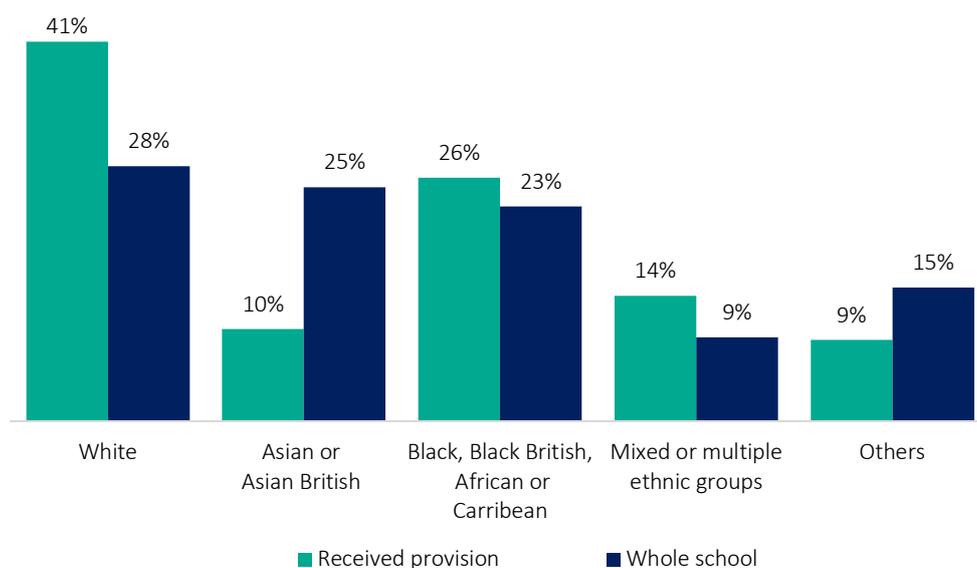


Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers. Notes: Our Lady's Catholic High School is a single gender school so is therefore not included in the study.

Ethnicity: All Schools

The picture in terms of ethnicity is more mixed. As shown in Figure 8, overall, students from Mixed or White ethnicities were over-represented in the interventions compared with the population of the combined schools, those from Black ethnicities very slightly over-represented, and those from Asian or 'other' ethnicities were under-represented.

Figure 8. Ethnicity of Excluded Initiative students compared with the whole school (weighted averages)



Source: data provided by schools. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.1 for further detail of sample numbers. Base: Intervention N = 500, Whole School N = 10537

Ethnicity: Individual school profiles

Turning to differences between schools, as Table 2 shows, the ethnic make-up of the eight schools varies. At all but Kingsbury High School, students from Black ethnicities were over-represented in the interventions compared to the whole school populations. At Duke's Aldridge Academy and Our Lady's Catholic High School, the difference was close to 10 percentage points. White students are over-represented in the Excluded Initiative in Beacon High School, Hendon School, Kingsbury High School (albeit very low numbers) and Phoenix Academy. There were fewer students of Asian ethnicities in the interventions in all schools (except for Hendon School) and fewer students of 'Other' ethnicities in the interventions compared to the whole school (except for Kingsbury High School). The proportions of those from Mixed ethnicities were varied across schools and was particularly high in Friern Barnet School.

Table 2. Students' ethnicities in the intervention and the whole school populations across the eight schools

School	White (%)		Asian or Asian British (%)		Black, Black British, African or Caribbean (%)		Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (%)		Others (%)	
	Intervention	Whole School	Intervention	Whole School	Intervention	Whole School	Intervention	Whole School	Intervention	Whole School
Beacon High School	56.0%	32.8%	1.0%	18.5%	25.0%	21.6%	14.0%	14.3%	4.0%	12.9%
Duke's Aldridge Academy	42.7%	49.8%	4.0%	7.1%	44.0%	33.0%	0.0%	0.1%	9.3%	10.1%
Friern Barnet School	39.3%	44.5%	8.9%	12.7%	21.4%	14.9%	30.4%	11.9%	0.0%	16.0%
Hendon School	33.3%	28.3%	28.2%	22.8%	17.9%	16.1%	10.3%	14.1%	10.3%	18.7%
Kemnal Technology College	62.4%	64.3%	8.5%	12.0%	7.7%	6.9%	16.2%	11.3%	5.1%	5.6%
Kingsbury High School	4.9%	3.2%	29.5%	56.1%	13.1%	17.6%	23.0%	8.2%	29.5%	15.0%
Our Lady's Catholic High School	12.8%	11.8%	0.0%	5.8%	70.2%	60.7%	8.5%	10.1%	8.5%	11.6%
Phoenix Academy	33.3%	20.0%	11.9%	16.1%	38.1%	32.5%	4.8%	9.4%	11.9%	22.0%
Total	41.2%	27.7%	10.0%	25.4%	26.4%	23.3%	13.6%	9.1%	8.8%	14.5%

3.2. Selecting and referring students for the Excluded Initiative provision

3.2.1. Selecting students

The school staff we interviewed stressed how students presented with different individual needs. The primary reason for referrals being made was what was perceived as 'challenging behaviour' within mainstream learning environments. The second reason for referral was disengagement - students with poor attendance or not engaging with lesson content, exercises or requests from teaching staff.

Teachers reflected that these behaviours often masked educational needs. Those who were seen to be 'disruptive' within mainstream classroom environments were typically experiencing challenges in understanding or engaging with lesson content, due to unresolved learning needs.

'Some students mask their needs. So they have a learning need, but they mask it with behaviour, so we address the behaviour but we haven't really noticed a learning need.' (SLT staff)

Staff also said students receiving Excluded Initiative support were often facing wider issues including gang related activity, violence, exposure to or involvement in drug dealing, domestic violence, family conflict and breakdown, and acute poverty bordering on destitution. Teaching staff mentioned that the students supported through the interventions were more likely to be those whose parents did not engage well with the school, or who may have a negative perception of school and education.

3.3. What processes are used to identify and refer students?

While the referral process varied from school to school and changed over time, the following approaches were used:

- **Multi staff involvement** - The referral process generally involved several members of staff, such as mainstream teachers, head of years, SLT members, safeguarding and SEN-D staff members, and the intervention staff.
- **Use of an 'inclusion panel'** - At some schools, an 'inclusion panel' would convene periodically and assess whether any new students should be referred to the intervention. The aim of these periodic meetings was to act as a 'catch-all' approach to identifying appropriate students for the intervention. At one school, all Year 7s were assessed in their admission interviews as to whether they may be suitable for the intervention, as a way for the school to recognise needs as early as possible.
- **Formalised tiered behaviour system** - Another process for referring students was through a formalised tiered behaviour system, where students would be considered for intervention provision if they reached the highest level of the behaviour tier, and where other interventions and options for support had been exhausted.
- **Less systematic** - At other schools however, the process involved a more direct and less systematic referral approach, where mainstream teachers would flag students who they felt would benefit from the intervention to the heads of years, SLT or intervention staff, who would then decide whether the student should be included in the intervention. One school used a questionnaire which was sent to mainstream staff who had taught students initially identified as being appropriate for the intervention, asking for feedback about their behaviour, which informed the final decision on whether to refer them. At other schools, decisions were made by SLT and intervention staff without the input from mainstream teachers.

Staff saw explaining to students why they were being sent to the intervention as a key part of the referral process. However, students reported receiving varying levels of information about why they were being referred and what was expected of them during their time there.

Where students felt well-prepared going into the intervention, they described the conversations with the staff member as open and honest, covering how their behaviour had led to the decision to refer them to the intervention and what was expected of them there. These students also noted that they had opportunities to talk about what they would like to get out of their time in the intervention as well, which they valued. However, some students were just told that they were being sent to the intervention, with limited explanations as to why, and would have liked more information.

3.4. Which students may have been missed?

Staff members generally agreed that there were students at their school who would have benefited from being in the intervention but had not been referred. There are several reasons for this:

- **Capacity constraints** - The main reason for not supporting students who may have benefited was constrained capacity of the intervention (either staff or the available of sessions provided by external organisations).

*‘That’s purely a capacity thing. We work within the bounds of our capacity, and I think if we really wanted to - the next step for me in terms of ongoing term planning is really looking at early intervention... There are probably about 20 more students that we could identify across the school, but that requires capacity.’
(Intervention lead)*

- **Later intervention** - Some schools reviewed students for possible referral at an early stage, while others referred students only when behaviour had escalated and other responses failed. The consensus among staff was that earlier intervention was better.
- **Ambiguity around referral criteria** - At some schools, there was a view among mainstream teachers that clearer criteria and a transparent decision-making process were needed. Several teachers reported that they were not aware of the criteria against which students were assessed for referral to the intervention.
- **Consideration of student dynamics** - Staff also explained that in referring students to the intervention, they had to consider the dynamics between students, and in some cases had not referred students at the same time if it was thought their presence together would impact negatively on their time in the intervention

4. How was the initiative implemented?

4.1. How did intervention staff support students towards outcomes

Due to the level of autonomy given to each of the eight funded schools, there were many differences in how interventions were both designed and delivered. These differences are discussed later in this chapter. What was clear from interviews with staff and students was that there were prominent areas of shared practice that defined the implementation of the fund. Specifically, the following factors were identified as key to empowering students to take steps towards improved outcomes and away from school exclusion:

- Consistency in relationships
- Restorative conversations between teachers and students
- Intensive support adapted to individual needs
- Increasing students' self-regulation and confidence
- Regular and positive parental engagement

The interviews with school staff and students suggest that the following aspects of the Excluded Initiative interventions can be conceptualised as the 'mechanisms of change', that is, the underpinning processes and methods that lead to change:

4.1.1. Consistency in relationships

A key aspect of all interventions thought to bring about positive change was the strong relationships built between intervention staff members and students, through small group or one-to-one sessions. Intervention staff noted that honest conversations and transparency helped to build stronger relationships with students, as did being patient and more tolerant of challenging behaviour. Students noted that feeling listened to and supported by the staff members in the intervention was important to them in developing strong relationships. Students and staff highlighted that change also came about through building consistent, authentic relationships, demonstrating sustained interest in a child and offering consistent support.

'I think having someone who is very approachable for the students, but also represents the idea of the hub; it's not just a building but is someone that they can approach and talk to. The students find [intervention staff name] such an approachable person; they want to talk to him. I think that helps so much; it's someone that they can have those conversations with.' (Mainstream teacher)

'They have to see that you're a person with integrity and that you're reliable and consistent and you're always going to be there for them.' (Intervention lead)

'I think students - those staff members who love it, who are extremely passionate about it, they can see that you care about it, that you're consistent and reliable.'

They love it. They see it. They want to be around you. They want to learn from you.' (Mainstream teacher)

4.1.2. Restorative conversations between teachers and students

Interviews with staff and students suggest that the restorative approaches taken by several interventions allowed students to develop stronger relationships with their classroom teachers. Interventions typically did this by facilitating conversations between students and teachers after times of conflict, allowing both parties to be heard by each other, generating more mutual trust, transparency, and a sense of fairness. Staff members and students both noted that these conversations helped to reduce conflict and challenging behaviour in lessons with those teachers. Conversations changed teachers' understandings and attitudes as well as those of students and led to a 're-setting' of relationships.

'We'd sit in the quiet room and we'd talk about it. There was this one teacher that I always used to argue with and now me and him are like so good, because [intervention lead name] would always make me come and talk to him, even though I did not want to.' (Student)

4.1.3. Intensive support adapted to individual needs

The interventions also provided the opportunity for staff to work more closely with students to understand their behaviour and needs, and to assess what support would be most beneficial to prevent them from being excluded. They were able to work directly with students to address behaviour and focus on subjects where students may require extra support. Socio-emotional support that aimed to support students to manage their anger and better understand their emotions and behaviour was noted by intervention staff as being particularly helpful.

4.1.4. Addressing self-regulation and confidence

Another shared practice that supported students towards improved outcomes was a focus on emotional regulation and the development of confidence. Many of the students supported through the interventions were facing adversity, both within school and externally, that made aligning with schools' behavioural expectations more challenging. Interventions were able to explicitly work with students to emotionally regulate at challenging times. This focussed support approach meant that students were more resilient when faced with challenges within mainstream learning environments.

'Nobody's there targeting you, you're not getting in trouble and you're just actually talking about your problems and how to control your anger or how to control yourself when you're talking to teachers.' (Student)

Consistent, individualised support of the intervention leads was also identified as a way of increasing students feeling of self-confidence.

'I think having the greater attention of a teacher really helped boost their confidence - and especially when we were focusing on some of the creative writing - they were actually producing work they were really proud of.' (Mainstream teacher)

4.1.5. Regular and positive parental engagement

Intervention staff saw regular and positive engagement with parents as important and something for which they had more time than mainstream teachers, sometimes contacting them as often as daily to keep them informed on progress, help them to support their child's learning and enable consistent messaging. Intervention leads often noted that without ongoing engagement with the students' parents, positive change was harder to realise and sustain.

'Partnership between the [intervention name] team, the school and the parents. [intervention name] really take on a massive part of that relationship, and meeting with parents, and daily report cards, going home, having that communication. Calling up when things go wrong, keeping the parents in the loop so we can support at school, and they can support at home as well, so those relationships are paramount to the work and success.' (Intervention Lead)

'They've had some difficult parents as well who previously, when the students were in mainstream, the head of year could never get hold of. Those dads have been spoken to every day, so it's really driving in and getting that consistency with the parents as well as the student.' (Intervention lead)

Intervention staff also helped to resolve family conflicts which were influencing students' ability to work. One student reflected on how the intervention lead helped her through a challenging time at home

'Yes, especially with my family because I had major issues with behaviour at home and [intervention staff name] was the only person at the time that had made me... Helped me get through it because she was in contact with my mum a lot in some way because of my behaviour.' (Student)

4.2. Differences in the design of the Excluded Initiative interventions

Our research has highlighted differences in the ways the eight partner schools have used the Excluded Initiative funding. (Short summaries of each school's provision were shown in the Introduction section). Being able to design their own approach was viewed as important by school staff

'Context matters. What does your school need, or your organisation need? You can look at other examples of things, and branding stuff around IAPs, or APs, something to do with this, but what does the data in your school tell you? What do your self-evaluations tell you you need in your school? Use that to, obviously, inform the vision around what you expect the hub to be.' (SLT staff)

The following discussion highlights the key differences between the schools' interventions, how they were implemented and the rationale behind this decision making.

4.2.1. Degree of blendedness

A key variation between the eight interventions was the degree to which they were 'blended' with the mainstream learning environment. The key dimensions of blendedness were:

- The degree to which mainstream teachers were involved in teaching students during the intervention period.
- The degree to which students attended mainstream lessons.
- The extent to which intervention students had other shared time with the mainstream student population, e.g. shared breaktimes and assembly time.
- The amount of delivery of the mainstream curriculum (wherever and by whom it was taught).
- The extent to which the structure of day in the intervention matched or replicated the wider student experience.
- The geographical location of the learning space itself (whether a separate building on-site or rooms within the main school building).

At one end of the spectrum were Excluded Initiative interventions that were highly blended with mainstream learning environments. For instance, Beacon High School implemented what they described as a whole school approach. Students remained in mainstream classes except when they were taken out for mentoring and other support sessions. At the other end of the spectrum, interventions operated with a high degree of separation and independence from the wider school environment. For example, Hendon School, Duke's Aldridge Academy and Phoenix Academy implemented interventions in independent spaces where students spent all their time away from mainstream learning environments. Other schools such as Our Lady's Catholic High School used a mixed approach, with students attending the independent learning space for some teaching as well as for other support interventions, but also attending some mainstream lessons.

There were different views about the strengths and limitations of these different approaches, but over time there was a clear shift towards, and more consistent views about the value of, more blended approaches. In schools where initially all or most of the teaching had been done by designated intervention staff, mainstream teachers became more involved in teaching in the intervention. In deciding on the approach, intervention staff were weighing up a number of different factors:

- **The value of separate space** - Space and time away from mainstream classrooms gave students respite from challenging relationships with peers and teachers, and a more consistent learning environment and staff.
- **Inclusivity and visibility** - More blended approaches meant that students remained a part of the wider school community and gave the Excluded Initiative more visibility and profile across the school.

'I would just say making sure that the [intervention name] is seen as a part of school. I do think it is seen as part of the school. I think that sometimes the fact that it is positioned away can make people think.... it's a separate bit ... but I think on the whole, just making sure that people understand that it's there for helping everyone, and that it's just, yes, like a part of the school.' (Mainstream teacher)

- **Curriculum coverage** - More consistency in covering the curriculum in mainstream lessons was seen as important to prevent learning gaps and to ease the return to mainstream lessons. However, this needed to be balanced with sessions supporting students with socio-emotional regulation and addressing underlying drivers of behavioural issues.

- **Small group learning** – A benefit of separate provision was the smaller class sizes and specialist support from subject teachers which enabled students to progress and to develop independent learning skills.
- **Opportunities for socialisation with mainstream students** - In schools with more blended approaches, students remained socially connected to the wider school and were able to maintain connection with peers.
- **Disassociation from the wider school community** - Teachers were also concerned about students becoming disassociated from the wider school community and were concerned that more challenging behaviours might become normalised in the interventions.

'They became very much, the [intervention name] is my school, and I'm not part of the school anymore, and that was their views, and they struggled to go back to lessons.' (Intervention lead)

4.2.2. Approaches to re-integration

Approaches to re-integration were an important part of the Excluded Initiative intervention design, and particularly so if students spent more time away from mainstream learning environments. Schools' approaches were not fixed and were typically a case of trial and error, strengthening over time. A number of strategies were used in planning and implementing re-integration, and the process was seen as aided when mainstream teachers had some involvement in teaching in the Excluded Initiative intervention. The approaches to re-integration described were:

- **Planning for re-integration** - Intervention staff discussed with the students what would help them and gave students reminders of strategies to use and tips for how to manage themselves. Some placed emphasis on bringing mainstream teachers and students together to discuss and plan for re-integration collaboratively. One school had all three parties sign a re-integration agreement setting out what each would do, and another used restorative conversations between students and teachers as part of re-integration planning.

'Before I send these strategies to the teachers, I sit down with the students and I say, 'What do you think that the teachers were not doing, the mainstream teachers were not doing before, that you want them to do' and they will tell me 'This, this, this', and I'll now write them out.' (Intervention lead)

- **Phased re-integration** - Phased re-integration was used by some schools, with students returning to only some mainstream classes initially and gradually building up. Other schools integrated to all lessons at the same time.
- **Continued connection to intervention staff** - An important part of supporting re-integration was ensuring that students had a continued connection with the intervention when they were back in mainstream classes. Intervention staff made it clear to students that they could come back for further support or use the intervention space if they needed to, monitored students' progress once they were back, and maintained informal contact with them. Students valued this.

'I make sure that our ex-students come in to the [intervention name] for check in, so that is the only time that I see them, and I say, 'How are you doing? Have you got any problems? Period one and period two, did you get any detentions?' (Intervention lead)

- **Wider school responsibility** - Intervention staff highlighted that re-integration did not only place expectations on students but also on mainstream teachers, and its success depended on the wider school community.

'We always tell [other staff], 'Please, you know these students have been away for six months, five months. You don't expect them to just go into lessons and start doing the best.' It's a struggle. We know that. That's one of the problems that we're having.' (Intervention lead)

One intervention lead said that planning for reintegration sometimes involved refresher training for teachers on the school's approaches to supporting students, or repeating guidance that was already part of students' SEN plans or the school's guidance on supporting students with SEN.

4.2.3. Other features of difference in the design of Excluded Initiative provision

There was also a range of other ways in which interventions varied on a school level:

- **Involvement of external agencies** – Some schools used the funding to engage with external agencies, which took either a leading or a more minor role. External providers were used to provide therapeutic support such as counselling, coaching, mentoring and therapy; specialist teaching support including numeracy and literacy interventions; and using cultural magnets such as sport, music, creative writing and theatre to engage children.

As well as providing specialist input, external agency staff held a different power relationship with students compared to school staff. Working in a more shoulder-to-shoulder way with students, they were able to support students to take ownership of change.

'Teachers don't have that time to sit there and understand what your problems are and stuff that goes on, whereas [external agency staff are] fully trained to do it, and that's what their job is. They're there to stick by you... whereas the teachers, it seems like it goes in one ear and out the other, basically. That's how it feels.' (Student)

- **Year groups supported** – There was also variation in the ages of children that were supported through the initiative, with some schools electing to support specific year groups as opposed to students in all years. This was an area where schools often changed their approaches over time. There was a general trend for schools initially to focus Excluded Initiative provision on students in later stages of their secondary journey (Year 10 and 11) but then to adapt their approach when they felt they could have greater impact when students were younger and first coming into schools.

They also moved to more consistency in school year, since mixed years presented challenges in terms of curriculum delivery. However, it was also recognised that younger students' behaviour sometimes improved when they were with older students.

- **Duration of support period** – The period of time for which students were supported also varied. Some schools opted for a full term while others opted for more condensed periods of support from four up to 12 weeks. A longer period was seen as valuable for students to make more progress, but particularly in more independent models, presented challenges in connectedness to the wider school

community. There was also variation in whether the duration was fixed or could be flexed to individual students' needs, the latter seen as valuable.

- **Acknowledgement of students' achievements** – While all schools sought to acknowledge the efforts of students who had been supported through the initiative, there was variance in how schools approached this. Some schools held 'graduations' which celebrated students' efforts and involved the whole school, providing an affirmative underpinning to the start of the re-integration period and challenging external misconceptions and stigma.

'If they have done well, they have to have their graduation, and for their parents to be invited. They have that celebration for them to know that they have been successful.' (Intervention lead)

4.3. What were the prominent barriers to and facilitators of implementation?

In considering the barriers to and facilitators of the implementation, we used the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) (see Chapter 2). Our analysis here reflects key domains identified in CFIR: the inner setting (i.e. the school itself); the outer setting (communities and services outside the school); the individuals implementing the intervention, and the implementation process itself.

The school or 'inner setting'

Securing the buy in of the wider staff body across the school was key to securing mainstream teachers' time to teach in the Excluded Initiative intervention or set work to be supervised by intervention staff, supporting re-integration, creating space for restorative conversations between students and teachers and ensuring that students were given the opportunity to have a fresh start.

Intervention staff described some early resistance to the new provision among mainstream staff, but this generally dissipated. Over time, most schools described mainstream teachers becoming more involved in the intervention, and positively offering their time and support, prompted by seeing the value of the Excluded Initiative work when students returned to mainstream classrooms. Engaging the wider staff group was aided by the school having a culture of inclusion and of valuing students.

'I can't speak for every member of staff, but definitely a large majority of staff believe in our ethos of keeping our children in school... There has to be an understanding that actually we're all in the same boat here, and we want to keep our children in school. That's the main thing. We want to keep them here.' (SLT staff)

In interviews and workshops, key approaches to gaining wider staff buy-in described were:

- Providing clear explanations about why the intervention is necessary, how it is being delivered, and demonstrating outcomes. This can be supported with data showing how impactful the intervention can be.
- Providing frequent communication about the intervention, to individual teachers and to the wider staff group.
- Providing support and guidance to teachers about challenges in the classroom.

- Sharing success stories (e.g. in a weekly bulletin).
- Involving intervention students in whole-school activities (e.g. assemblies).

Having the support and engagement of the SLT was also seen as essential driver of delivery and staff buy-in. Several intervention leads felt that SLT support had increased over the course of the intervention and helped the intervention to be more fully integrated into the school.

The outer setting

The outer setting within which the school operated was also seen to influence schools' ability to implement the intervention effectively. The following factors were seen to influence delivery:

- **Pressure on specialist provisions** – Some children using the Excluded Initiative provision had needs that could not be fully met and needed specialist provision from outside the school. The pressure on this provision was a significant challenge. Waiting times of a year plus for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), limited availability of Education Psychologists and other learning support, and high thresholds for support from social services meant that children did not receive critical support.

'There are some students that my level of support might not be high enough for their needs, and I think for some of those students, the support in here is just not enough, or it's not the right support for them. They need external agencies, they need intense support that I can't necessarily deliver in the space.' (Intervention lead)

- **Ofsted inspection influencing delivery** - Although discussed only briefly, some schools reported that the Excluded Initiative intervention had been positively regarded by Ofsted in inspections.

The characteristics of individuals involved

A consistent learning from interviews with teaching staff and students was the importance of the personal characteristics of those leading the interventions. Interviewees reflected on how the often unique skillset and passion of intervention staff were key to achieving meaningful change for students.

'Watching the students, how they respond to her [intervention lead] is amazing really. They really respond and have a positive relationship with her It's clear to me and ... to the students that she cares about them and is invested in them doing well, and she has a very personal, professional relationship with every single student there They want to impress her; they want to get merits; they want to get ... glowing commendations from their teachers, and if they behave well, they say, 'Can you tell [intervention lead]? Can you speak to [her] about how well I did?'' (Mainstream teacher)

The interpersonal characteristics seen as critical to successful implementation were:

- **Consistency, patience and clear boundaries** – Being patient and having consistent and clear boundaries with students was seen as important.

'We're talking about kids who, they're at their last bastion of support in school. It takes time. You're going to need to be patient and willing to invest time. You're going to need to look, I suppose, at the beginning at the smaller victories.'
(Mainstream teacher)

- **Honesty and openness** – Having open honest conversations about the consequences of exclusion, was seen as playing an important role in motivating and empowering students to work towards improved outcomes. Staff sometimes drew on their own experiences to make these discussions impactful and authentic.

'[Intervention staff member] said, like she was talking about her behaviour as well and she said 'I wasn't the best', and that's why she wanted to help kids that were like her as well.' (Student)

- **Emotional availability and trust** – Actively engaging with and responding to children's emotional needs on a day-to-day basis was seen to build trust within relationships.

This level of communication and closeness differed from students' experiences with mainstream teachers. By taking a more person centred and personable approach, intervention delivery staff were able to work alongside students, challenging them in supportive ways.

Implementation processes

Being able to adapt provision to local contexts and evolve the interventions in response to the changing needs of students, and through trial and error, were seen as very important. Other processes that were highlighted as aiding implementation of the Excluded Initiative interventions were:

- Having a high-profile launch, including training for the whole staff group on what the Excluded Initiative intervention is and how they should work with it.
- The visible engagement and support of senior staff, including through approaches such as formal referral panels.
- Sharing learning about inclusion with the wider staff group, providing advice and guidance to teaching staff (to support children staying in mainstream classes, to support teachers' teaching in the intervention, and to support reintegration).
- Having some flexibility in implementing the behaviour policy, within the intervention and when students initially returned to mainstream classes.

'The behaviour system works a tiny bit differently, so reminders compared to warnings, and just little tweaks that we wouldn't use in the mainstream behaviour system, but we do use up there, and that has been so clearly communicated to me.' (Mainstream teacher)

- Putting time into building relationships with teaching staff, addressing their resistance or concerns openly.

5. What difference has the initiative made?

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter we report evidence relating to the impacts of the Excluded Initiative. We approached this in three ways:

- 1. Comparing exclusion and suspension rates with a matched comparison group, using DfE data:** Using published DfE data on exclusions and suspensions provided by schools to compare exclusion and suspension rates between the eight funded schools and a closely matched comparison group of schools. (The basis for selection of the comparison schools was outlined in Chapter 2.)
- 2. Analysing student journeys:** Looking specifically at the students who went through the initiatives, comparing key indicators before and after their engagement with the interventions.
- 3. Qualitative perspectives:** Drawing on the interviews with teaching staff and children to understand the differences it made for individual students and for the school as a whole.

5.2. Comparing suspension and exclusion rates with a matched comparison group

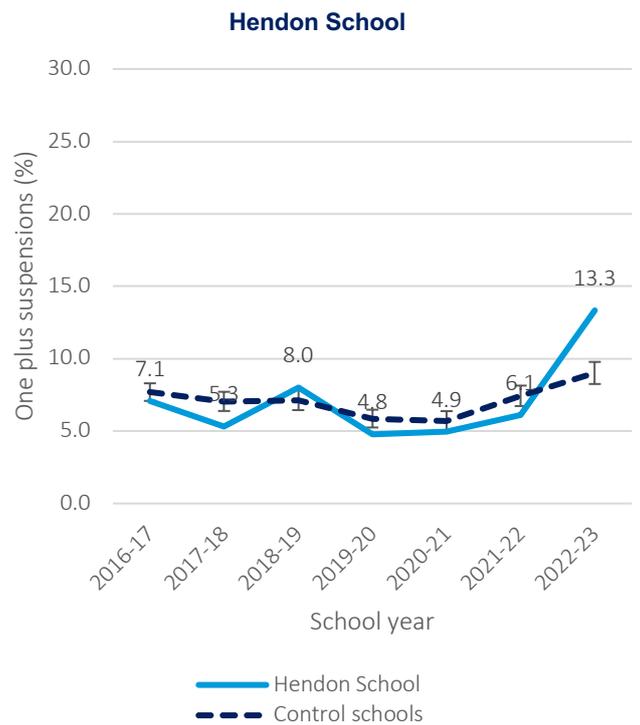
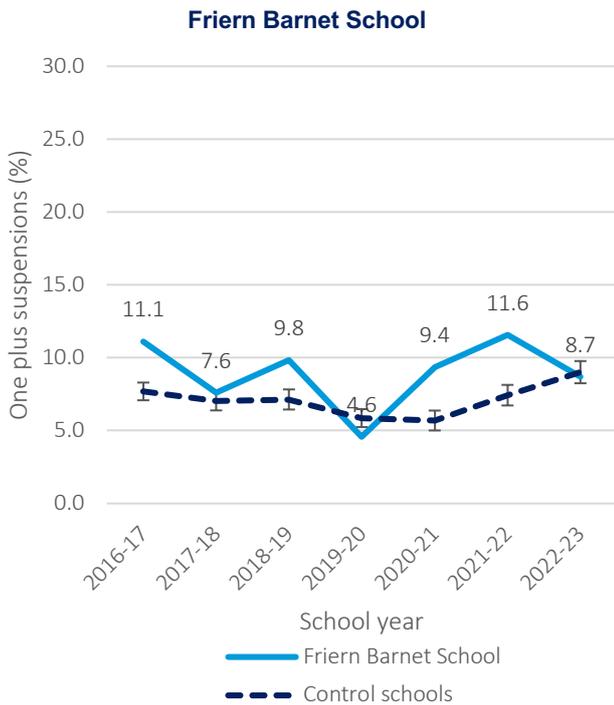
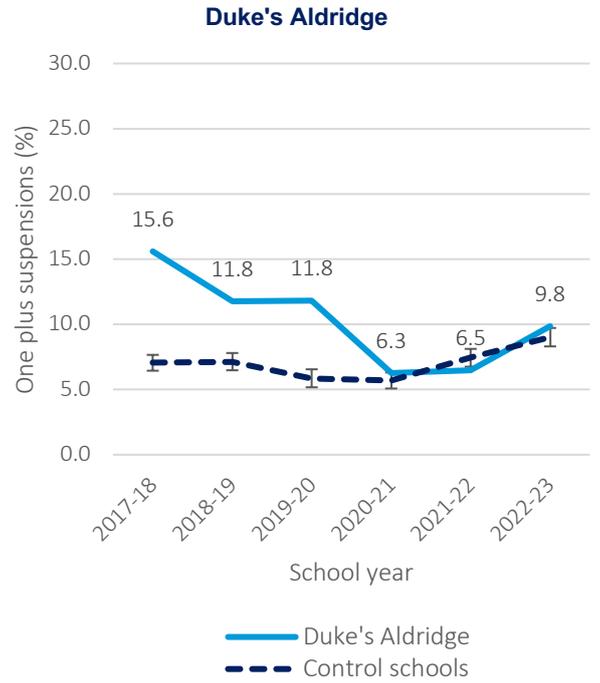
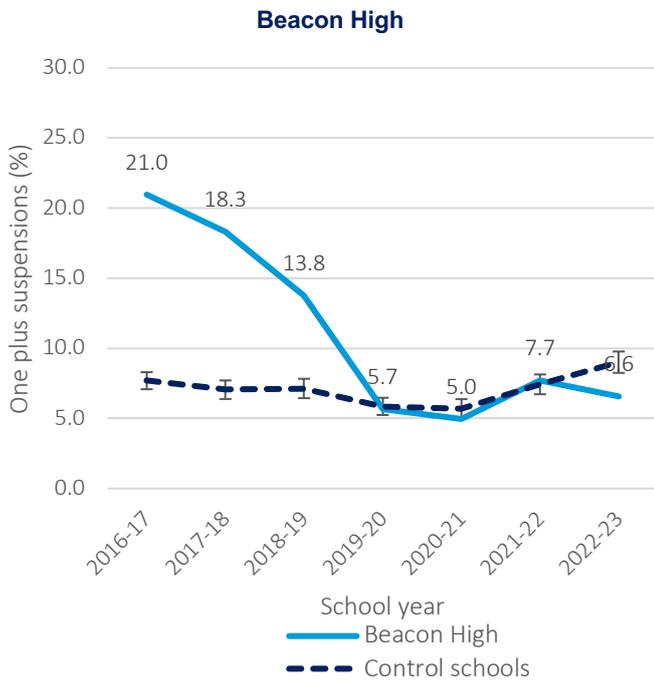
5.2.1. Suspensions

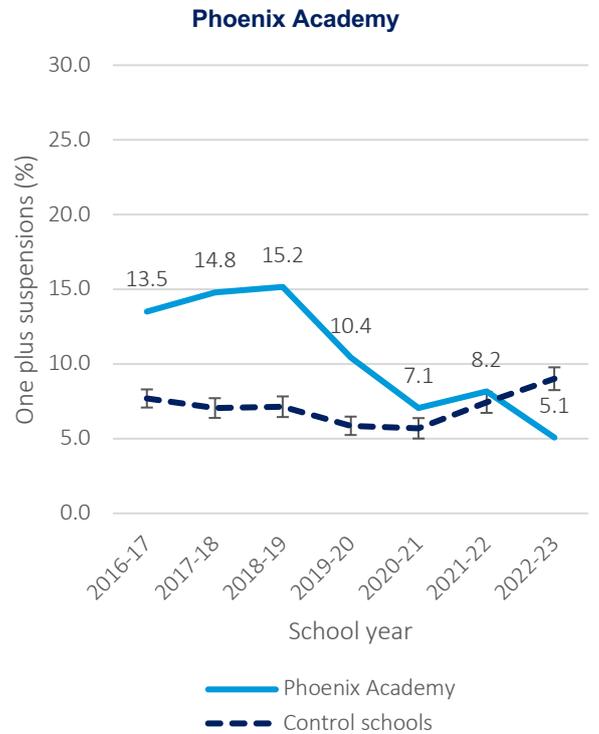
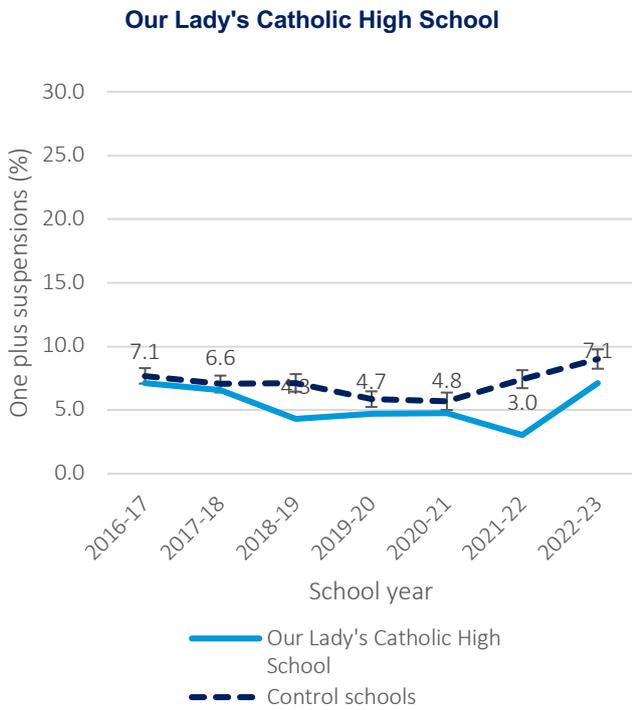
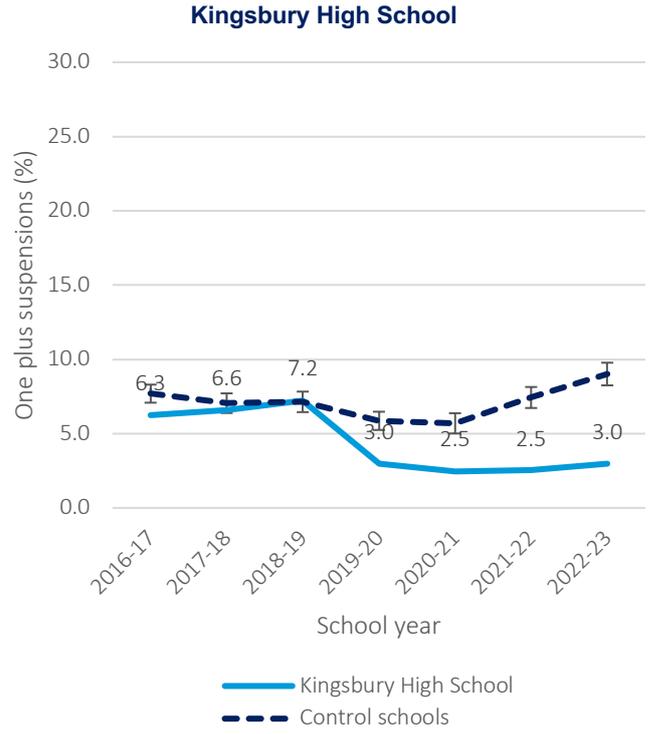
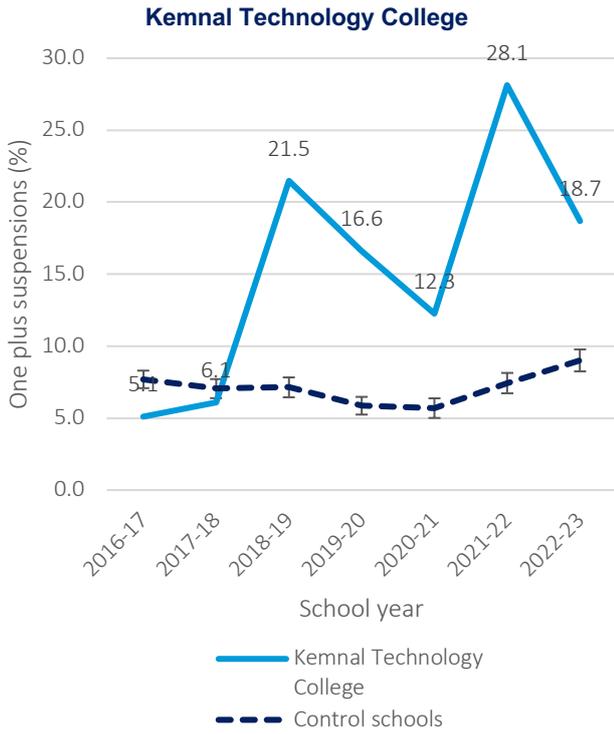
Figure 9 shows the rates of pupils (percentages) who had one or more suspension(s) in each academic year from 2016-17 to 2022-23 in Excluded Initiative schools, compared to the group of matched control schools. In each chart, the line for matched control schools is the same, showing an upward trend in suspension rates since 2020-21.

Beacon High School, Duke's Aldridge Academy, Kingsbury High School and Phoenix Academy showed promising trends of reductions in rates of suspensions over time, that remained relatively stable from 2019-20 and 2020-21 onwards. Notably, for Beacon High School, Duke's Aldridge Academy and Phoenix Academy, each of these schools had markedly higher rates of suspensions than the matched control group from 2016-2019, but rates reduced to be comparable with control schools between 2020-21 and 2022-2023. Kingsbury High School also showed a decrease, with rates starting in a comparable range to the control schools, and markedly lower than the control schools from 2019-20 to 2022-2023.

Figure 9. Comparison of rates of suspension across individual Excluded Initiative schools and matched control comparison schools.

(Control group schools N=30; error bars indicate mean +/- standard error). Source for all charts is 'Academic year 2022/23 Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England' (DfE 2024)

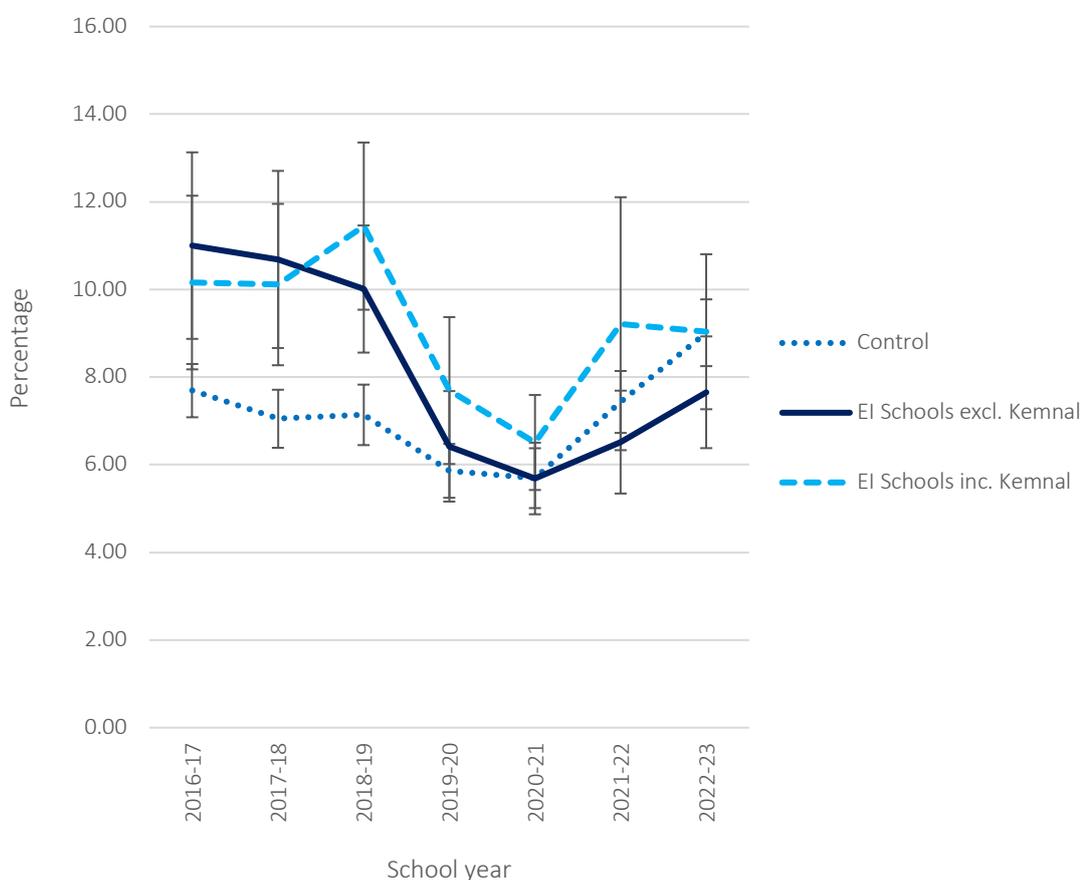




Other schools showed no clear trend in rates of suspension over time, with Friern Barnet School, Hendon School and Our Lady’s Catholic High showing no discernible pattern of change. Both Hendon School and Our Lady’s Catholic High showed increasing rates of suspensions in 2021-22 and 2022-23. Kemnal Technology College showed a markedly different pattern, with an increasing, but fluctuating, trend in suspension rates, and a notable peak of 28% in 2021-22. A member of SLT at Kemnal Technology College confirmed that the data was accurate and described a spike in problematic behaviours during the transition back to school following the Covid lockdowns, which was addressed somewhat through the Excluded Initiative provision and the wider work of inclusion and pastoral teams.

When we looked at trends across all eight schools combined, because Kemnal Technology College was an outlier, we analysed the data both including this school and excluding it.

Figure 10. Comparison of rates of suspension across Excluded Initiative schools and matched control comparison schools.



Control group schools N=30; error bars indicate mean +/- standard error). Source for all charts is published DfE data ‘Academic year 2022/23 Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England’ (DfE 2024)

Figure 10 displays the group average change in suspension rates across academic years for the matched control schools (dotted line) and for Excluded Initiative schools including Kemnal Technology College (dashed line) and excluding Kemnal (solid line).

When we include Kemnal Technology College, we see an overall trend of Excluded Initiative schools with suspension rates well above the comparison group up to 2018-19,

dipping to a low and coming in line with the control schools in 2019-20 (before Excluded Initiative funding began) and 2020-21 (the year funding began - noting this was during the Covid-19 pandemic and so may represent an artificial 'low point'). Rates in both control schools and intervention schools have increased since 2020-21 with Excluded Initiative schools having higher rates but aligned with the comparison group in 2022-23.

When we exclude Kemnal Technology College, the changes are more pronounced, with the Excluded Initiative schools excluding Kemnal Technology College having lower suspension rates than the comparison schools from 2021-22.

This, together with the data showing individual school patterns, suggests that the Excluded Initiative has overall had a positive impact on suspensions.

5.2.2. Exclusions

We carried out the same analyses looking at exclusion data. Figure 11 shows the rates of pupils (percentages) who had been excluded in each academic year from 2016-17 to 2022-23 in Excluded Initiative schools, compared to the group of matched control schools. Again, the line for control schools is identical in all the charts, showing a slow decline until 2020-21 (starting before Excluded Initiative funding began) followed by a rise.

Plots show different trends across individual schools. Duke's Aldridge Academy, Friern Barnet School, Hendon School and Phoenix Academy data demonstrated reductions in exclusions from 2016/17 that were sustained from around 2020-21 to 2022-23 and that bring exclusion levels in those schools broadly in line with the control schools. The change in profile is particularly striking for Hendon School and Phoenix Academy, with Phoenix Academy recording a zero rate of exclusions since 2018-19, before Excluded Initiative funding began.

Beacon High School demonstrated an overall reducing trend from 2016/17-2022/23, with a marked reduction in 2019-20/2020-21 (which was likely to be artificially low due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and rise since. Rates of exclusion remained notably higher than in the control schools in both 2021-22 and 2022-23 although the difference narrowed over time.

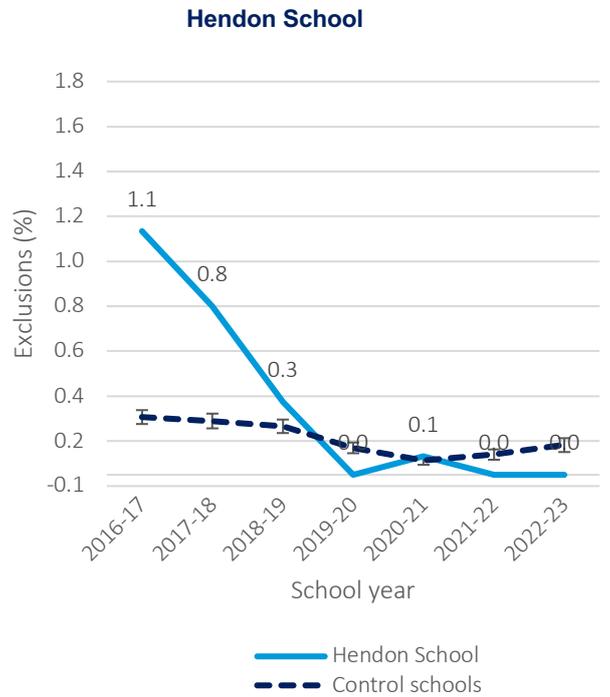
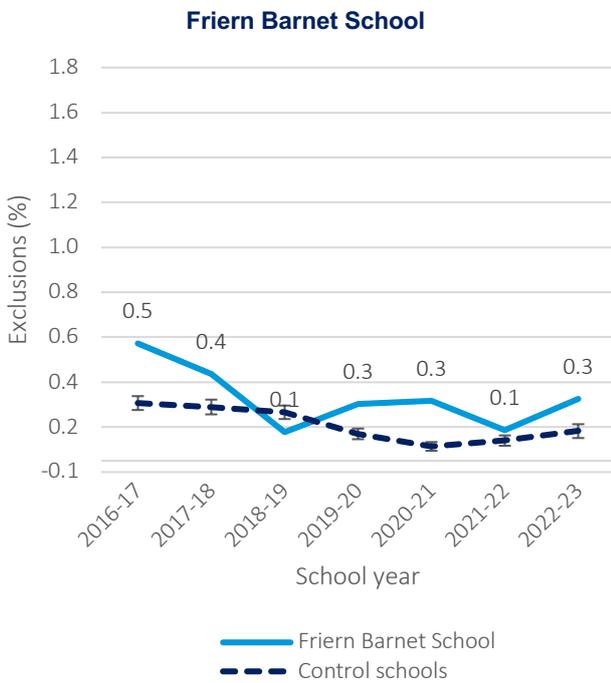
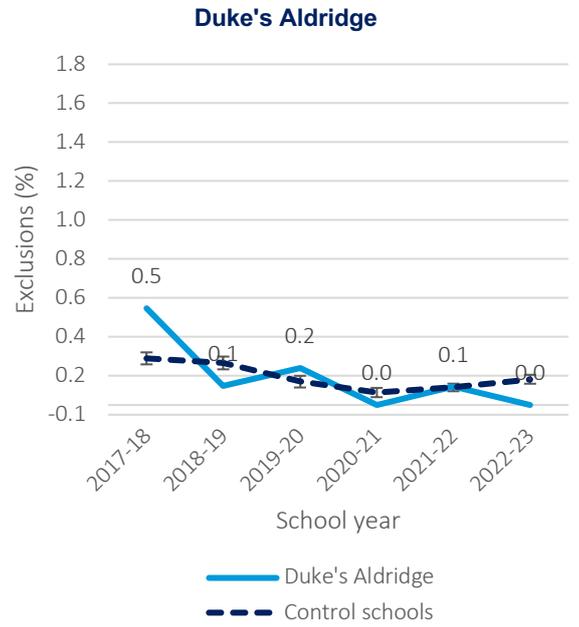
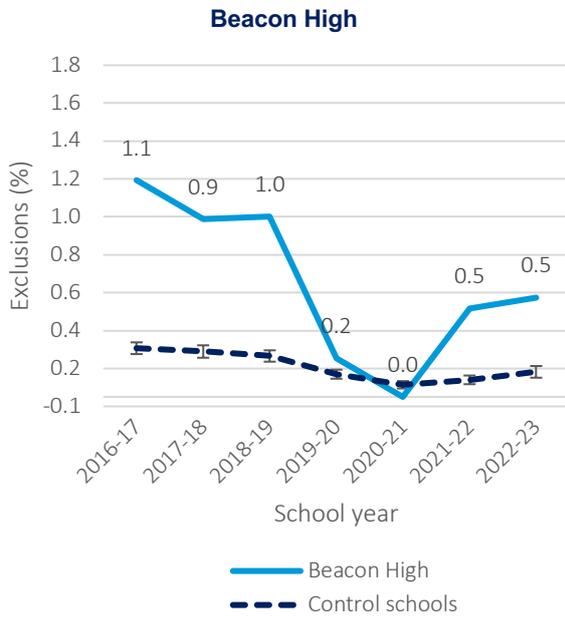
Two schools (Kingsbury High School and Our Lady's Catholic High) demonstrated no clear trend in changes in exclusion rates, although it should be noted that rates reported were in a comparable range to the control schools (0-0.5%) throughout the period observed.

As seen in the suspensions data, Kemnal Technology College showed a different pattern of effects, with peaks in exclusions of 1.3-1.5% in the years 2018-19 and 2022-23. Again, we have included comparative analysis of three groups. Firstly, the comparison group of unfunded schools as described in the methodology, secondly, the funded schools including Kemnal Technology College, and thirdly the funded schools excluding Kemnal Technology College.

Overall, these data suggest that Excluded Initiative may have contributed to reduced exclusions in five schools.

Figure 11. Comparison of rates of exclusion across individual Excluded Initiative schools and matched control comparison schools.

(Control group schools N=30; error bars indicate mean +/- standard error). Source for all charts is 'Academic year 2022/23 Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England' (DfE 2024)



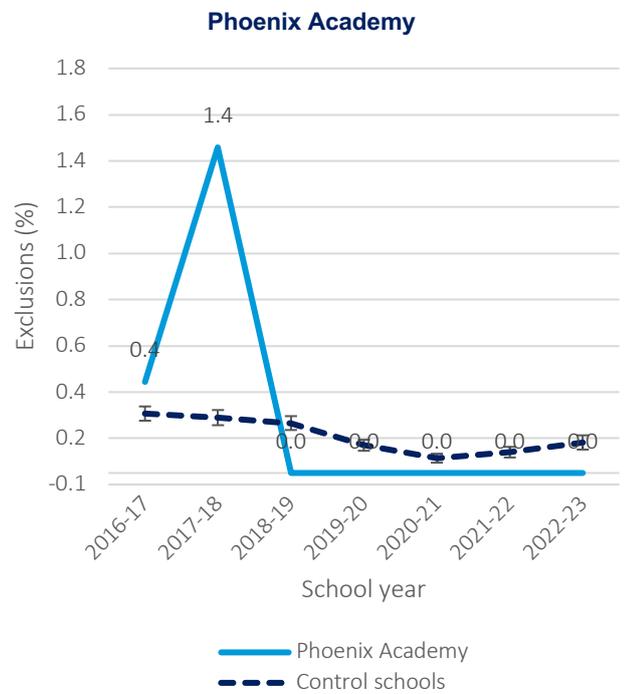
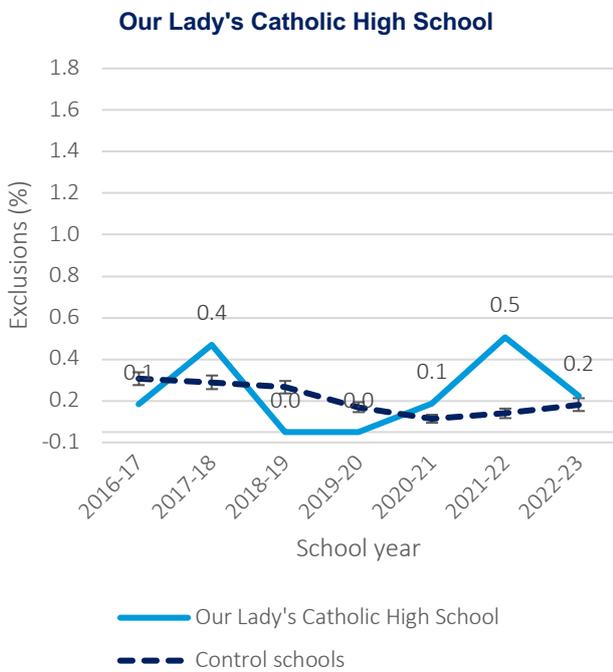
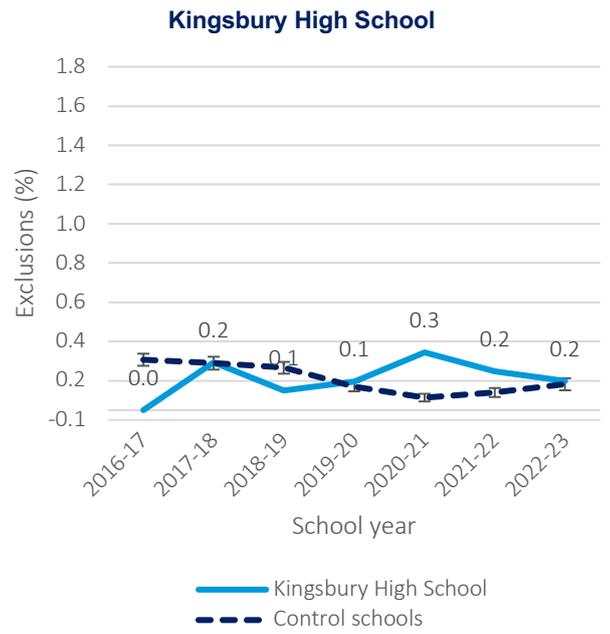
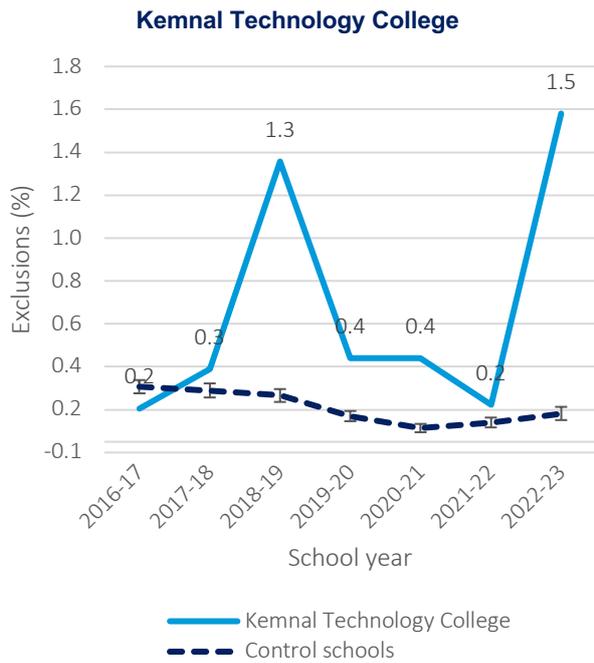
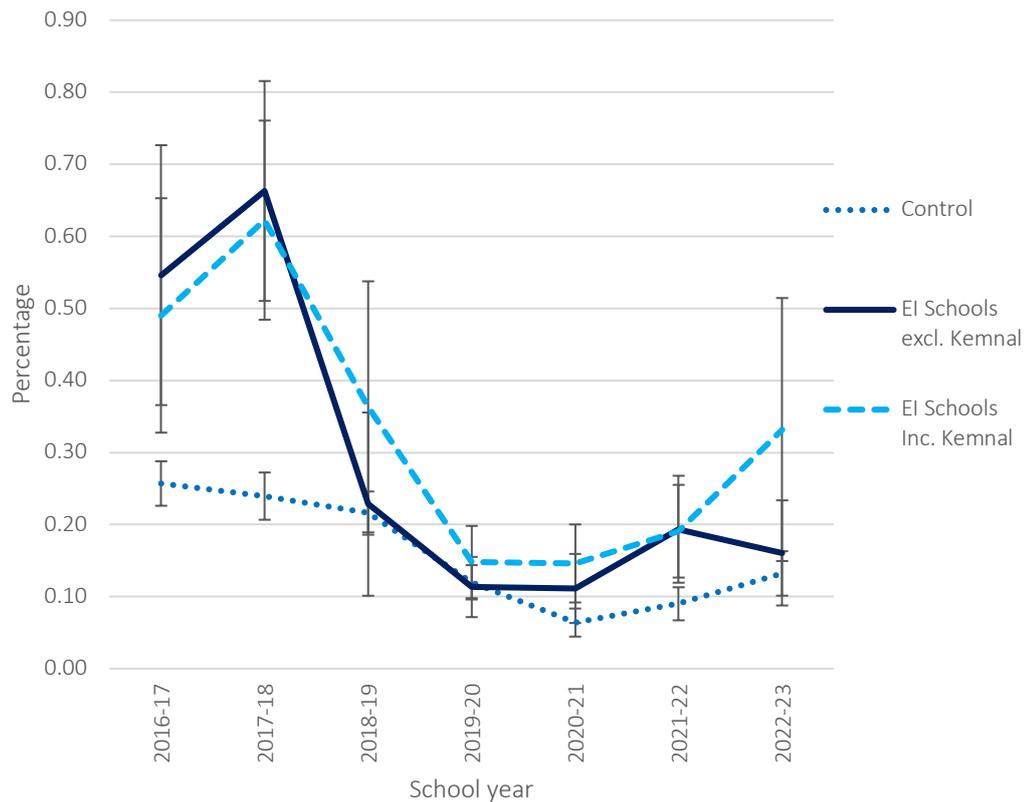


Figure 12 displays the group average change in exclusion rates across academic years, again both including Kemnal Technology College (the dashed line) and excluding Kemnal Technology College (the solid line).

Figure 12. Comparison of rates of exclusions across Excluded Initiative schools and matched control comparison schools.

(Control group schools N=30; error bars indicate mean +/- standard error). Source for all charts is 'Academic year 2022/23 Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England.' (DfE 2024)



Note: (N=30; error bars indicate M+/-SE).

Comparable to the pattern shown in the suspensions data, the overall trend both including and excluding Kemnal Technology College shows much higher exclusion rates for the Excluded Initiative schools in 2016-17 and 2017-2018, dipping to a low in 2019-20 (noting this was during the Covid-19 pandemic, and so may represent an artificial 'low point'). Exclusion rates including Kemnal Technology College remain closer to, although higher than, the comparison schools, with the gap widening in 2022-23. If Kemnal Technology College is excluded from the analysis, the Excluded Initiative schools are more closely aligned to the comparison group, with only very slightly higher exclusion rates in 2022-23.

The analyses suggest that the Excluded Initiative has overall had a positive impact on exclusions.

5.3. Analysing student journeys

We also analysed data provided by schools' data specifically about Excluded Initiative students' journeys. This section draws on that analysis and on the qualitative interviews conducted with students and school staff (SLT, intervention staff and mainstream teachers).

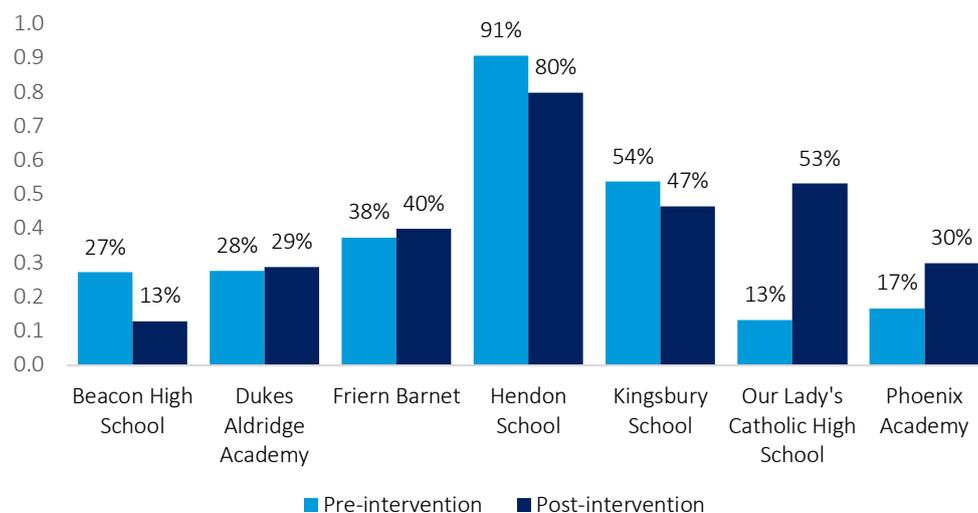
Analysing student journeys was an exploratory analysis and there are a number of limitations to the data. Due to the small sample sizes, it is challenging to infer 'impact' and this analysis should be viewed as descriptive of patterns on an individual school level. Given that schools measure some outcomes in different ways, the analysis presented does not support comparison between schools. The caveats to note are as follows:

- Most importantly, we do not have a measure of the counterfactual - i.e. what would have happened in the absence of the Excluded Initiative, to provide a point of comparison.
- Because the analysis compares the years before and after the intervention, the sample of pupils that could be included was often small. We did not have a 'pre' profile for children who were in Year 7 (or Year 8 where the Excluded Initiative entry year is Year 8) when they experienced Excluded Initiative interventions, nor a 'post' profile for those experiencing them in Year 11.
- The year that the student is in the intervention is not included in the analysis since the analysis is based on data in the years before and the years after the Excluded Initiative provision. If the year a student went into the provision involved a spike in problematic outcomes (e.g. suspensions) which led to them going into the provision, this spike will be missed in our data set, and the trend potentially flattened.
- The last year for data inclusion varied between the schools. We have data up to 2023-24 for the schools whose funding continued to that academic year (see Chapter 1). The other four schools' funding ended as the 2022-23 academic year came to a close although we requested updated data, none of the four schools provided this.
- The data sets that the schools provided were in some cases incomplete, missing information on certain year groups, time periods and relevant outcomes. This was particularly the case for managed moves where data was only provided by four schools. Kemnal Technology College was only able to provide data on student attendance and so is not included in other analyses.
- Additionally, while most schools provided data on attainment, the way it was measured changed over time and hence, we were only able to compare attainment scores for Excluded Initiative students before and after the intervention for two schools.
- Behaviour is measured through analysis of the number of 'behaviour' and 'achievement' points schools give to each student. However, the systems that schools use vary making comparisons difficult. Whilst behaviour points were collected by all schools, achievement points were only measured by, and therefore able to be compared, for two schools.

5.3.1. Suspensions

Data provided by schools on Excluded Initiative students' suspensions before and after their time in Excluded Initiative provision show a mixed picture - see Figure 13. Three of the schools (Hendon School, Kingsbury High School and Beacon High School) saw decreases in the likelihood of Excluded Initiative students being suspended at least once following engagement with the intervention. Two (Friern Barnet and Dukes Aldridge Academy) saw these rates remain relatively unchanged, while the remaining two (Phoenix Academy and Our Lady's Catholic High School) saw increases in the likelihood of students being suspended following support.

Figure 13. Excluded Initiative students: percentage who have been suspended at least once

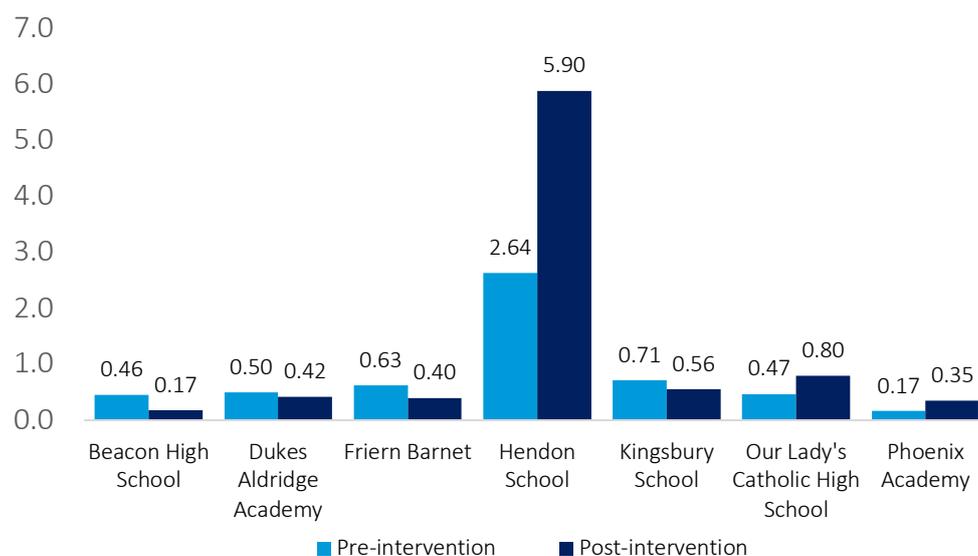


Source: data provided by schools. Sample size per school ranged from 6 to 34. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.2 for further detail of sample numbers. Note: Data on suspensions was not provided by Kennal Technology College.

The average number of suspensions per Excluded Initiative student also decreased for four of the schools who provided useable data (Beacon High School, Duke's Aldridge Academy, Friern Barnet School, Kingsbury High School), see Figure 14. Three schools (Hendon School, Our Lady's Catholic High School, Phoenix Academy) saw an increase to the average suspension rate for those who engaged in provision.

These changes should be understood in the context of the trends nationally and in London and in the control schools (reported earlier in this Chapter) which show rising rates of exclusion and suspension consistently following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 14. Average number of suspensions per Excluded Initiative student



Source: data provided by schools. Sample size per school ranged from 6 to 34. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.2 for further detail of sample numbers. Note: Data on suspensions was not provided by Kemnal Technology College.

Exclusions

Schools reported low rates of exclusions of students who had been through the interventions, ranging from 0% to 7.8% (see Table 3). Given that the Excluded Initiative provision targeted students at risk of exclusion, this suggests that it may have had a protective factor, although we do not know what would have happened to these students in the absence of the Excluded Initiative.

Table 3. Excluded Initiative students: exclusions since intervention

	Number of Excluded Initiative pupils	Number of Excluded Initiative pupils excluded since the intervention	Rate (%) of exclusion since time in Excluded Initiative
Beacon High School	92	4	4.3%
Duke's Aldridge Academy	62	No data available	No data available
Friern Barnet School	43	1*	2.3%
Hendon School	51	4	7.8%
Kemnal Technology College	120	6	5%
Kingsbury High School	52	2	3.8%

Our Lady's Catholic High School	48	1	2%
Phoenix Academy	39	0	0%

Notes: *Friern Barnet school: The figure on exclusion is underestimated, as data on permanent exclusion only provided for 2023-24 academic year. More students may have been permanently excluded in previous academic years.

Managed moves

Collecting data on managed moves was an ongoing challenge in the evaluation. Schools are not required to provide this data to the DfE. Schools did not have consistent approaches to collecting and reporting these data, and working definitions vary from that offered by the DfE. For example, while some schools define a managed move as a permanent moving of a student to another mainstream school, others include temporary transfers to mainstream or alternative provision. Only four schools provided data on managed moves, and in one case the data were difficult to interpret as it indicated multiple managed moves for individual students. These issues all make the data hard to interpret.

As Table 4 shows, apart from Friern Barnet school, the numbers of managed moves are low, although we do not know what the rate might have been without the Excluded Initiative.

Table 4. Excluded Initiative students: managed moves since the intervention.

	Number of Excluded Initiative pupils	Number of pupils on managed moves since the intervention	Rate (%) of managed moves since time in Excluded Initiative
Beacon High School	92	No data available	No data available
Duke's Aldridge Academy	62	No data available	No data available
Friern Barnet School	43	12*	28%
Hendon School	51	4	8%
Kemnal Technology College	120	No data available	No data available

Kingsbury High School	52	4**	8%
Our Lady's Catholic High School	48	3	6%
Phoenix Academy	39	No data available***	No data available***

Notes: *Friern Barnet School: The data recorded multiple managed moves for the same pupil. Data on managed move only exists for 2023-24 academic year. **Kingsbury High school: The school records as managed move where students are on roll with them as well as on roll at another school or at a medical provision. It also includes pupils where the managed move was not successful and the student returned. ***Phoenix Academy: Data provided only for 2018-19 academic year.

5.4. Qualitative data on suspensions, exclusions and managed moves

Intervention staff and SLT members widely reported in the qualitative interviews that they had noticed a decrease in the numbers of suspensions and exclusions at the school since the introduction of the interventions and felt that the Excluded Initiative had reduced the risk of suspension or exclusion for individual children. Many interviewees reflected that specific students would have been excluded without the presence of the interventions at their schools.

'Without the [intervention name], we wouldn't have had anywhere else to go with quite a few students. There are about at least five students that I can think of off the top of my head that probably will have qualified or warranted a permanent exclusion if we didn't have any other means of trying to meet their needs in school.' (Intervention staff)

Students also spoke positively about the Excluded Initiative interventions and the decreased likelihood of exclusions. The majority of those interviewed felt it supported them to take steps away from behaviours that might have led them to be excluded, often identifying intervention delivery staff as the primary reason for their continued inclusion in mainstream environments.

'[Intervention staff member] actually helped me get through a lot since me joining the school. I'm pretty sure without her I wouldn't even be here right now only because I thought... I was supposed to be leaving the school based on my issues with my behaviour but she was the one that convinced me to stay here and get through the [intervention].' (Student)

Teaching staff acknowledged that some children were excluded or suspended despite being referred to receive support.

'I don't think the [intervention name] is a magic fix for every student; and, certainly, there are some students that I don't think have benefited from it.' (Mainstream teacher)

There were a range of reasons why some children were unable to make progress through engagement with the interventions. Some were reluctant to be referred in the first instance which resulted in hesitancy and a lack of engagement with the intervention. For others, it was felt that the intervention was offered too late or the students' needs were beyond the support that the intervention could provide. (We discussed different approaches to the timing of referrals in Chapter 4.)

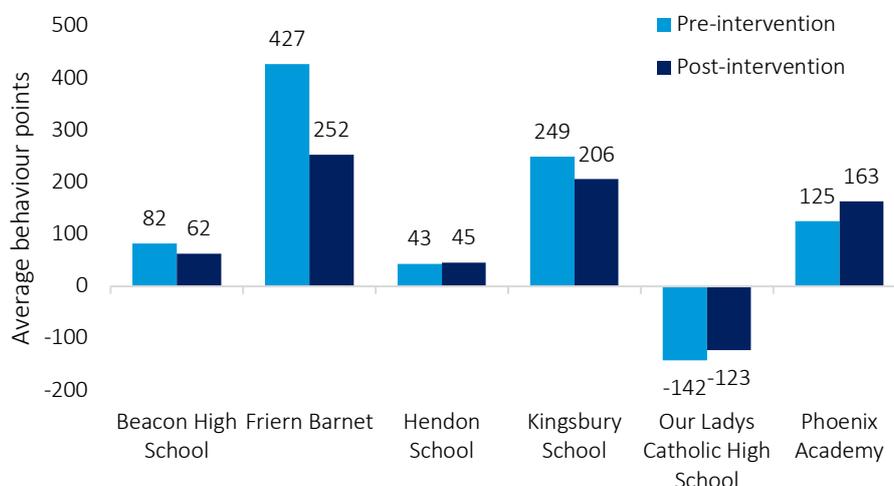
'They were already at the point of at risk of permanent exclusion, and there just hasn't been enough time to get to - they've gone beyond that level of intervention, and that's where, probably, the [intervention name] hasn't been able to help them. It's not because the [intervention name] can't do the work, it's just the time hasn't been there. The [intervention name] wasn't there early enough for the young person.' (SLT staff)

5.4.1. Behaviour

The data provided by schools also indicate a general improvement in Excluded Initiative students' behaviour post-intervention compared to pre-intervention. Six schools were able to provide behaviour records data. Schools use slightly different systems of measuring behaviour points, and so the numbers of points are not comparable between schools. At Our Lady's Catholic High School, behaviour points were recorded as negative numbers, hence at this school, a lower negative number indicates more behaviour points were given to a student.

Four schools (Beacon High School, Friern Barnet School, Kingsbury High School, and Our Lady's Catholic High School) saw improvements in the average number of behaviour points received by Excluded Initiative students before and after their time in the intervention. While Phoenix Academy and Hendon School saw an increase in average behaviour points post the intervention, the analysis should be treated with caution as it is only based on small sample sizes. Data on behaviour are not collected by the DfE centrally, so it is not possible to compare these trends with those seen more widely.

Figure 15. Average number of behaviour points per Excluded Initiative student



Source: data provided by schools. Sample size per school ranged from 6 to 34. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.2 for further detail of sample numbers. Note: Data on behaviour was not provided by Kemnal Technology College.

The qualitative interviews with staff and students highlighted that improved behaviour was a key outcome of the interventions. Students were calmer, more polite and respectful towards teachers and other students. There was less disruption in lessons, and improved attitudes to learning. Teachers reflected how the students had been able to behave in ways that aligned with the expectations of the wider classroom environment. Students also reflected on how they had been able to manage or regulate their emotions to a greater extent following engagement with the interventions. Staff and students felt this had come about through

- Teaching, counselling, and mentoring about how to manage and respond to challenging situations without anger.
- Direct work with students to improve their confidence, self-esteem, and self-awareness of their behaviours
- Building close relationships with intervention staff which modelled better student-teacher interaction
- Being able to talk about issues that were going on outside school, which reduced stress and made it easier for them to get support

“Teachers come up to me and like, ‘Oh, ever since you’ve left the hub you’ve been so good. Ever since you joined the hub, you’ve become a different person.’ I’m like, ‘Yes, because it literally changed my whole behaviour, like everything.’ Because when I was misbehaving it would be about problems going on at home, I was able to talk about that [in the intervention] with [the intervention staff]. It would be like relieving. So when I went into my next lesson, I wouldn’t be stressing about anything. I would be like just going into my lesson.” (Student)

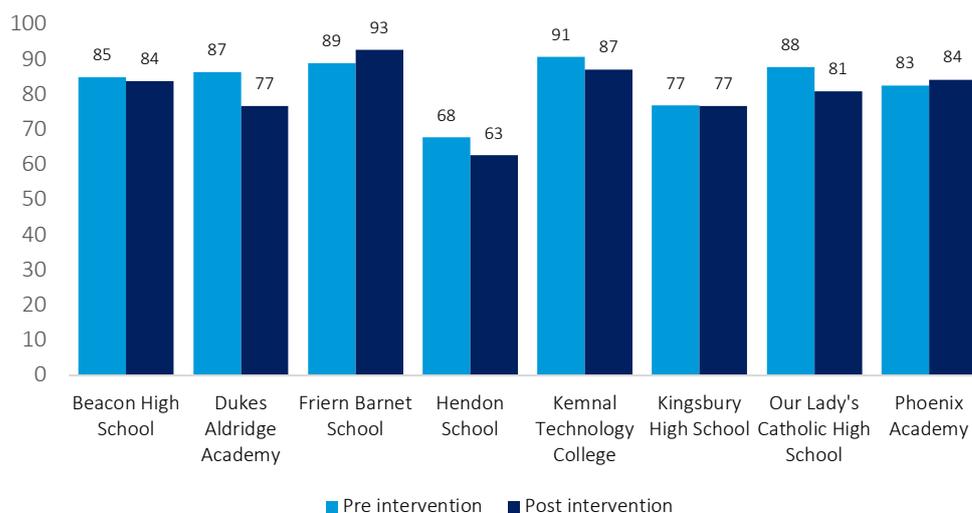
- Better understanding among school staff of a student’s needs and behaviour and more positive regard by the teacher for students.
- Being removed from social relationship dynamics that may have contributed to poor behaviour

Several teachers and intervention staff highlighted how in some cases, students still behaved in ways that were perceived to be challenging following support. However, they noted that behaviour was significantly better than before they had been through the intervention, as were their attitudes towards staff members, other students, and to learning. Teachers at these schools described how providing longer-term mentoring or check-ins with students after reintegration were beneficial ways of sustaining changes.

5.4.2. Attendance

Attendance data were available for all eight schools and presented a mixed picture. Rates of attendance among Excluded Initiative students improved in only two schools (Friern Barnet School and Phoenix Academy, with the improvement in both very small). They were unchanged in Kingsbury High School and decreased in the remaining five schools. The fact that attendance worsened by 8% or less in all except one of those five schools may indicate a more positive picture than seen nationally and across London.

Figure 16. Excluded Initiative students: attendance rates



Source: data provided by schools. Sample size ranged from 6 to 34. Please see sample break down in appendix 8.3.2 for further detail of sample numbers.

Despite these trends, staff members and students highlighted changes in individual students' attendance. These changes came about in a number of ways. Students' attendance improved when they were in the intervention. Intervention staff reported that they set high expectations of students, and smaller groups in the intervention than mainstream classes meant lateness or absence was easier for staff to notice and keep track of. Students noted that they were more motivated to attend the intervention than they had been in mainstream classes, because they enjoyed their time in the intervention and with intervention staff. Being in a safe space meant they were able to ask for help, and there was often less intensive academic teaching time. Activities such as mentoring had helped students to see that getting better grades would improve their future outcomes. One member of staff said they kept the intervention space open on strike days, as some students wanted to come into the space even when school was not open.

'This student had zero attendance because she didn't want to go to the mainstream, but when she came into [Intervention name] and she feels accommodated and safe, she's here, her attendance improved because she feels like a small environment is comfortable.' (Intervention lead)

'My attendance was dropping, being late to school. Now I started to take it seriously after [time in the intervention] ... my grades and the way I've been learning and take a part in lessons [have improved].' (Student)

5.4.3. Attainment

Attainment data that could be compared over time and across year groups was provided by only two schools (Beacon High School & Duke's Aldridge Academy). Both saw an improvement among the students receiving the intervention, albeit only a marginal improvement for Beacon High School. These increases in attainment contrast with the picture of declining attainment since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic seen across the country²⁴.

²⁴ Education Endowment Foundation. (2022). *The Impact of Covid-19 on Learning: A review of the evidence*. [Online]. Last Updated: May 2022. Available at: https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/documents/guidance-for-teachers/covid-19/Impact_of_Covid_on_Learning.pdf?v=1652815530 [Accessed 3 October 2024].

In the qualitative interviews, educational attainment was perceived to have improved as a result of the interventions, by staff members and students across schools. Three main outcomes in relation to attainment were noted: that students had better grasp of lesson content compared to before they were supported by the intervention, that they were doing more work, and that their motivations to learn and engage with lessons had improved.

'They've completely turned themselves around, some of them are doing their GCSEs, and it's just amazing to see where they are now.' (SLT staff)

Teachers noted greater participation in lessons, improved attitudes to learning, and that students would ask for help if they needed it after they were back in mainstream classes. Students reported that they felt they were improving in their subjects and 'getting smarter', as well as getting more work done.

'The main ways [the intervention] has helped me is with my actual spelling and my English and my reading because [intervention teacher] helps me so much with my reading in English. It's every Friday, Wednesday and Monday. It very helped me in my English; I spell so good, I read fantastically, I speak - back then I couldn't even speak a word.' (Student)

School staff also noted that improvements in students' learning may not be fully reflected in attainment data from formal assessments, as their academic level was low, but was nonetheless evident to classroom teachers.

Feedback from staff and students about the key aspects of the intervention provision that contributed to changes in attainment were:

- Fewer distraction, a change in pace in teaching, and not falling behind other students in the group.

'I thought it was just there for like fun and stuff, because obviously everyone always laughs and stuff like that, but when I went in there like, yes, I liked how it was because I was actually learning more than before.' (Student)

- Behavioural and emotional support reducing 'disruptive' behaviour.
- Direct one-to-one academic teaching and support.
- Where mainstream teachers taught in the intervention, students reported better relationships with them which helped them to participate when they returned to mainstream lessons.

However, there were mixed views among school staff about how well-prepared students were academically to return to mainstream lessons. Some felt they 'hit the ground running' when reintegrated, whereas others felt they had missed learning and fallen behind. Most interventions did not offer a full curriculum, so an unintended consequence students may have been that students lost learning and fell behind (at least temporarily) in subjects they did not cover while they were in the intervention. However, for students, the benefits they gained from the interventions generally weighed as more important than what they saw as temporary gaps in learnings.

'I was good at the Year 9 work because it was a new curriculum, but when I came out, I found learning a bit hard because I can't really join up with them since I joined so late, because of [intervention name]. I just needed to catch up.' (Student)

5.4.4. Relationships in school and beyond

Improved relationships were a key change for the students. Students reflected on how following engagement with the interventions their relationships with wider teaching staff had improved.

'Now I know how to respect the teachers, respect the staff, because before I was zero close to respecting staff or teachers.' (Student)

Students felt that teachers responded differently to them, were less likely to be angry, and they felt able to undo negative pre-conceptions held by teachers. Teachers noted that they were better able to understand students' needs once a relationship had been built within the intervention.

'It made my relationship with a lot of the teachers in the school a lot better, because [intervention staff member] would always make me apologise to them. Now I just automatically apologise, because I was so used to getting made to apologise, now I just automatically do it. It's made my relationship with a lot of teachers better.' (Student)

However, some students stressed that they still faced problems with teachers back in mainstream classes. Some students felt that regardless of the progress that they made some of the teaching staff would hold on to negative perceptions due to previous points of conflict. These teachers were often contrasted to those involved in intervention delivery.

'I'd like to have more teachers like [those in the Excluded Initiative provision], instead of just ... [teachers] that would literally just shout at you. They won't help you.' (Student)

The interventions were also able to support students to work towards more positive relationships with family and peers. Positive relationships held between students and intervention delivery staff acted as a reference point or model for students to understand what respectful and mutually beneficial relationships look like, and to experience them. Children had also made connections with students with whom they may not have previously come into contact.

'There were definitely issues around peer relationships and trying to - doing the wrong things to try and fit in and be cool. Working on her on her self-esteem and what positive friendships and relationships looked like. She has massively turned it around.' (Intervention lead)

'I built up a lot of good friendships, which I still have now, especially with people that are in my year because I met some new people in.... Even in younger years and I had built up good relations also with my mentors and my teachers.' (Student)

5.4.5. Wider impacts on schools

A further area of change described as a result of the Excluded Initiative was positive change across the school more widely. This is important because it challenges the idea that the value of the Excluded Initiative interventions was in improving the behaviours of the students and acknowledges that inclusivity is also realised by improvements and adaptations to the wider schooling system.

Members of teaching staff reflected on how the Excluded Initiative interventions were tangible examples of schools delivering on their values of inclusivity, and in turn reinforced those values and cultures.

'The culture of the school - I think [the intervention has] played its part. I think we've had a drive on culture and I think all of the provisions, the behaviour provisions, the SEN provisions, they build into that culture and making sure those expectations are met and set for the students, so I think [intervention name] has had an impact.' (Mainstream teacher)

Teachers described that having 'disruptive' students taken out of the classroom helped other students to behave in a more settled way and gave them more time to support students who were struggling. In addition, seeing Excluded Initiative students return with quite different behaviours and attitudes to learning provided important positive modelling to the whole class, which in turn supported a more positive school culture.

'They're just taken out of mainstream and cannot cause those disruptions in the first instance, but then when they come back, for them to now be modelling good behaviour is - I couldn't tell you the concrete impact that that has, but I can see that as having a really positive impact on other members of the year group.' (Mainstream teacher)

School staff felt that they and the wider school had a better understanding of students' needs and circumstances. For instance, one school has initiated a contextual safeguarding initiative influenced by recognising the needs of children in the Excluded Initiative provision.

Teachers also reflected on how having the Excluded Initiative intervention had challenged them to improve their practice and work towards more inclusive practices and classroom environments. They had particularly learnt from teaching in the Excluded Initiative and from the reintegration strategies. They described feeling that they now invested more in positive relationships with students and relied less on their authority in behaviour management and more on understanding how to relate to each child, with a less hierarchical and strict approach, and a more positive environment in classrooms.

'The students in here, they're hard! [Laughs] It takes a lot of patience; they'll test you. I would say it has definitely improved in terms of my behaviour management and how I approach those difficult students in the mainstream. It has definitely helped. Yes, it helped me a lot in that sense.' (Mainstream teacher)

Several staff described providing more support, earlier, to students who were struggling with behaviour, including reaching out to Excluded Initiative intervention staff for support and guidance and using restorative conversations after difficult incidents and linked with detentions, with the aim of exhausting options before referring to the interventions:

'With those students with specific SEND requirements or who have had behavioural issues, it does cause me to maybe refine my approach with them sometimes ... [Especially with] students in our mainstream classes who have graduated from [Intervention name], ... having that background, that context, and having already built that relationship with them ... in that small group setting, has now helped our behaviour management strategies with them in mainstream... Even with students who haven't been in [intervention name], I think often it's certainly caused me to [be more] reflective about the way I'm behaviour managing those particular individuals.' (Mainstream teacher)

Finally - and particularly important given the challenges schools face in recruiting and retaining teaching staff - teachers also reported feeling more positive about teaching as a result of improvements stemming from the Excluded Initiative. The improved behaviour of students that had been through the interventions made teachers feel more positive about teaching. They were having to break up fewer fights, and deal with less challenging behaviour, and they were able to reach out to Excluded Initiative staff to get support if they needed it. They described feeling less stressed and calmer, and found it very rewarding to see the improved behaviour and learning of children. This improved their enjoyment of teaching and their wellbeing at work.

'Our staff surveys, we've done two recently, and the staff surveys say that 90% of the staff feel respected, feel safe; the same with the students. The wellbeing survey was really positive and said that staff were happy teaching here and felt safe and supported, and felt behaviour had improved.' (SLT staff)

Some schools had shared their learning with other local schools, and Beacon High had achieved the Inclusive School Award with Centre of Excellence status.

5.4.6. Engaging in the school community

Students also described feeling valued and a sense of engagement and belonging within the wider school environment. For many of the students their patterns of behaviour had isolated them within the school, as a result of underlying needs that peers were not experiencing, and 'disruptive' and/or disengaged behaviours and isolation and other punitive responses which created a sense of disconnect from the wider school community.

The interventions aimed to address this, by demonstrating commitment to students, helping them gain the skills to actively engage in the wider school community, and increasing their sense of belonging and connection. One teacher reflected on the journey of an Excluded Initiative student who had particularly low confidence when referred to the Excluded Initiative, but who build the courage and confidence to share their work - poetry - publicly in the school.

'That was a really nice thing - that journey - from someone who didn't have any confidence in their writing, to someone who will share their ideas quite confidently in front of the class - and was part of the poetry, where they shared it in front of strangers, in front of parents, teachers - all of that.' (Intervention lead)

6. How likely is it that the interventions will be maintained?

By the time of the final round of qualitative fieldwork, four schools' funding period had ended, whilst four were still receiving funding (see Chapter 1).

6.1. Schools whose funding had ended

The schools whose funding ended in 2022/23 were Beacon High School, Our Lady's Catholic High School and Kemnal Technology College (funding ending in July 2023) and Duke's Aldridge Academy (December 2023).

We aimed to interview a staff member at each of these schools, but only two were able to take part. Discussions with SLT leads at these two schools suggest that it has been challenging to sustain the intervention within the schools following the end of funding. While both of the SLT leads we spoke to had ambitions of continuing the intervention in some form, the absence of resourcing meant that they were unable to continue to deliver the interventions at the same level. Important context here is the significant cuts that schools experienced in central government funding.

Both schools maintained the underpinning values of the initiative and promoted inclusive practice across the wider environment but had not been able to sustain the focussed support critical to students' positive journeys. At Beacon High School, the intention had been to continue the intervention in some form, with non-teaching pastoral staff providing mentoring and behaviour support and embedding some of the successful strategies in mainstream learning environments. However, the main intervention staff member had moved on and there were other staff absences which made this challenging, and the intention to mainstream the Excluded Initiative's work had not been fulfilled. Following discussions with the school governors, it had been agreed that the school would fund a specialist initiative, albeit in a lighter touch form than had been the cases with Excluded Initiative funding, and a lead role was now being advertised, with a view to deciding after a year whether specialist provision needs to be maintained permanently or whether mainstreaming of approaches is sufficient.

'[The ending of the funding] had quite a big impact.... Not having the funding meant that I couldn't have the provision in the way that I had it. I couldn't have a dedicated member of staff... to man that space and to do the extra interventions.'
(SLT staff)

At Our Lady's Catholic High School, the school had intended to maintain the provision, but this had proved impossible given budget constraints, and the initiative had ended when the Excluded Initiative funding ceased and a lead staff member had left, but the school was now considering whether it could be funded in the next school year, albeit in a more limited model.

'So in the financial sense, really, we just couldn't, keep it going...It's just pure financial, but we're looking at how we can perhaps manoeuvre resources around to have something similar.' (Intervention lead)

Close collaboration with parents and restorative conversations had depended on facilitation by intervention leads. Both interviewees felt that their school was less able to support children at risk of exclusion and that this was already being seen in increased suspensions and more behavioural issues.

'Our suspensions are up [following the end of funding]. Not dramatically. But they have increased. I was actually doing a document for governors yesterday. So I have looked at it and yeah, so we have noticed an increase in suspensions.' (SLT staff)

'I've noticed a real increase in lower levels of behaviour issues with year seven, for example, the ones who have just come in, who would have benefited from the [intervention name].' (SLT staff)

6.2. Schools with continued funding into 2023-24

Among schools that still had funding (Friern Barnet School, Hendon School, Kingsbury High School, Phoenix Academy), there was a clear intention to sustain the provision in some form, although they had concerns about how this would be funded. One school was confident they would be able to sustain the provision and indeed hoped to be able to expand it. Another intended to continue it although with fewer specialist staff and with mainstream teachers more involved. There was a desire among school staff to continue the provision in some form, reflecting the positive experiences teaching staff had had of the initiative. However, this was often balanced with an acknowledgement of the practical realities of a reduction in school funding.

While the overall sense was that maintenance of the interventions would be challenging without funding, teaching staff were still determined to continue to try to source finances and find solutions to continue elements of the interventions. They were planning to identify funding from within school budgets if possible. SLT members and intervention leads had also sometimes been in active conversations with local authorities to attempt to secure funding.

'How we manage that as the funding stops is going to be a real challenge for the school, given that budgets are getting tighter each year. There isn't much drive or support from government level or local authority level to try and support that type of provision, even though it is desperately needed in schools.' (SLT member)

There were real concerns about the implications of this, and teachers were concerned they would see an increase in exclusions and suspensions.

'We'll try our best to keep that model going, but currently we have three members of staff that are full-time employed, so we'd have to try and look for the money to keep that area going. If [the intervention] was removed from the structure we wouldn't really have anywhere for the children to go, so it's most likely that they would end up at the PRU, or an external provision.' (Intervention lead)

However, learnings from the initiative that were not resource dependent were thought more likely to continue to be implemented, and at least some of the impacts on the wider school (discussed in Chapter 5) maintained.

Some interviewees also felt that a longer period of funding would have been helpful to embed their Excluded Initiative provision, since it had taken time to refine and adapt to respond to local context and the changing needs of students.

'A couple of years is really a really small amount of time to be able to see the impact, is what I think. Especially when you've got to trial things and change things and work with staff.' (Intervention lead)

7. Recommendations & final reflections

In this final chapter, we set out a series of recommendations for practice and policy, and then summarise and discuss the findings.

7.1. Recommendations

7.1.1. Practice recommendations: eight key features of the design of provision

The evaluation highlights the following eight key features of the design of specialist inclusion provision, which we frame as recommendations for schools (and other organisations) planning and designing specialist inclusion provision. These eight features emerge from our analysis as the building blocks or core components of effective provision.

- 1. Make provision as blended as possible:** Although having separate space, time and support was important, more blended approaches are seen as beneficial in supporting children's engagement within the school community and catalysing changes that embed a wider ethos of inclusion. This was the direction of change as the initiatives matured.
- 2. Ensure strong re-integration strategies:** Whatever the degree of blendedness, strong re-integration strategies are a core part of the model. Effective reintegration involved consultation with and support for students and mainstream teachers; the involvement of wider specialist staff in the school; work to restore relationships before reintegration; commitment from mainstream teachers and students to specific strategies to be used in the classroom; phased returns; a degree of constructive flexibility in the application of behavioural policies and standards; continued support from the inclusion provision for students and mainstream staff; and monitoring of progress by provision staff. The implication is that teachers needed to change their behaviour too for classrooms to become more inclusive.
- 3. Centre student-staff relationships:** A resounding message from the evaluation is that relationships are at the heart of inclusion. Building relationships with students was a core part of the work of the specialist inclusion provision staff, and stronger relationships with mainstream teachers were also key. Ultimately, as one intervention lead said, inclusion means having staff across the school *'who love young people and want to develop them as well as teach them'*.
- 4. Keep an emphasis on learning:** As the interventions matured, there was a general trend towards more emphasis on continued access to the curriculum, with a widening of the curriculum subjects covered, more teaching by mainstream teachers, and management of cohorts so that students could be grouped with more similar learning needs. This suggests that centring and maximising learning is an important component of effective provision.
- 5. Be flexible in duration and content of support:** The Excluded Initiative interventions varied in the duration of support, from six weeks to a term. The evidence does not allow us to say what the optimal duration is, but the general

message was that being able to tailor duration to individual students' needs was important.

6. **Include parental engagements:** Effective parent engagement is also a core aspect of successful provision. The Excluded Initiative leads worked hard to build and sustain relationships with parents, often in the face of initial suspicion or hostility, and found that working in partnership with parents was an important driver of success.
7. **Select staff with specialist skills:** It was clear from the accounts of school staff and students that effective provision needs staff with particular skills and qualities: a deep understanding of the issues that lie behind children's challenging behaviour, the ability to win trust from and build relationships with them, and authenticity and honesty in their relationships with them. They also need credibility with mainstream teachers, and the ability to relate to, support and build relationships with them.
8. **Include external provision:** External provision was also an important feature of effective approaches. It provided more intensive specialist support, and a change in the dynamic of professional-student relationships.

7.1.2. Practice recommendations: key aspects of the implementation of provision

Alongside features of the design of effective provision, our analysis also highlighted important approaches to the implementation:

1. **Have clear referral criteria and processes:** The population of students that the inclusion provision is intended for needs to be clear and made visible across the school staff group. School data and collaborative reviews of students should be used to identify students who would benefit as well as referral by mainstream teachers. It is also important to ensure children understand why they have been referred and what it will involve.
2. **Intervene early:** The general view was that intervening early is helpful. Eligibility criteria should include students who are disengaged, vulnerable or who need additional emotional and learning support but whose behaviour and attendance does not (yet) place them at risk of exclusion.
3. **Ensure continuous communication for high awareness and a positive profile:** Schools found it helpful to have a school-wide launch of the Excluded Initiative intervention, to keep awareness high among staff (including new staff), and to ensure that communication framed the initiative positively and avoided stigmatising or labelling the students who attended it. Celebrating the achievements of Excluded Initiative pupils was an important part of this
4. **SLT support and involvement is essential:** SLT support was essential to take the initiative forward, demonstrated through e.g. an SLT member acting as sponsor or line manager of the initiative lead; SLT involvement in referral decisions; SLT involvement in whole-school celebration events; SLTs visiting the intervention space; SLT setting expectation that mainstream teachers to teach in the space, and SLT involvement in reviewing data about the initiative use and successes.
5. **Ensure sufficient mainstream staffing capacity:** Having sufficient mainstream teaching capacity available to teach in the intervention was also critical and was an important facilitator towards more blended and inclusive models of delivery.

6. **Share learning:** A further important implementation strategy was building relationships with mainstream staff, providing guidance and advice about how to support students in the classroom and avoid the need for a referral, and how to support students' re-integration.
7. **Data-driven decision making:** Implementation was also aided where schools used data and feedback to iterate the design and implementation of the intervention, and to monitor and support students' reintegration and progress after their time in the provision.
8. **Build a culture of inclusion:** Finally, effective provision both required and reinforced positive inclusion cultures. This meant a culture which embraced inclusion, where school staff had training on issues such as attachment, trauma and contextual safeguarding, where parents were seen as informed partners, where relationships were centred, and which enabled flexible and thoughtful application of behaviour policies. Schools also shared their learning with other local schools and with the local authority, helping to make strong inclusion provision the norm.

7.1.3. Recommendations for policymakers

The following recommendations are made for policymakers to support specialist inclusion provision and to build inclusive learning environments for all students:

1. **Provide more funding to schools for specialist inclusion provision:** Whether as part of main school budgets or through specific funding routes, more funding is needed for specialist inclusion provision along the lines of that funded by the Excluded Initiative.
2. **Fund research and evaluation to test inclusive approaches:** Further work needs to be undertaken to assess the impacts of different approaches for different groups of students and build a picture of effective practice.
3. **Develop further guidance relating to inclusion provision:** The DfE should develop clear guidance on quality features of and quality standards for inclusion provision. This guidance needs to support schools to implement such provision in a way that promotes inclusion, avoiding segregation or inclusion provision becoming exclusionary. IAP also needs to be scrutinised by Ofsted to assess whether it is truly inclusive in ethos and aims.
4. **Support improved school data collection:** To ensure there is a clear picture relating to risks and student needs, policymakers should work to increase consistency and transparency of reporting, particularly ensuring more reliable data about, and scrutiny of, managed moves on a national level.
5. **Ensure the sufficiency of wider child and family support systems:** Schools cannot fully meet the needs of all students. To support vulnerable students and include them fully in the school community, schools must be able to draw on the support of external specialist services such as Educational Psychology, CAMHS and social services. These wider systems of family support need to be available in a timely manner.

7.2. Discussion

7.2.1. The difference the Excluded Initiative has made

Being excluded from school is devastating for children and sets them on a trajectory of extreme vulnerability to harms and of very poor life chances. Responding to ‘disruptive’ behaviour in classrooms through inclusive approaches is also a key challenge for teachers, one that brings acute stress to a profession that is already under great pressure. Behind this behaviour often lie trauma, safeguarding issues arising from homes and communities, mental health issues and unhappiness.

If rates of suspensions and exclusions continue to rise, it will be increasingly important that schools have support to implement inclusive approaches. The Excluded Initiative has provided schools with much needed resources to support some of the most marginalised and vulnerable children across greater London. It has demonstrated that there are strategies that can be implemented to support those on the cusp of exclusion back into mainstream learning environments, empowering them to take steps towards improved learning outcomes.

By the time of our last data collection from schools (before the end of the funding period) the Excluded Initiative has reached over 500 of the most marginalised children in the eight partner schools. The profile of those reached shows that the initiative was supporting the most vulnerable children across London. Simultaneously, it demonstrates that mainstream learning environments in schools are challenging for these students and indicates the extent to which our mainstream education system is not working for the most vulnerable children.

We explored the difference the Excluded Initiative has made through analyses of three different types of data - comparing change over time in suspension and exclusion rates in the eight Excluded Initiative schools with a matched group of 30 schools; using school data to compare children’s trajectories before and after their time in the intervention; and through qualitative interviews with school staff and students to capture their perspectives on change. All three indicate that the Excluded Initiative succeeded in reducing exclusions and suspensions. Although not as rigorous as a randomised controlled trial or quasi-experimental approach, the fact that all three data sources point to positive impacts is convincing evidence that the Excluded Initiative succeeded in its aim of reducing exclusions and is testament to the efforts of the staff - and children - involved.

In particular, our analysis of DfE data on suspensions and exclusions show a narrowing of the gap in rates as a result of the Excluded Initiative. Where the Excluded Initiative schools began the funding period with substantially higher rates, by 2022-23 the gap had narrowed considerably. There is variation between schools in these and other data, and the Excluded Initiative was not able to prevent all children from being excluded or suspended, but the achievements are impressive.

For students, this is not only about avoiding suspension and exclusion. It is also about being more integrated into the school community, having the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from learning, and, fundamentally, being healthier, safer and happier.

What is also striking is that the Excluded Initiative catalysed wider change, for mainstream teachers and for the school as a whole. Teachers felt they and the class benefited from student's temporary period away from the classroom and they had more time to focus on supporting other students. Their understanding of the needs of the individual children, and their relationships with them, improved, including through restorative conversations.

Perhaps most significantly, teachers also pointed to their own learning and behaviour changes, developing more inclusive practices and classroom environments. By the end of the Excluded Initiative funding, teachers were providing more support, earlier, to students struggling to manage their behaviour, including reaching out to Excluded Initiative staff for support and guidance, and restorative conversations were being used to repair relationships after earlier episodes of challenge or conflict. Notably, teachers who had initially seen the Excluded Initiative as primarily about the removal or *exclusion* of 'disruptive' students from their classroom came to see it as primarily about *inclusion*.

For the schools as a whole, the Excluded Initiative helped to reinforce and strengthen inclusive practice and raise the profile of inclusion as a fundamental value across all learning environments. This is important because it suggests that the Excluded Initiative helped to reframe thinking away from 'correcting' the behaviours of students, to 'disruption' being an acute communication of need, and inclusion being about improvements and adaptation to the wider school system. The initiative helped to expose gaps, pointing to areas where there was a need for continued training and reinforcement in understanding the issues that lie behind what is experienced as 'disruptive' behaviour. The Excluded Initiative not only supported the most vulnerable children: it helped to strengthen inclusion practice and make it a priority across the school.

7.2.2. Maintaining the Excluded Initiative

Despite their intentions, the evidence indicates that many of the schools were struggling to maintain specialist inclusion provision after the end of the Excluded Initiative funding period. The general intention was to sustain the initiative, albeit with less specialist staffing and provision and relying more on mainstream staff to provide support. It is unfortunate that the end of funding has coincided with a period of particular pressure on school budgets, which has made even this lighter touch model difficult to implement.

At this stage, we are unclear what the optimal model for sustained provision is. The greater reliance on mainstream teachers in providing support may be beneficial, if it helps to embed stronger inclusion practice across the school and to build a culture of inclusion in mainstream learning environments. However, this asks a lot of mainstream teachers, and our analyses suggest it would be challenging without sufficient specialist support and provision. There may be value in a model for sustaining interventions which places more emphasis on the adaptation and development of mainstream teachers and learning environments, highlighting the importance of mainstream classrooms becoming places of inclusion for all. However, it seems highly unlikely that the model can be entirely mainstreamed, and maintaining sufficient specialist staff and provision (including external provision) will be important.

7.2.3. When inclusion becomes exclusion: the inclusion-exclusion paradox

It is perhaps paradoxical that some forms of inclusion provision can themselves be exclusionary. There is a challenge in addressing the needs of all students without creating divisions or silos²⁵ - which run the risk of children falling between gaps, stigmatising, and reducing efforts to make mainstream teaching environments inclusive. It is helpful here to consider different approaches to meeting children's needs:

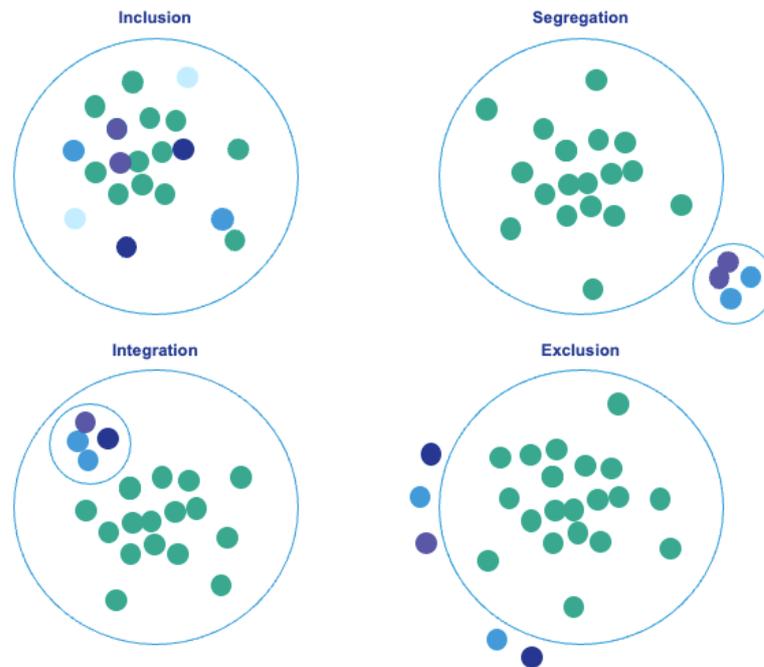
- **Full inclusion:** where all children are in mainstream learning environments that meet their differing needs.

²⁵ IPPR and The Difference (2024) *op. cit.*

- **Integration:** where children with differing needs spend all or some of their time in separated spaces which are part of the wider school community.
- **Segregation:** where children spend all their time in separate spaces, not fully part of the wider school community.
- **Exclusion:** where children are permanently removed from the school.

These different models are illustrated in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17. Models of inclusion-exclusion

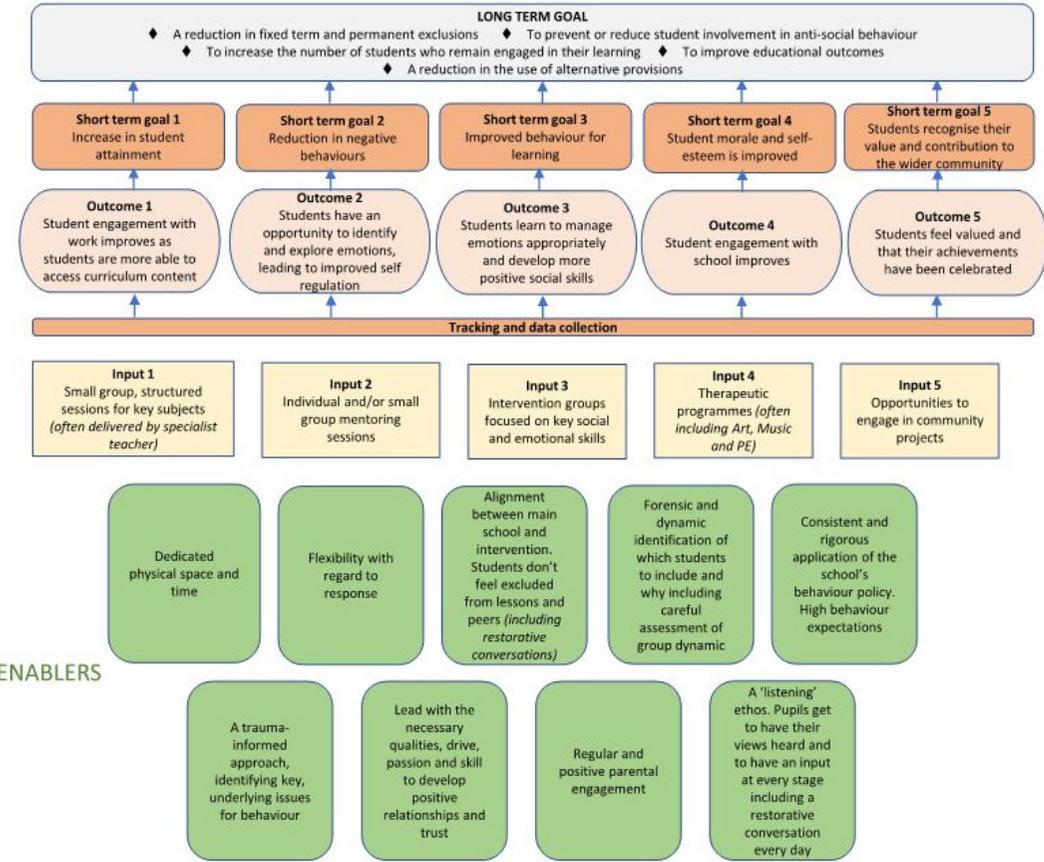


The Excluded Initiative interventions generally fell within the Integrated and Segregated models, but with a general trend towards Integration over the course of the project. Critically, these periods of integration and segregation, depending on the intervention design, were always driven by the aim to get students to a point of sustained inclusion.

What has been evident throughout the delivery of the Excluded Initiative is that those working within schools have committed tirelessly to empower students towards improved outcomes. The funding period has enabled schools to trial innovative approaches, to ensure that students most in need receive highly tailored support, to promote and realise wider change across school environments. The evidence reflected on throughout this report seeks to build upon these efforts and promote informed decision making for greater inclusivity of children across the UK.

8. Appendices

8.1. University College London Theory of Change



8.2. Refined Theory of Change



Target population

Young people at risk of exclusion, suspension and individual needs not met within mainstream learning environments.

Inputs	Outputs	Mechanisms of Change	Intermediate outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specialist staff hired to empower students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small group structured sessions for key subject delivered by subject teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restorative conversations between teachers and students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School environments normalise inclusive practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated space for engaged children to be provided additional support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual and/or small group mentoring sessions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular and positive parental engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved student attainment and attendance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge sharing of delivery amongst schools within the fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intervention groups focused on key social and emotional skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritising inclusion across the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students recognise their value within wider school environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships with external agencies with specialist knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Therapeutic programmes delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency in relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students meet behavioural expectations of the school.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered re-integration strategies to mainstream learning environments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive support adapted to individual needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers improve specialist SEN-D teaching.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students improve self-regulation and gain confidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students improve relationships.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for re-integration into mainstream environments. 	

Impact

Reduction in permanent exclusions and suspensions.



8.3 Within school analysis sample numbers

8.3.1 School level data charts on demographics

	In the intervention										Whole school									
School	FSM eligible	Has SEND	Male	Female	White	Asian or Asian British	Black, Black British, African or Caribbean	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	Others	N	FSM eligible	Has SEND	Male	Female	White	Asian or Asian British	Black, Black British, African or Caribbean	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	Others	N
Beacon High School	63.4%	29.7%	59.4%	40.6%	56.0%	1.0%	25.0%	14.0%	4.0%	92	57.6%	21.0%	58.0%	42.0%	32.8%	18.5%	21.6%	14.3%	12.9%	724
Dukes Aldridge Academy	50.7%	32.0%	60.0%	40.0%	42.7%	4.0%	44.0%	0.0%	9.3%	62	38.1%	11.7%	52.0%	48.0%	49.8%	7.1%	33.0%	0.1%	10.1%	1724
Kemnal Technology College	47.1%	28.1%	55.4%	44.6%	62.4%	8.5%	7.7%	16.2%	5.1%	120	44.6%	30.9%	64.3%	35.7%	64.3%	12.0%	6.9%	11.3%	5.6%	596
Our Lady's Catholic High School	72.9%	25.0%	N.A	N.A	12.8%	0.0%	70.2%	8.5%	8.5%	48	45.7%	6.9%	N.A	N.A	11.8%	5.8%	60.7%	10.1%	11.6%	737
Friern Barnet School	42.9%	66.1%	50.0%	50.0%	39.3%	8.9%	21.4%	30.4%	0.0%	43	32.0%	30.3%	50.8%	49.2%	44.5%	12.7%	14.9%	11.9%	16.0%	1482
Hendon School	59.1%	38.6%	65.9%	34.1%	33.3%	28.2%	17.9%	10.3%	10.3%	44	36.0%	15.7%	56.1%	43.9%	28.3%	22.8%	16.1%	14.1%	18.7%	1577

Kingsbury High School	55.6%	49.2%	66.7%	33.3%	4.9%	29.5%	13.1%	23.0%	29.5%	52	25.1%	10.6%	54.6%	45.4%	3.2%	56.1%	17.6%	8.2%	15.0%	2913
Phoenix Academy	54.8%	35.7%	78.6%	21.4%	33.3%	11.9%	38.1%	4.8%	11.9%	39	42.6%	16.7%	56.5%	43.5%	20.0%	16.1%	32.5%	9.4%	22.0%	784

8.3.2 School level data charts on pre-post analysis

	Pre-intervention	Post-Intervention	N included in analysis	Year
Friern Barnet School				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	37.50	40.00	6	2024
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.63	0.40		2024
Average Behaviour Points	427.25	252.30		2024
Average Attendance (%)	89.00	92.79		2024
Hendon School				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	90.91	80.00	9	2024
Average number of suspensions/pupil	2.64	5.90		2024
Average Behaviour Points	43.09	45.00		2024
Average Attendance (%)	67.82	62.78		2024

Kingsbury High School				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	53.85	46.67	12	2024
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.71	0.56		2024
Average Behaviour Points	248.67	205.88		2024
Average Attendance (%)	76.89	76.79		2024
Phoenix Academy				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	16.67	30.00	13	2024
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.17	0.35		2024
Average Behaviour Points	124.78	163.20		2024
Average Attendance (%)	82.71	84.31		2024
Dukes Aldridge Academy				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	27.8	28.9	34	2023
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.5	0.4		2023
Average Attendance (%)	86.5	76.9		2023
Average Attainment	5.3	9.2		2023

Kemnal Technology College				
Average Attendance (%)	90.8	87.2	24	2023
Our Lady's Catholic High School				2023
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	13.3	53.3	15	2023
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.5	0.8		2023
Average Behaviour Points	-142.4	-122.6		2023
Average Attendance (%)	88.0	81.0		2023
Beacon High School				
% of pupils who have been suspended at least once	27.3	13.0	21	2023
Average number of suspensions/pupil	0.5	0.2		2023
Average Behaviour Points	81.9	62.3		2023
Average Achievement Points	64.3	89.6		2023
Average Attendance (%)	85.3	84.0		2023
Average Attainment	3.0	3.1		2023

8.3.3 School level data charts on exclusions and managed moves

	Number of pupils who received the intervention in analysis	Number of pupils permanently excluded since receiving the intervention	Number of pupils on managed move since receiving the intervention	Year data provided
Friern Barnet School	43	1	12	2024
Hendon School	51	4	4	2024
Kingsbury High School	52	2	4	2024
Phoenix Academy	39	0	No data available	2024
Beacon High School	92	4	No data available	2023
Dukes Aldridge Academy	62	No data available	No data available	2023
Kemnal Technology College	120	6	No data available	2023
Our Lady's Catholic High School	48	1	3	2023

8.4. Control group schools for impact analysis

1	Ark Academy	12	Heartlands High School	23	St Mary Magdalene Academy
2	Ark Burlington Danes Academy	13	Highbury Fields School	24	Stoke Newington School and Sixth Form
3	Ark Elvin Academy	14	Hornsey School for Girls	25	The Bridge Academy
4	Bishop Douglass School Finchley	15	London Academy	26	The City Academy, Hackney
5	Cardinal Pole Catholic School	16	Mossbourne Community Academy	27	The Compton School
6	City of London Academy Islington	17	Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy	28	The Petchey Academy
7	E-ACT Crest Academy	18	Mulberry Academy Woodside	29	The Urswick School - A Church of England Secondary School
8	Fulham Cross Academy	19	Park View School	30	Whitefield School
9	Fulham Cross Girls' School and Language College	20	Saint Claudine's Catholic School for Girls		
10	Hammersmith Academy	21	Skinners' Academy		
11	Harris Lowe Academy Willesden	22	St Aloysius RC College		

8.5. Breakdown of qualitative interviews across data collection waves

	Mainstream teachers	Students	Senior leadership team	Excluded Initiative delivery staff	Total
Wave 1: April-May 2023	12	14	8	7	41
Wave 2: October 2023	0	5	0	8	13
Wave 3: March 2024	3	8	0	7	18
Total	15	27	8	22	72