

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**05 JANUARY 2026**

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**EXCLUSIONS AND SUSPENSIONS**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To update members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee on suspensions and exclusions in Darlington for the 2023-24 academic year.

**Summary**

2. Suspensions and permanent exclusions are disciplinary measures used by schools to manage pupil behaviour. The report provides both national and regional context for the local position. Both suspension and exclusions have risen over recent years.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that :-
- (a) That the committee notes the position on suspensions and exclusions
  - (b) That the committee notes the priority actions for 25/26

**Tony Murphy**  
**Assistant Director of Education and Inclusion**

**Background Papers**

There are no background papers for this report.

Tony Murphy: Extension 5637

Council Plan	Education supports the commitments for children and young people-supporting the best start in life, realising potential and raising aspirations.
Addressing inequalities	Effective monitoring of attendance supports children ensuring that they can receive access to high quality educational provision and outcomes.
Tackling Climate Change	The effective delivery of education provision will support the council's Climate Change priorities.

Efficient and effective use of resources	The efficient monitoring of education the commitments in the council's Safety Valve Agreement to ensure efficient use of the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.
Health and Wellbeing	Health lifestyles of children and young people is a key component of effective education provision
S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific elements of the strategy which address crime and disorder.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected.
Groups Affected	Children, young people families and key stakeholders.
Budget and Policy Framework	No change to the Budget and Policy Framework
Key Decision	Not applicable
Urgent Decision	Not applicable
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The effective delivery of education will positively benefit looked after children and care leavers.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

4. The Education Act 2002 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) provides Headteachers with the powers to suspend or exclude pupils to maintain discipline and ensure the safety of the school community. Suspensions (previously known as fixed-period exclusions) and permanent exclusions are disciplinary measures used by schools to manage pupil behaviour. These measures are typically considered as a last resort when other strategies to manage behaviour have been exhausted.
5. Multi-Academy Trusts and Governing Bodies are responsible for setting their own suspension and permanent exclusion policy, following Department for Education (DfE) guidance. Only the Headteacher of a school can suspend or permanently exclude a pupil on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be suspended for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year or permanently excluded).
6. Nationally, suspensions and exclusions remain a challenge. There has been a rise in the number of pupils who are suspended or permanently excluded from schools. Suspension have increased 40% nationally from 22/23 and permanent exclusion has increased by 31%. The North East has the highest rate of suspension and permanent exclusion compared to other regions.
7. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM) or who have Special Educational Needs (SEN) are more likely to be excluded. Pupils eligible for FSM are 4 times more likely to be excluded than those who are not eligible.
8. Persistent disruptive behaviour is the most common reason nationally and locally for suspension and permanent exclusion.
9. Data for 2024/25 has not yet been validated or released by the Department for Education and therefore this report is based on provisional data shared with TfC by schools.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

### **Summary of the 2023/24 Exclusions Report (Latest release from DfE).**

10. Darlington's 2023/24 exclusion report shows rising exclusions and suspensions nationally and locally. Nationally, permanent exclusions and suspensions increased substantially in 2023/24. Locally, Darlington's permanent exclusion rate and suspension rate remain above national averages; suspensions are below the North East regional average but above the national average. Disproportionate impact falls on older pupils, boys, and those with SEN or from low-income households.

### **National headlines**

11. Permanent exclusions: 10,885 in 2023/24 — up 16.1% on 2022/23 (≈13 PEX per 10,000 pupils).
12. Suspensions: 954,952 in 2023/24 — up ~21% on 2022/23 (≈1,131 suspensions per 10,000 pupils).
13. Secondary schools account for the majority of permanent exclusions (84%).
14. Most common reasons nationwide: persistent disruptive behaviour (highest for both PEX and suspensions), verbal abuse/threats to adults and physical assault on pupils.
15. Exclusion and suspension rates rise with age; boys are more than twice as likely to be permanently excluded as girls.

### **Darlington — headline findings**

16. Upheld permanent exclusions in 2023/24: 47 (an increase of 21 from 2022/23).
17. Darlington's suspension rate: 15.51 (above national 11.31, below NE regional 18.42). Primary suspension rate is 4.12 (above regional and national primary rates); secondary suspension rate is 31 (below regional secondary, above national secondary).
18. Year groups most affected: Year 10 (highest PEX, 18 pupils) then Year 9 (11).
19. PEX by phase: Primary PEX increased to 10 in 2023/24 (from 8 in 2022/23).
20. Cohort with PEX: 3 pupils with an EHCP and 13 receiving SEN support were permanently excluded in Darlington. Two looked-after children (LAC) were permanently excluded.

### **Main reasons for exclusions and suspensions (Darlington)**

21. Permanent exclusions top reasons: persistent/general disruptive behaviour (33.9%), physical assault on a pupil (28.8%), physical assault on an adult (15.3%).
22. Suspensions top reasons: persistent disruptive behaviour (~40% in local breakdown), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult (high proportion), and physical assault against a pupil.
23. Other recorded suspension reasons include damage, drug/alcohol incidents, racist abuse, sexual misconduct and inappropriate online use (each smaller percentages).

### **Disproportionate impact and vulnerable groups**

24. Nationally, children eligible for free school meals (low-income) and pupils with SEN are disproportionately excluded: children on FSM nearly six times more likely to be permanently excluded; pupils with SEN support over five times more likely than pupils with no SEN.
25. Suspension rates for pupils with EHCPs and SEN support in Darlington are higher than regional and national rates for these cohorts.
26. Boys are more than twice as likely to be suspended as girls locally (2023/24 rates: boys 20.44, girls 10.31).

### **School-level picture and 'hotspots'**

27. Grand totals for Darlington 2023/24: 2,827 suspensions involving 810 pupils, 5,140.5 total days lost, and 59 PEx recorded in local returns (note: includes some PEx that completed after the academic year and rescinded cases).
28. Several secondary schools account for a high share of days and suspensions (examples: Haughton Academy, Hummersknott, Longfield, St Aidan's, Wyvern, Polam Hall, Rise Carr). One school contributed 17 of the PEXs and one academy trust accounted for about 48% of Darlington's PEXs.
29. Secondary phase accounts for the majority of suspensions and PEXs (~91% of days and suspensions).

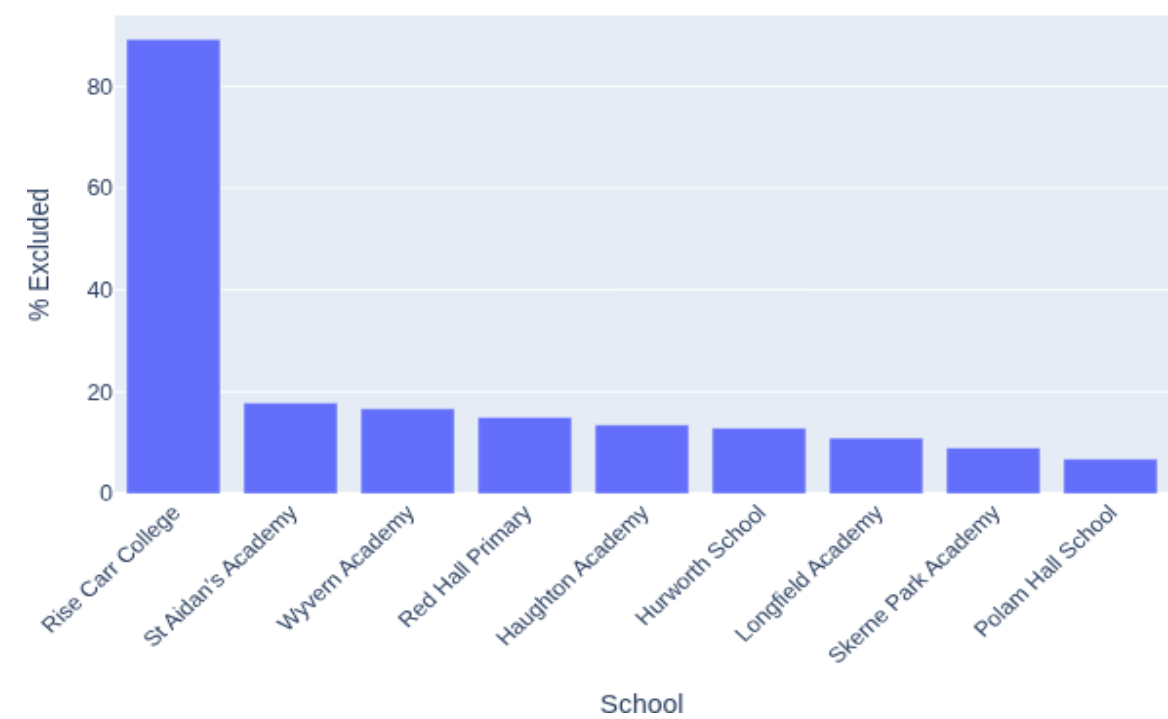
### **Key conclusions**

30. Exclusions and suspensions are rising both nationally and locally, with Darlington above national averages for both permanent exclusions and suspensions.
31. Persistent disruptive behaviour and assaults (pupil/adult) are the primary drivers.
32. Vulnerable pupils (SEN, EHCP, FSM) and older boys are most affected, indicating targeted early intervention and alternative provision are priorities.
33. A small number of schools/academy trusts carry a disproportionate share of exclusions and suspensions, suggesting further opportunities for focused support, practice-sharing, monitoring and challenge.

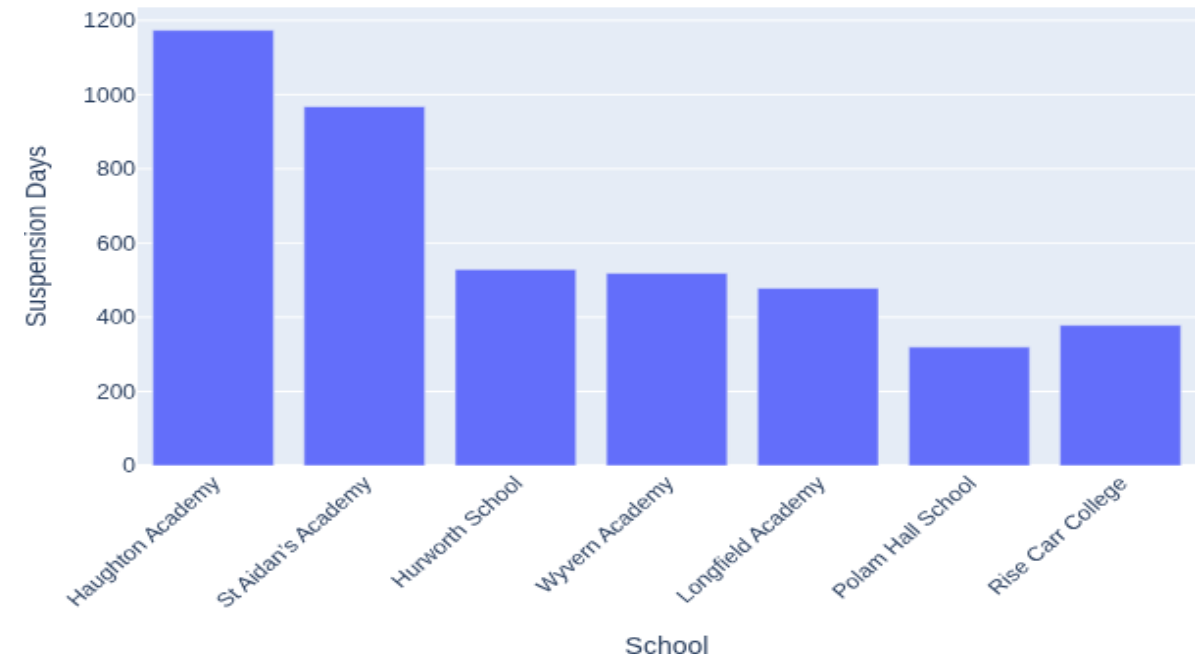
### **Unvalidated data for 2024/25**

34. Overall Totals
  - (a) Total Days Suspended: 5,033.5
  - (b) Total Suspensions: 2,954
  - (c) Total Pupils Suspended: 756
  - (d) Permanent Exclusions: 43
  - (e) % of School Population Excluded: 4.7%
  - (f) SEND Pupils: 279
  - (g) EHCP Pupils: 119
  - (h) PEx with EHCP: 5

Top Schools by % of Population Excluded



Top Schools by Suspension Days



35. Distribution:

- (a) Primary Schools: ~6.7% of days, 7.6% of suspensions
- (b) Secondary Schools: ~93.3% of days, 92.4% of suspensions

36. Top Reasons for Suspensions:

- (a) Persistent/General Disruptive Behaviour – 49.2%
- (b) Verbal Abuse/Threatening Behaviour (Adult) – 21.9%
- (c) Physical Assault (Pupil) – 10.8%
- (d) Permanent Exclusions:
- (e) Persistent Disruptive Behaviour – 39.5%
- (f) Physical Assault (Pupil) – 23.3%

37. Priorities for 25/26

- (a) Targeted support for pupils with SEN and FSM to reduce disproportionate exclusions.
- (b) Strengthen alternative provision, supported off-site placements and phased reintegration to reduce permanent exclusions.
- (c) Work with the small number of schools/ trusts with high PEX/suspension volumes to review practice, resources and behaviour support strategies.
- (d) Continue monitoring age, gender and SEN-related disparities and evaluate the impact of the Darlington Inclusion Charter rollout.
- (e) Evaluate the Primary PEx Pilot with regards to roll-out and expansion to further sites.