Exclusions Review Call for Evidence

The evidence base

The call for evidence includes a summary of 2015/16 fixed term and permanent exclusion rates and some of the pupil factors that are related to them. However the results presented suffer from quite marked limitations:

- They present the raw percentage of pupils receiving an exclusion for each pupil characteristic, they do not take account of the fact that these pupil characteristics are related. So we do not know the unique association between exclusion and each factor, net of other factors.
- They are a snapshot of exclusions in a single academic year, they do not show how exclusions accumulate as young people progress through school.

These limitations are present in nearly all reporting of the England national data on exclusions. However there is one study that has exploited the longitudinal nature of the National Pupil Database (NPD) to follow a cohort of students over time as they journey through secondary school. Strand and Fletcher (2014) track the whole national cohort of 573,000 students entering secondary school in Year 7 in September 2006 and followed them through until they left school at the end of Year 11 in summer 2011, identifying the date, type and duration of every instance of formal exclusion recorded.

Results

The level of exclusions in secondary schools is much higher than the single academic year data suggest

The call for evidence indicates that 2.1% of pupils receive a fixed term exclusion (FTE) in the 2015/16. However the longitudinal data indicates the likelihood of experiencing a FTE at some stage during the course of secondary schooling is considerably higher than this. The data are shown in Figure 1 on the next page.

- Around 16% of students experience a FTE at some point during their secondary school career, that is 1 in 7 of all students.

- Among Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean students this rises to over 30% or nearly 1 in 3 of the students from these two ethnic groups.

- Results are also raised for Black African (25%) and Mixed White and Black African (23%) students relative to White British students.
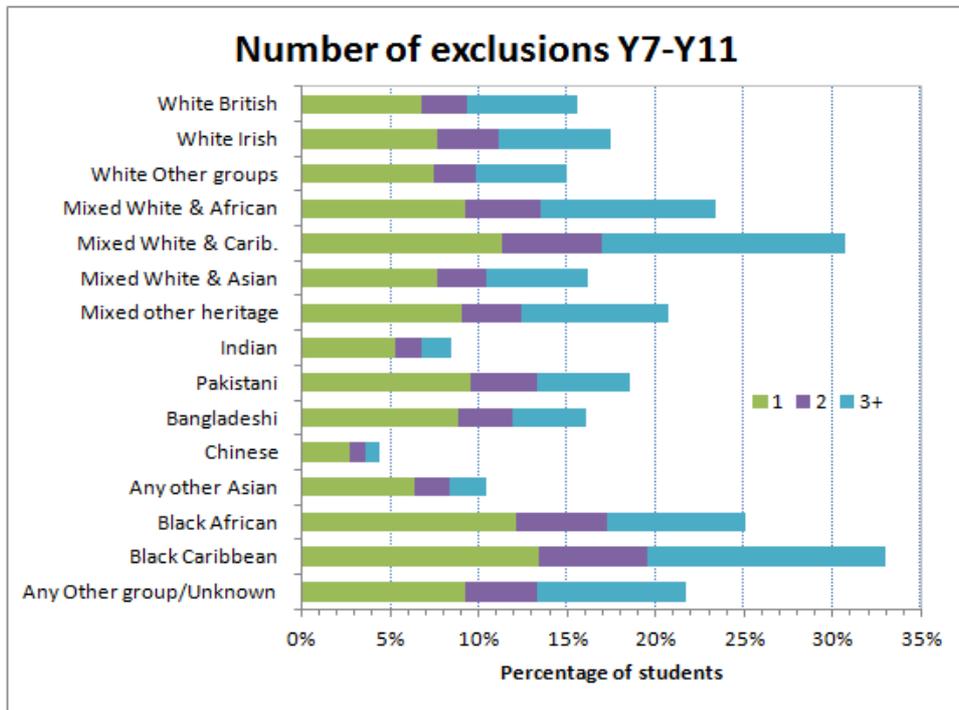
Student background and fixed term exclusion from school

Strand & Fletcher (2014) looked at the association between a wide range of pupil background factors collected at the start of secondary school and pupil's subsequent experience of exclusion. We modelled the elapsed time to the first instance of exclusion using log-hazard modelling to identify the unique effect of each predictor. The results are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: The relative impact of different pupil characteristics on subsequent exclusion from secondary school

Variable	WALD	Odds Ratio
Gender	8,491	1.94
SEN type	8,162	3.21
Poverty - FSM & IDACI	5,131	1.94
Absence Autum Y7 (1SD)	3,453	1.23
Ethnic group	2,064	-
KS2 English (1 level below mean)	1,672	1.28
CLA	788	1.86
School type	473	-
School %FSM	298	-
School % White British	60	-

The WALD statistic can be used to give a rough indication of the relative importance of different factors as predictors of the odds of being excluded from school, while controlling for all other factors in the model. We describe the factors in this order below. Note that

throughout the discussion the estimate of the effect of each factor has controlled for the influence of other factors in the model.

1. **Gender:** this was the single most powerful predictor of exclusion, with the odds of exclusions for boys almost twice as high as the odds for girls.

2. **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**: The call for evidence appears to show a relationship between SEN and exclusion, but it aggregates all types of SEN together which gives a very misleading picture of the relationship between SEN and exclusion. Here we looked at the relationship between exclusion and the primary type of SEN[1]. The odds of being excluded for pupil's identified with Behavioural Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD[2]) were over three times as high as for pupils with no identified SEN, perhaps not surprisingly. However for all other types of SEN the odds of being excluded from school were actually <u>lower</u> than the odds for pupils with no identified SEN.

Figure 2: The odds for time to first exclusion by SEN type relative to students with no identified SEN.
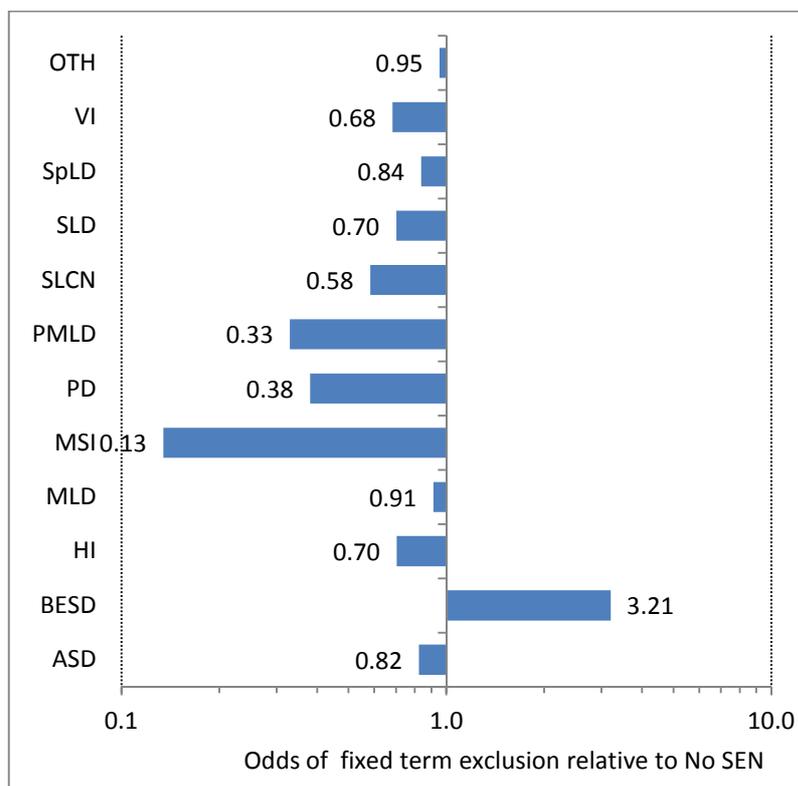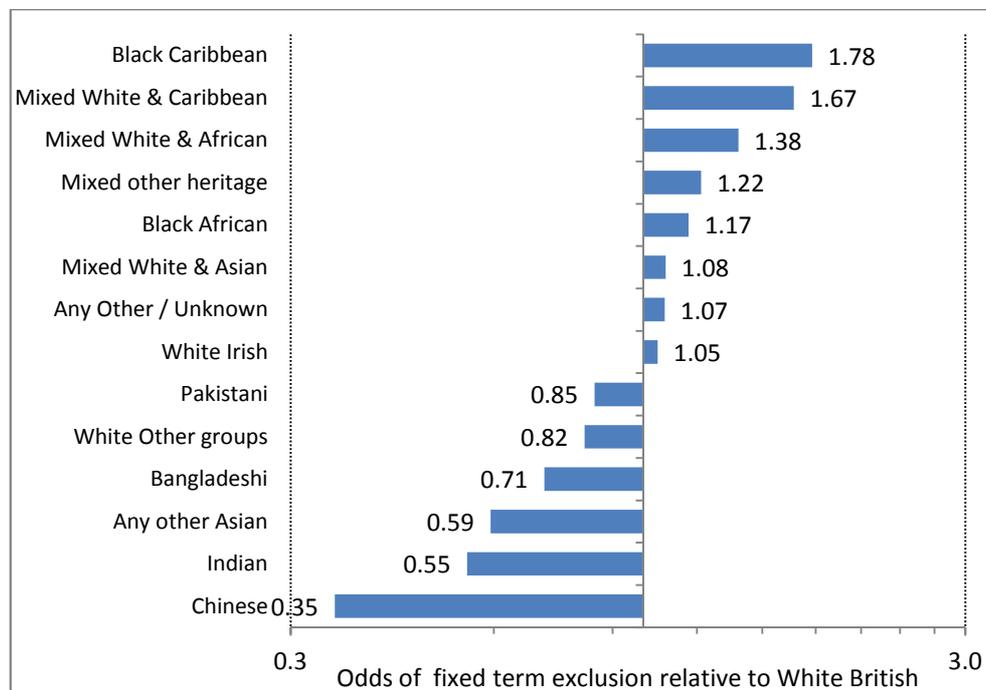

Notes: 1 represents the odds of exclusion for pupils with no identified SEN. Values above 1 indicate higher odds for exclusion compared to no SEN (e.g. 2.0 means the odds are twice as high), and values below 1 indicate lower odds for exclusion (e.g. 0.5 means the odds are half as high). The model controls for gender, poverty as indicated by entitlement to FSM and IDACI, ethnicity, attainment at age 11, attendance in autumn Y7, Looked After Status and school type and composition. SEN type as identified in January Y7. ASD= Autistic Spectrum Disorder; BESD= Behavioural, Emotional & Social Difficulties; HI= Hearing Impaired; MLD= Moderate Learning Difficulties; MSI= Multi-sensory Impairment; PD= Physical Difficulties; SLCN= Speech, Language and Communication Needs; SLD= Severe Learning Difficulties; SpLD= Specific Learning Difficulties; VI= Visual Impairment; OTH= Other type of SEN.

---

[1] . There are twelve categories or types of SEN recorded by schools, these are given in the notes below Figure 2.
[2] . The labels for some categories of SEN changed in September 2014 and students previously recorded as having BESD would now be recorded as having Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

3. **Poverty:** this was assessed through two measures (i) whether the pupil was entitled to a Free School Meal (FSM) which broadly indicates families reliant on state benefits for income, and (ii) the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) which indicates the proportion of families in the local neighbourhood with children under the age 16 and in receipt of benefits. Taken together poverty was the next most influential factor on exclusions, with the odds of exclusion for students entitled to FSM and living in an area of high deprivation being almost twice as high (OR=1.94) as students not on FSM and in an area of 'average' deprivation.

4. **Absence from school in the autumn term of Y7:** the level of absence during the first term of secondary school was the next strongest factor in accounting for exclusion. Students with above average absence[3] had odds for exclusion that were 1.23 higher than students at the average level of absence.

5. **Ethnic group:** Even after control for the effects on levels of educational achievement on entry to secondary school, poor attendance in Y7, type of SEN, family and neighbourhood poverty, looked after status, school type and composition, the odds of exclusion for Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean were over two-thirds higher (OR= 1.78 and 1.67 respectively) than the odds for White British students. Figure 3 shows the results.

**Figure 3: Odds for time to first exclusion for ethnic minority groups relative to White British students**

Notes: The line at 1 represents the odds of exclusion for White British students. Values above 1 indicate higher odds for exclusion(e.g. 1.50 means the odds are 1.5 times higher than for White British), and values below 1 indicate lower odds for exclusion (e.g. 0.67 means the odds are two-thirds of the odds for White British students). Some very small groups have not been included in the table, see full report. The model controls for gender, poverty as indicated by entitlement to FSM and IDACI, SEN type, ethnicity, attainment at age 11, attendance in autumn Y7, Looked After Status and school type and composition.

---

[3] . That is one Standard Deviation (SD) above the mean, approximately missing 15 sessions compared to the average of 6 sessions during the autumn term.

6. **Attainment at age 11** – Low levels of achievement at age 11 were a strong risk factor for exclusion. Particularly important was achievement in English, much more so than mathematics or science. The odds of being excluded for students who struggled with reading and writing (e.g. achieved a KS2 fine-grade English score one level below the expected level) were 1.30 higher than those with an average score, and 1.66 higher if they were two grades lower.

Figure 4: Exclusion rate by KS2 English score
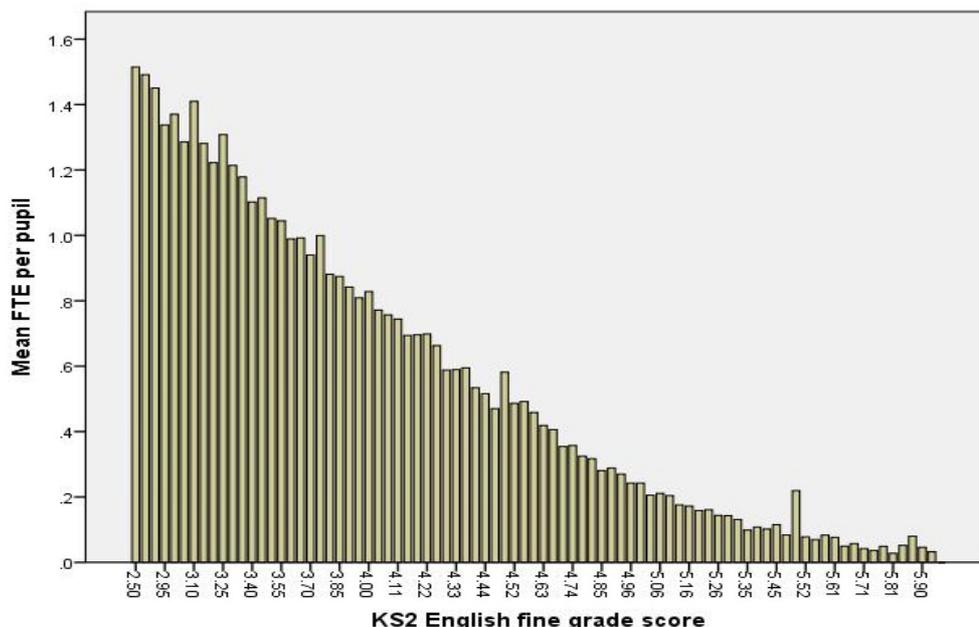
Note: This chart shows the mean number of fixed-term exclusions per student at different scores on the overall KS2 English test. Based on 539,046 students with valid KS2 English scores at age 11. Population mean KS2 English score= 4.5, SD=0.75.

7. **Children Looked After (CLA)** – The odds of being excluded for Children in Local Authority Care were 1.86 times higher than for children not looked after, which is a substantially higher risk, although it applies to relatively few young people (2,746 of the 570,000 students at Y7 or just 0.5%).

8. **School level factors** – These had relatively small influence as predictors of exclusion (see further discussion below).

School and Local Authority (LA) factors

Strand & Fletcher (2014) used multi-level modelling determine how much of the variation in exclusion is at the student, the school or the Local Authority (LA) level.

-   LA level accounts for only 6% of the variation in exclusions, so differences between LAs in exclusions rate are relatively small compared to the school and student level. However 6% is still higher than the 2% of variation in pupil achievement and the 1% of variation in pupil educational progress that is accounted for at the LA level (DFE, 2004). So while LA's have little direct effect on disciplinary policy in schools they may have some mediating role e.g. in leading collaborative arrangements between schools such

as exclusion trading/managed moves, that mitigate some of the worse effects of a school led system.

- The school level accounted for 20% of the variation in exclusions, slightly higher than the 10%-15% of the variation in educational achievement that is typically accounted for at the school level. We had limited data available on schools and could not find many factors that explained the variability between schools. Grammar schools had much lower levels of exclusions with odds of exclusion about half the odds of comprehensive schools, and academies were more likely to exclude than comprehensive schools (the odds were 1.4 times higher[4]). There was some tentative evidence that - after individual student poverty was taken into account - schools with a high concentration of %FSM were slightly little less likely to exclude than those schools with a lower %FSM (1SD increase in school %FSM had an OR= 0.93). This might indicate that schools with a high % of FSM students were more tolerant of behaviours that would trigger disciplinary procedures in other schools, but further research is necessary here. The pupil teacher ratio and the % of ethnic minority students did not have any association with exclusion.

Permanent exclusion (PE)

Just as with FTE, the same pupil background factors are associated with increased risk of Permanent Exclusion (PE). Being a boy, being entitled to a FSM, living in a deprived neighbourhood (IDACI), being in Local Authority Care (CLA), having low attainment in national tests (particularly in English) at the end of primary school and poor attendance at the start of Y7 are all associated with a substantial increase in the risks of PE.

Again though, even controlling for all these factors, Black Caribbean (OR=2.60), Mixed White and Black Caribbean (OR=1.93) and Mixed White and Black African (OR=1.63) students are still substantially over-represented among those experiencing PE relative to White British students, while Other Asian (OR=0.19), Indian (OR=0.53), Chinese (OR=0.61), Pakistani (OR=0.69) and Bangladeshi (OR=0.70) students are all under-represented relative to White British students.

We ask whether the over-representation among Black ethnic groups for PE can be accounted for by their higher risk of FTE we demonstrated earlier. The number of previous FTEs and the total numbers of days of FTE experienced had a strong association with the incidence of PE and indeed were the strongest predictors of PE, raising the amount of variance in PE explained from 10% to almost 25%. However it is notable that Black Caribbean (OR=2.44), Mixed White and Black Caribbean (OR=1.76) and Mixed White and Black African (OR=1.86) students *still* had substantially higher odds of a PE even after accounting for the higher levels of FTE in these groups relative to White British students.

---

[4]. It should be noted though that school type was sourced from Y7 and in 2006/07 there were only 46 City Academies in England.

Conclusion

This above confirms the message emerging from all the analysis presented here. Overall Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean students experience a 67% increase in the odds of fixed term exclusion relative to 'similar' White British students (i.e. White British students with the same gender, level of poverty, types of SEN, level of school attendance, prior attainment, looked after status and school type and composition). Furthermore among the sub-set of students experiencing a permanent exclusion, Black Caribbean and Mixed White & Black Caribbean students on average received fewer instances of FTE compared to White British students (4.6 vs. 5.6) so the raised risk of PE for these ethnic groups is not accounted for by student background factors or by past history of fixed term exclusion.

It is not possible from this data to say what does account for the raised incidence of both fixed term and permanent exclusion of these two ethnic groups, but the analysis eliminates many of the plausible alternative explanations. Overall we believe these data are consistent with an element of systematic bias in the school exclusion process.

Further Research

Strand and Fletcher (2014) have established that it is feasible to use the NPD to track exclusions to reveal new and interesting results about the factors that drive exclusion from schools. However the study needs to be repeated with more recent data and the resources to explore the process in further depth. For example, of those students who received a FTE, around 56% went on to experience a subsequent exclusion but around 44% received no further exclusions. So while earlier exclusions are highly predictive of later exclusion, it is by no means inevitable that fixed term exclusions always lead to further exclusions, or accumulate to lead inevitably to a permanent exclusion. Identifying different trajectories, including those that might be termed relatively 'successful', and identifying pupil and school correlates of different trajectories, offers the potential for new insights on the outcomes of school exclusion. It would be extremely valuable if the Department for Education (DFE) were able to fund such research through the DFE Highlight to the ESRC Secondary Data Analysis Initiative (SDAI).

References
Strand., S. & Fletcher, J. (2014). *A Quantitative Longitudinal Analysis of Exclusions from English Secondary Schools.* Oxford: University of Oxford. http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Exclusion-from-Secondary-schools_small.pdf

Professor Steve Strand
Professor of Education and Fellow of St. Cross College
University of Oxford
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: (01865) 611071
Email: steve.strand@education.ox.ac.uk
Webpage: www.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/directory/professor-steve-strand/

3 May 2018