

The Cost of Exclusions in Somerset

A deep dive analysis of the data

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January 2020

Highlights

- Data for this report was obtained from our in-house Capita system and national Department for Education reports
- Somerset is in the top twenty of poor performing local authorities for school exclusions
- Exclusion rates in Somerset are increasing year on year – 3.24 Somerset, England 2.43 (2017/18)
- Exclusions rates are rising nationally – Somerset is following this trend
- Permanent Exclusion rates have increased from 0.05 (2013/14) to 0.16 (2017/18)
- Fixed-term Exclusion rates have increased from 2.0 (2013/14) to 3.09 (2017/18)
- Permanent exclusion in Somerset is 0.16, England is 0.10 (2017/18)
- The rate of exclusion increases every school year, from 2.1 at Year One to 22.4 at Year 10, this mirrors national data, but with much higher rates in Somerset
- Exclusion data from Capita demonstrates our 2018/19 fixed term exclusions have continued to rise since the publication of 2017/18 national data
- Some secondary schools have more than doubled their number of Fixed Term Exclusion over the past two years
- Somerset has the highest rate of fixed-term exclusion compared to all our statistical neighbours

- The fixed-term exclusion rates for secondary age pupils in Somerset are above the England rate, the South-west rate and our comparative neighbours
- Somerset has highest number of students with one or more fixed term exclusions compared to all our statistical neighbours
- The length of fixed-term school exclusion in Somerset is consistently shorter than the England average of 4.41 days, compared to 4.04 days in Somerset (2017/18)
- The average number of exclusions per pupil in Somerset (2.44) is higher than England (2.18) (2017/18)
- Boys in Somerset schools have a much higher rate of exclusion than the national average
- Girls make-up about a quarter to a third of all exclusion episodes
- There are higher rates of exclusion for schools in Somerset in more deprived areas
- Children with SEND – there are much higher rates of exclusion and this is increasing
- Gap between Somerset and England SEN exclusion rate is increasing year on year
- Most school exclusions are for persistent disruptive behaviour

Introduction

It has been acknowledged over the past few years that Somerset has an increasing rate of young people excluded from school. Exclusion data is monitored regularly through the Phase Strategy Groups and various dashboards and reports are available, but it is now a prime opportunity to look at this area in depth and challenge the poor performance of Somerset schools and look for reasons behind the results.

This report aims to look where we are nationally, within the west-country and against our comparative neighbouring authorities. It looks at sub-sets of data and where there appears to be an increased risk of exclusions for different groups.

When writing this report there is a concern about collating too much data for identifying the real reasons behind Somerset's poor performance. This document aims to be open for discussion, interpretation, amendment and criticism and it will change form, as the review continues, until we identify solid root causes for this complex issue and then our partners can discuss recommendations and actions for our children and schools.

National Context

A literature review commissioned by the Department of Education in 2018² gathered evidence from many studies to examine the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children, this concluded that

'certain vulnerabilities, individually or combined, increased a child's risk of exclusion. These included: SEND, including social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, poverty, low attainment, being from certain minority ethnic groups, being bullied, poor relationships with teachers, life trauma and challenges in their home lives. The potential drivers of exclusion identified .. could be numerous and layered, which could have a multiplier effect'.

The review further concluded that schools did not operate in a vacuum and that they are microcosms of society, suggesting that the current patterns of exclusions were perpetuating society-wide stereotyping and discrimination, particularly along the lines of class, race, gender and disadvantage.

The school-family dynamic was sometimes described as problematic and in general parent-school communication reduced after primary school. In some small-scale studies, parents felt unfairly blamed for their child's behaviour but unable to discuss matters with schools or to advocate effectively on behalf of their child. Research also found the opposite: that parents blamed schools.

The Children's Commissioner for England commented in March 2019⁴ that when children are excluded from school, they lose their safety net and that when she had talked to any child in prison or in trouble with the police and they will tell you that falling out of school was a trigger point. She further commented, with 100,000 now being excluded or off-rolled each year, there are a lot of children on the outside – and it is being on the outside which makes these children vulnerable. Children should be at school, it gives them structure, access to support, the opportunity to build relationships with trusted adults and other friends. For vulnerable kids on the edge of gangs, it's these basics which are missing from the rest of their lives.

The Children's Commissioner recognised that not all exclusions are avoidable. She felt that schools had a responsibility to all their students. If a child poses a genuine risk to their peers, it is quite right the school takes steps to keep other children safe. She acknowledged that whilst exclusions have risen 67% since 2012/13, there is no evidence that behaviour patterns had changed. And the children they are excluding are highly vulnerable: half of them have mental health problems, a similar number also have special educational needs. All this suggests that schools' tolerance of disruptive behaviour and the underlying causes (including poor mental health and SEND) are reducing.

Further analysis conducted by the Children's Commissioners office shows that it is only a small minority of schools where this is happening. Just **10% of schools in England are responsible for a staggering 88% of all exclusions**. Research they conducted in eleven local authority areas found a similar pattern – 10% of schools were responsible for the majority of off-rolling. The Commissioner concluded that there were no plausible explanations as to why schools serving similar populations can legitimately have such different rates of exclusion.

This is reflective in Somerset, why do we have such different rates of exclusion to our comparative neighbours and why are our exclusion numbers increasing so rapidly?

Definitions and the legal framework for Exclusions in Schools

The key guidelines concerning exclusion are covered within the most recent guidance provided by the Department of Education (DfE) which is available as a hyperlink in the Reference section of this report¹, however, a short summary of the most pertinent points is provided below: -

'Only a Head Teacher can exclude a pupil and this must be on disciplinary grounds. A pupil may be excluded for one or more fixed periods (up to a maximum of 45 school days in a single academic year), or permanently. A fixed-period exclusion does not have to be for a continuous period.'

'A fixed-period exclusion can also be for parts of the school day.'

'a fixed-period exclusion cannot be converted into a permanent exclusion. In exceptional cases, ... a further fixed-period exclusion may be issued to begin immediately after the first period ends; or a permanent exclusion may be issued to begin immediately after the end of the fixed period.'

'permanent exclusion should only be used as a last resort, 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 in the school.'

'The decision to exclude a pupil must be lawful, reasonable and fair. Schools have a statutory duty not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics, such as disability or race. Schools should give particular consideration to the fair treatment of pupils from groups who are vulnerable to exclusion.'

'Disruptive behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs. Where a school has concerns about a pupil's behaviour, it should try to identify whether there are any causal factors and intervene early in order to reduce the need for a subsequent exclusion. In this situation, schools should consider whether a multi-agency assessment that goes beyond the pupil's educational needs is required.'

'The behaviour of a pupil outside school can be considered grounds for an exclusion.'

'Under the Equality Act 2010 (the Equality Act), schools must not discriminate against, harass or victimise pupils because of: sex; race; disability; religion or belief; sexual orientation; pregnancy/maternity; or gender reassignment. For disabled children, this includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments to policies and practices and the provision of auxiliary aids.'

The head teacher and governing board must comply with their statutory duties in relation to SEN when administering the exclusion process. This includes having regard to the SEND Code of Practice⁵.

..it is unlawful to exclude a pupil simply because they have additional needs or a disability that the school feels it is unable to meet, or for a reason such as: academic attainment/ability; the action of a pupil's parents; or the failure of a pupil to meet specific conditions before they are reinstated,

'Informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending a pupil home 'to cool off', are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be formally recorded.

'Maintained schools have the power to direct a pupil off-site for education to improve their behaviour '

Findings

National Picture and Rankings

Data for this report was obtained from our in-house Capita system and national Department for Education reports.

The tables below display Somerset's ranking compared to other local authorities (LAs). Please note a ranking of **1 indicates the highest rate of exclusion** compared to other LAs. As can be seen in the first table, Somerset is in the top twenty of all local authorities in the country for Permanent exclusions, Fixed-rate exclusions and students with one or more fixed period exclusion.

Somerset's ranking of all LAs (up to 152 LAs)			
	Permanent exclusion Rate - Ranking of LAs	Fixed Period Exclusion Rate - Ranking of LAs	Students with one or more fixed period exclusions rate - Ranking
2013-14	93	45	47
2014-15	88	36	47
2015-16	64	24	25
2016-17	51	17	22
2017-18	24	20	20

When comparing Exclusion data to our statistical neighbours, the comparison is bleak. Somerset has the highest rate of Fixed-term exclusion, and students with one or more fixed exclusions and is third within the ranking for Permanent Exclusions.

Somerset's ranking of Statistical Neighbour LAs (11 LAs)			
	Permanent Exclusion Rate (Ranking)	Fixed Period Exclusion Rate (Ranking)	Students with one or more fixed exclusions (Ranking)
2013-14	8	1	1
2014-15	8	1	1
2015-16	7	1	1
2016-17	4	1	1
2017-18	3	1	1

The next table compares our performance against other south-west LA's. As can be seen the Somerset performance has decreased over the past few years compared to other south-west councils. There are a few South-west councils that are performing well on their exclusion rates – these would be:

For Permanent Exclusions (Somerset – 24 National Ranking 2017/18)

- Isles of Scilly – but ignore for low numbers
- Bristol – a ranking of 143 nationally
- Wiltshire – a ranking of 137 nationally

For Fixed Period Exclusions – (20 National ranking 2017/18)

- Isles of Scilly - again ignore
- Cornwall – a ranking of 114 nationally
- Gloucestershire – a ranking of 77 nationally
- Wiltshire – a ranking of 72 nationally

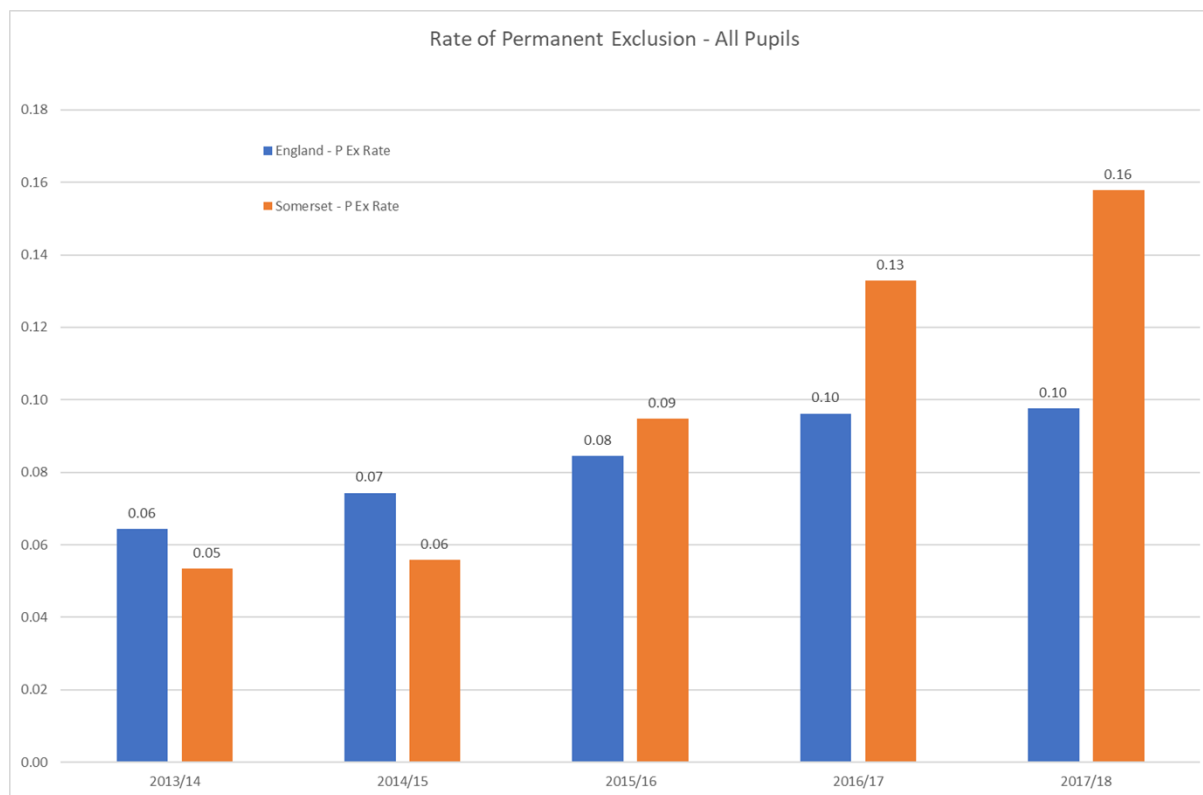
Somerset's ranking of South West LAs (up to 16 LAs)			
	Permanent Exclusion Rate (Ranking)	Fixed Period Exclusion Rate (Ranking)	Students with one or more fixed exclusions (Ranking)
2013-14	11	7	6
2014-15	11	6	6
2015-16	10	4	3
2016-17	7	3	3
2017-18	4	4	3

Exclusion rates are increasing nationally and in Somerset

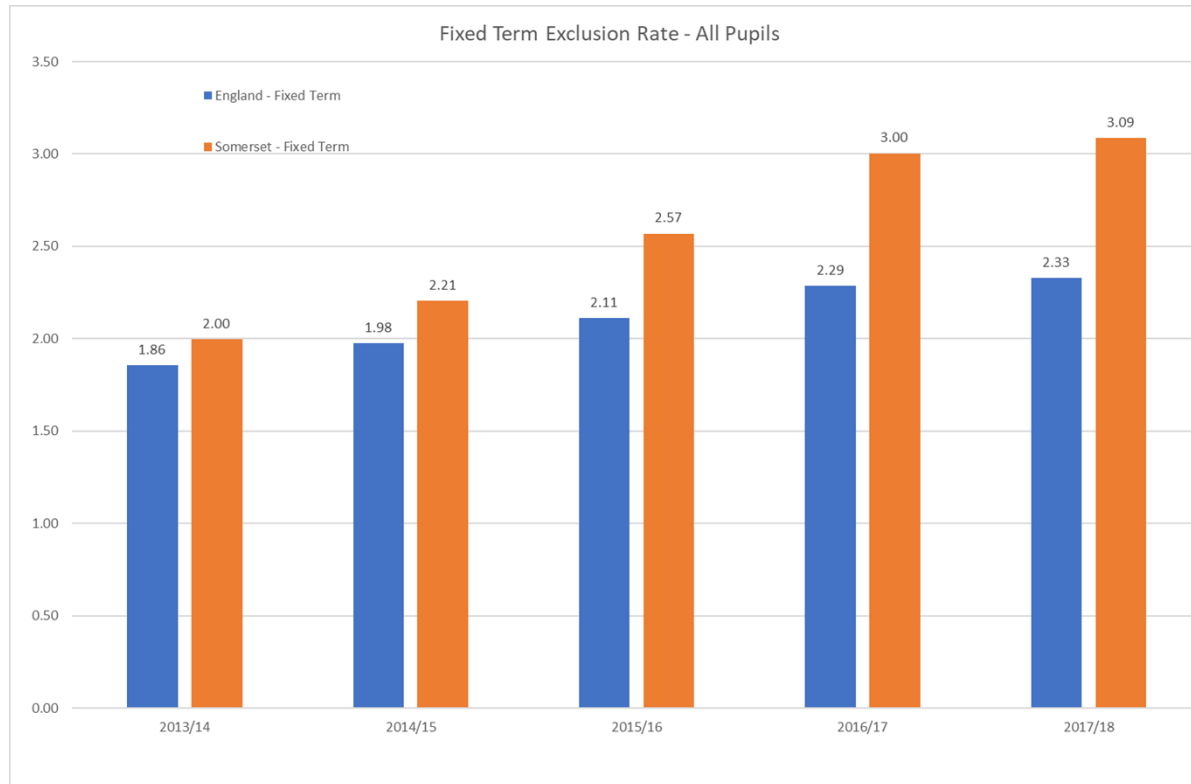
The graphs below demonstrate the rise of the rate of school exclusion in Somerset and in England.

The rate of exclusion as calculated by DfE is the number of exclusions divided by the school roll (at the January Census) multiplied by 100. As some students will trigger multiple exclusions it's not the number/percentage of students excluded.

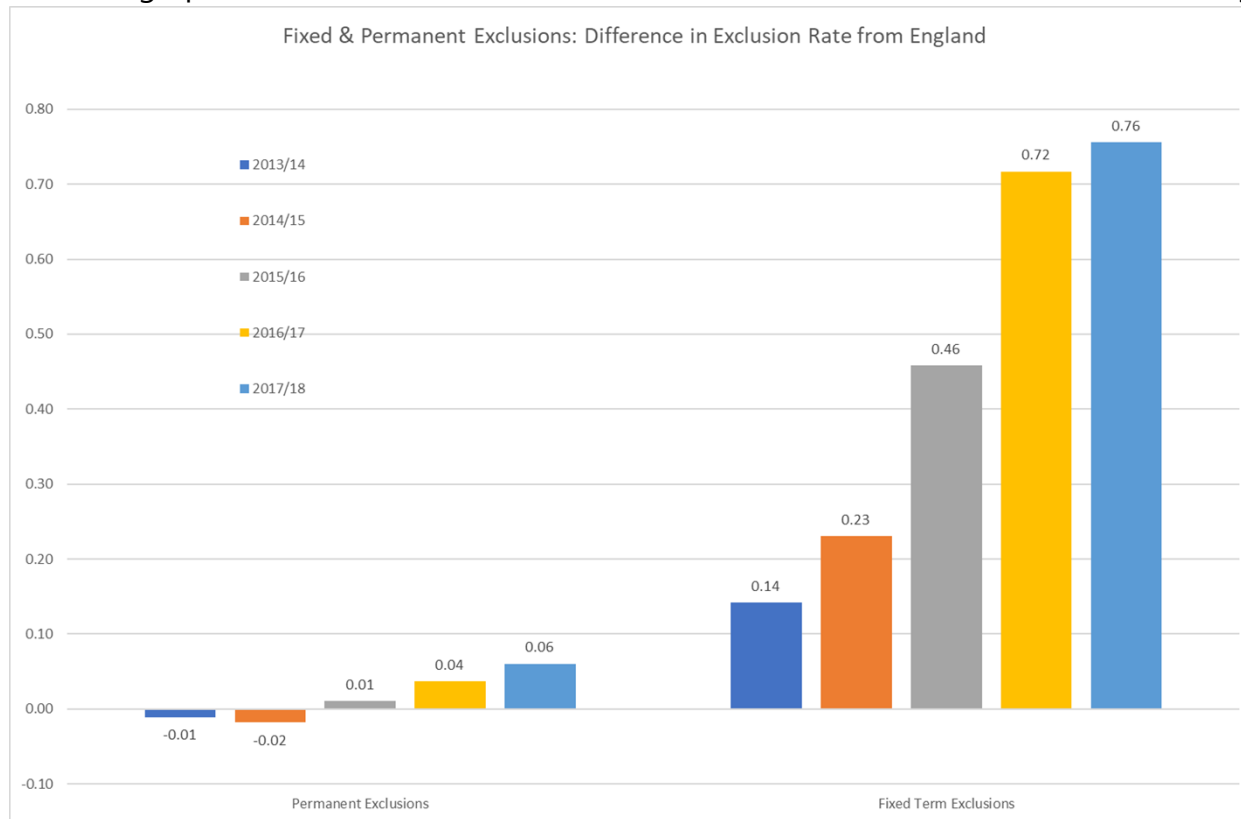
As can be seen from the Permanent Exclusion rate graph below, Somerset was below the national rate in 2013/14 and 2014/15, but since then the rate has risen to significantly over the England rate.



For fixed-term exclusions (see graph below) the rate in Somerset has risen year on year from 2013/14 to 2017/18. The rate for England has also increased but by a much smaller amount.



The next graph shows the difference between the exclusion rates with Somerset and England.



Are there differences in Exclusion rates between Primary and Secondaries?

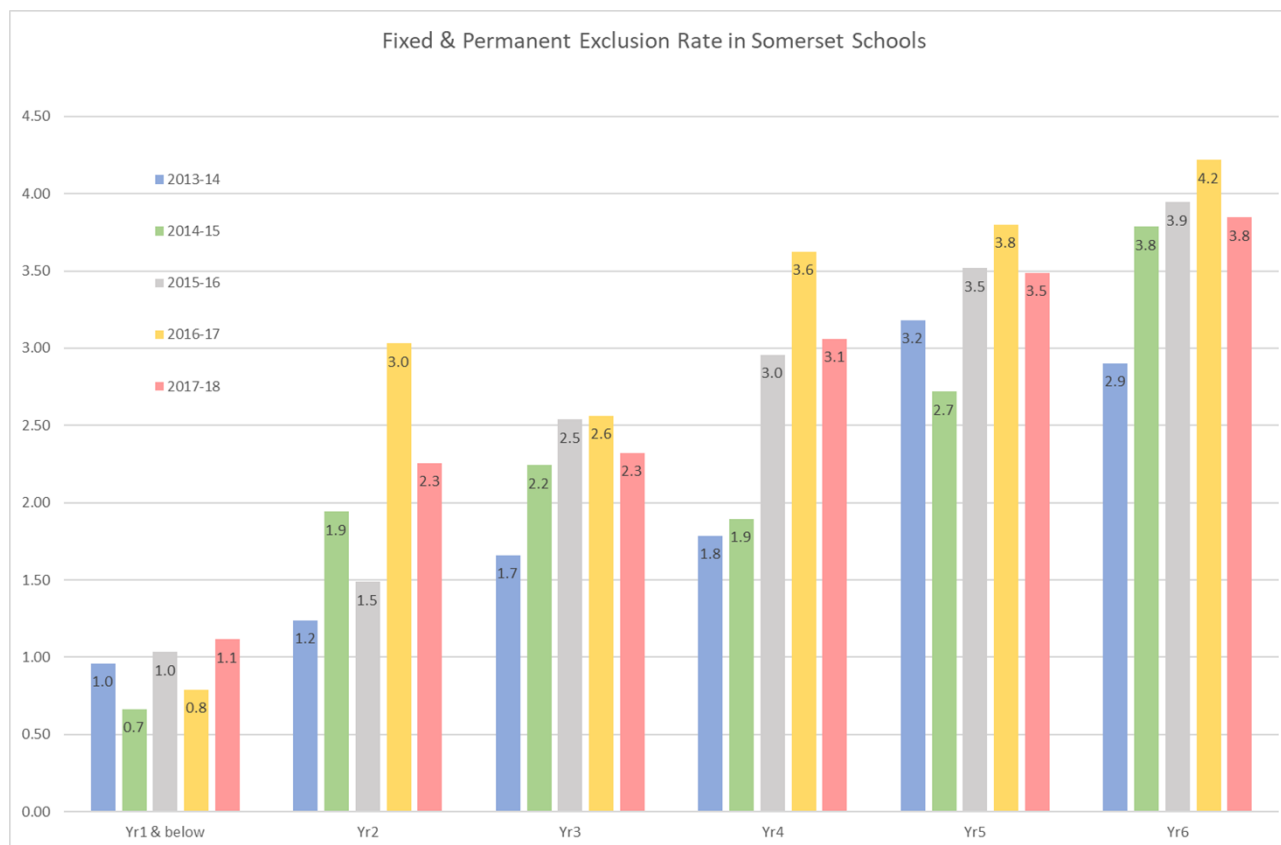
There is a marked difference between exclusion rates from Primaries to Secondaries, as will be explained further on in this report. The data in the table below is DfE information from the 2017-18 Permanent and Fixed Term Exclusion rates split between Primary and Secondary schools, with comparisons to rates for England, the South-west region and our comparative neighbours.

Permanent and Fixed-Term exclusion rates – primary and secondary split – 2017/18 DfE Data (pub' July 2019)				
No of incidents/no of pupil on roll as a percentage.				
	Primary		Secondary	
	Permanent	Fixed Term	Permanent	Fixed Term
Somerset	0.05	2.15	0.30	14.30
South-West	0.04	1.77	0.22	11.19
Statistical Neighbours*	Mean Average 0.04 Range 0.01 to 0.07	Mean Average 1.91 Range 1.19 to 2.93	Mean Average 0.23 Range 0.04 to 0.36	Mean Average 9.55 Range 6.77 to 14.30
England	0.03	1.40	0.20	10.13

*we do not have the pupil numbers to calculate this as a percentage

As the table above demonstrates, our fixed-term exclusion rates for secondary age pupils are above the England rate, the South-west rate and our comparative neighbours. The fixed-term secondary exclusion data from this table is interesting to compare against the performance of individual secondary schools in Somerset. Please note we do not have national data for middle schools, so our data could be tempered by our three-tier system in some areas.

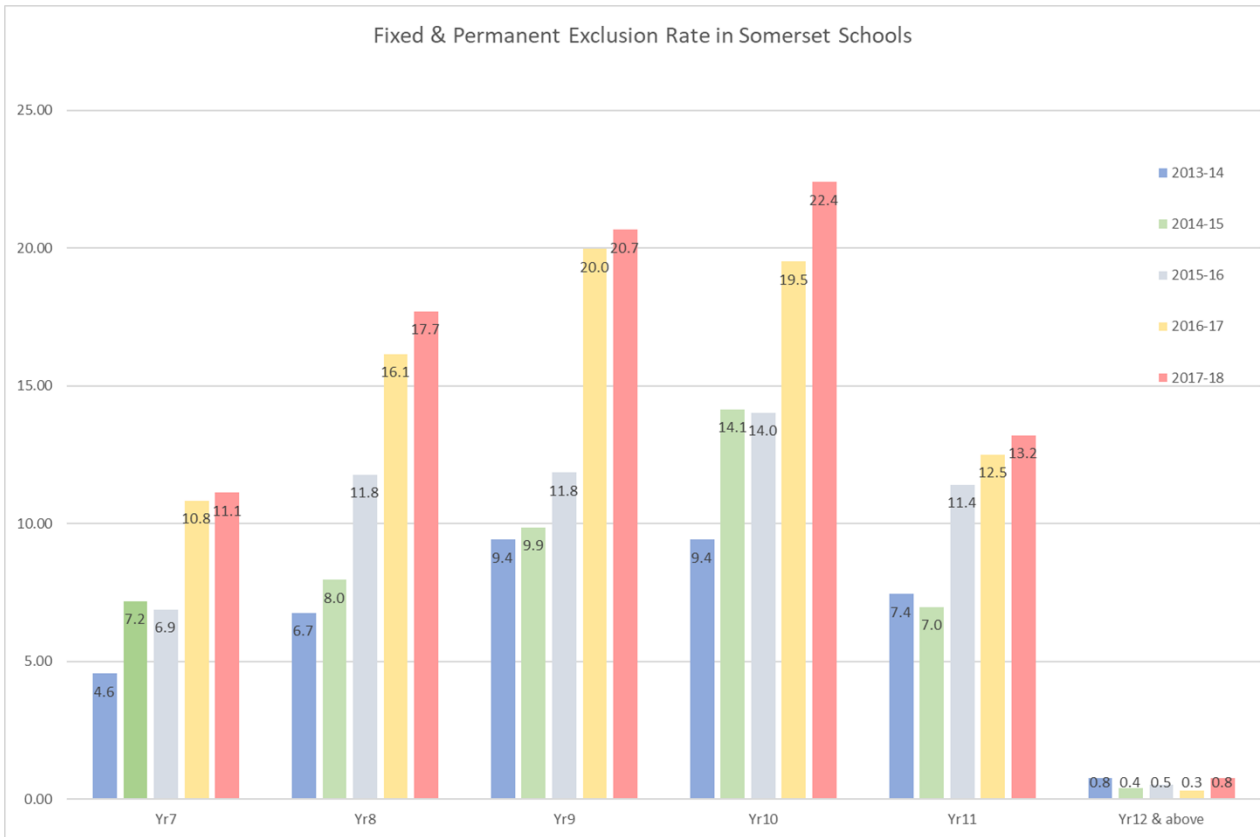
The data shown in the following two graphs identifies that the rate of exclusion increases with age, so as the young people move up through the school years. The first graph displays the data for the primary schools in Somerset, the low rate of exclusion in the very early years to a higher rate in Year six. What is encouraging however, is that the rate of exclusion for primary schools has decreased across these primary years from 2016/17 to 2017/18, apart for Year One and below.



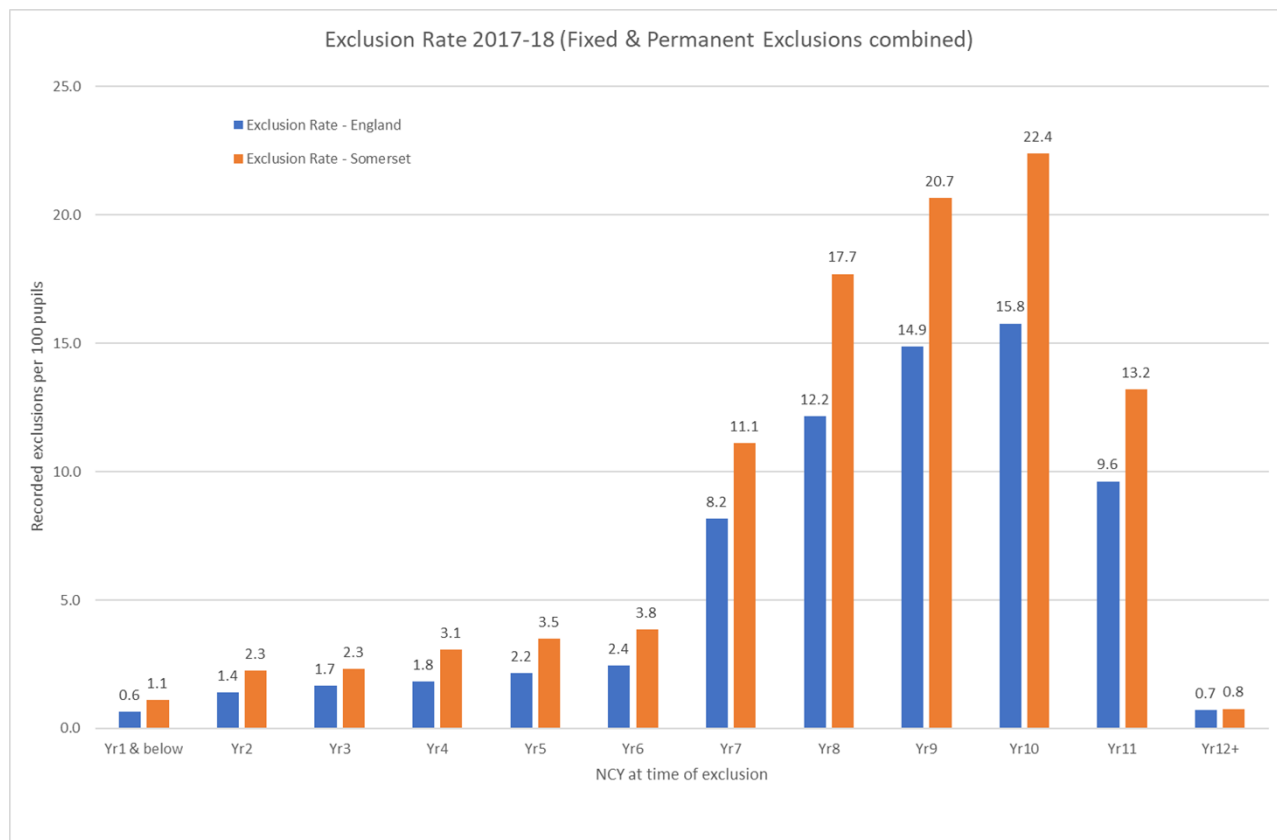
The next graph looks at the fixed and permanent exclusion rate for secondary schools. They demonstrate the rise across the years, but that the highest rate is for Year 10 and it drops significantly for Year 11, perhaps the reasons behind this are: -

- the Pupil Referral Units (PRU's) have historically held most of the difficult Year 11's,
- it is rare for a school to take a permanent excluded pupil in year 11
- there is little time left for them to be excluded as they are only there for just over two terms

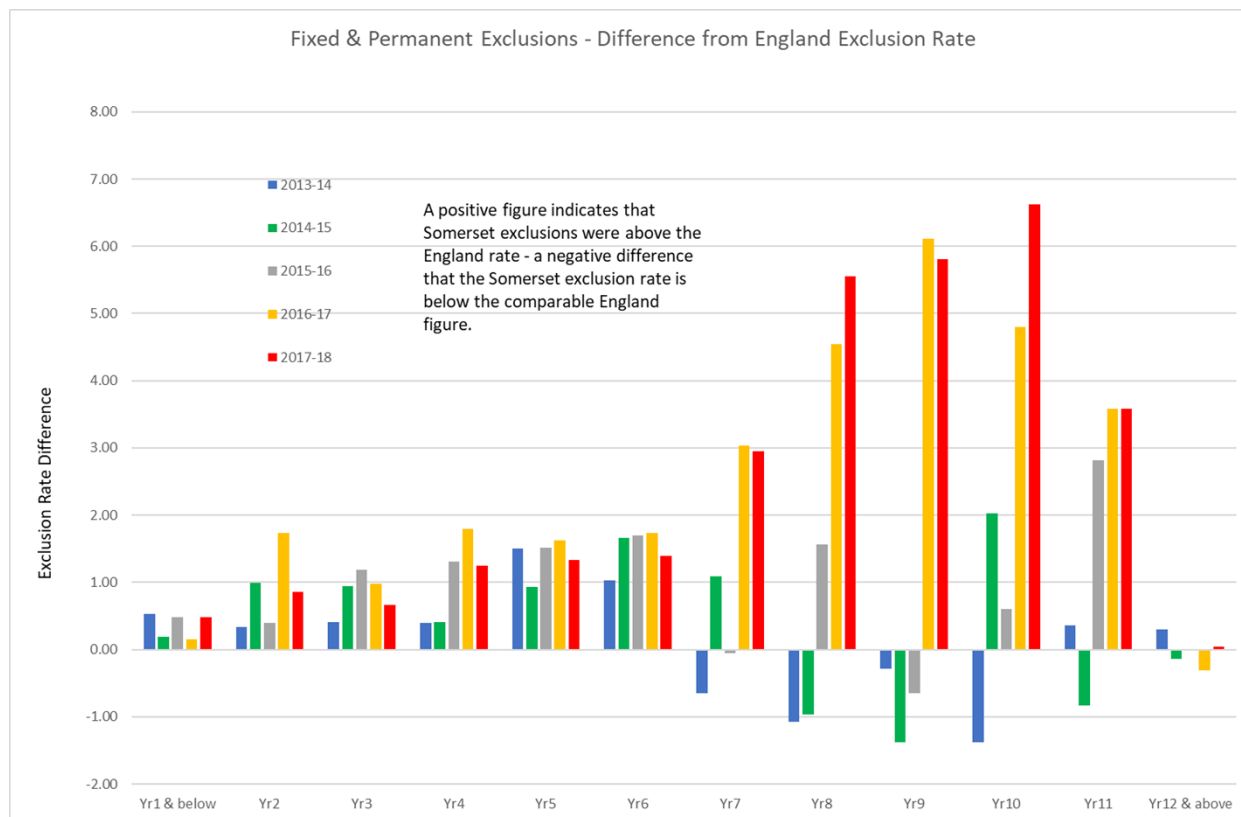
Fixed & Permanent Exclusion Rate in Somerset Schools



The following graph compares our primary and secondary data to England data for the same school years, they follow a similar pattern, but what is very apparent is our higher exclusion rate in Somerset across all year groups.



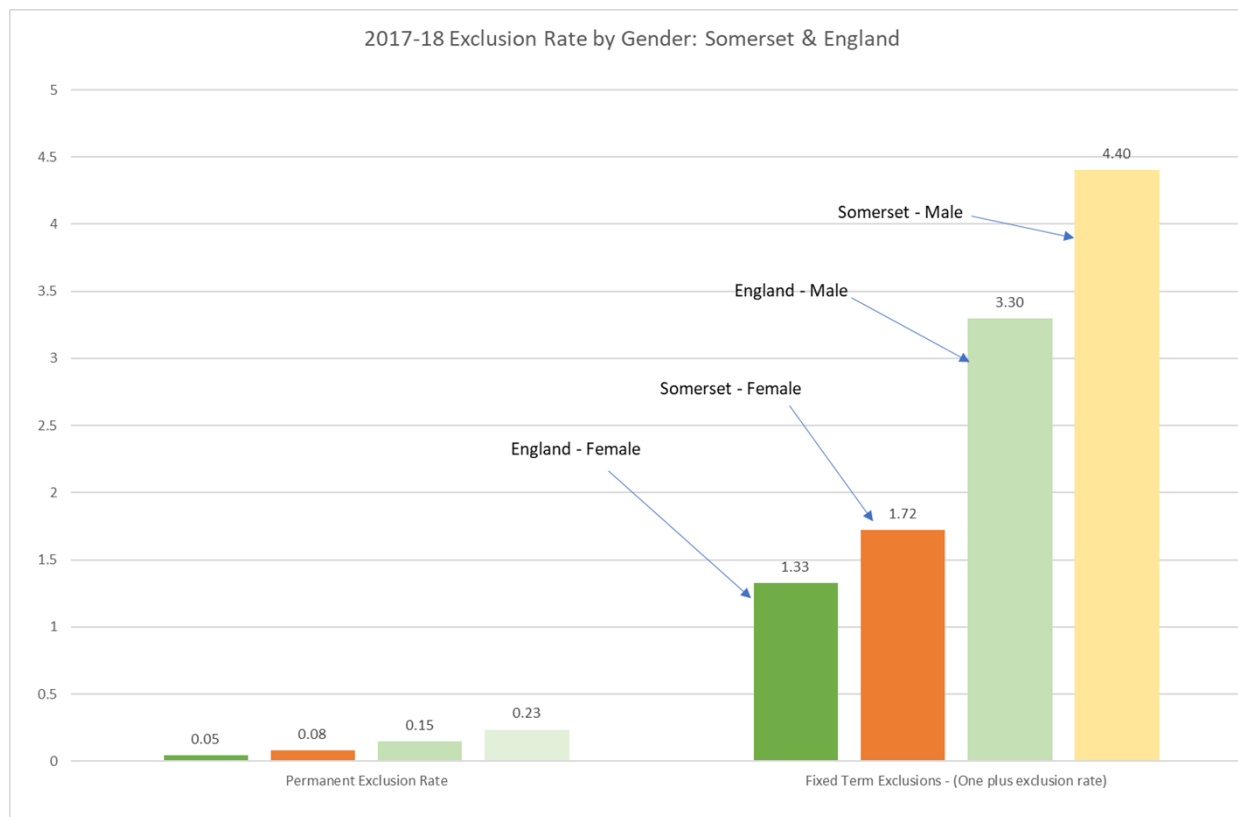
The graph below compares our exclusion rate against the England rate, it again demonstrates our rise in exclusions and our journey from good performance in this area in 2013/14 and 2014/15 to now exceeding the England rate. As the commentary on the graph explains negative performance is good.



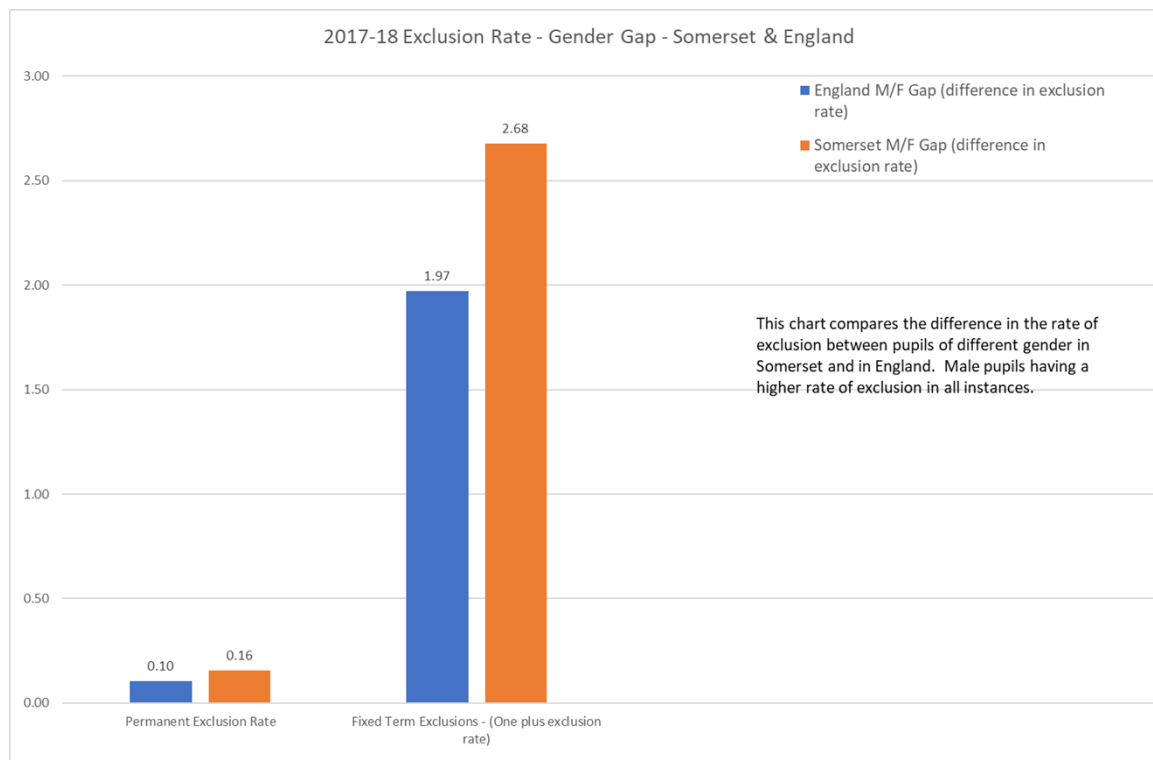
Are there differences between genders in Somerset?

In 2018/19 there were thirteen permanent exclusions for females (23.2%) and 43 for males (76.8%). For fixed term exclusions, there were 935 for females (31.9%) and 1,992 (68.1%) for males. It could be summarised as girls in Somerset make-up a quarter to a third of all exclusion episodes.

The graphs below show our performance compared to the England average, it demonstrates that for both males and females our exclusion rates are higher than the national average. It also shows that Somerset follow the same pattern of boys receiving more exclusion episodes than girls.



The next graph shows the difference between our male/female exclusion rate compared to England male/female rate, concluding that Somerset is excluding a **far higher** rate of boys than the England average, and girls in Somerset still have more exclusions than the national average.



Secondary Schools and Academies across Somerset

This part for the report examines the fixed-term exclusion rates across the twenty-nine secondary schools, not including the middle schools, as it is apparent from the data above that the main area of concern is within this age-range.

Somerset's average mean fixed term exclusion rate for the secondary schools is 20.7. Some of the schools far exceed this, the table below gives details of all schools with a rate of 20 and above.

Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) incidences by Secondary Schools (Source: Capita One at 16.12.19)				
School	2017/18	2018/19	No on School Roll	Fixed Term Exclusion Rate 2018/19 %
School 1	278	472	855	55.2
School 2	118	152	316	48.1
School 3	324	588	1256	46.8
School 4	279	540	1359	39.7
School 5	120	323	940	34.4
School 6	149	215	687	31.3
School 7	130	298	969	30.8
School 8	209	191	798	23.9
School 9	191	174	730	23.8
School 10	86	161	803	20.0

However, some schools are not excluding as much.

School 11	272	216	1191	18.1
School 12	163	260	1472	17.7
School 13	71	94	577	16.3
School 14	310	203	1275	15.9
School 15	149	166	1061	15.6
School 16	130	119	774	15.4
School 17	85	113	744	15.2
School 18	242	159	1065	14.9
School 19	62	49	333	14.7
School 20	58	132	908	14.5
School 21	51	71	528	13.4
School 22	111	117	906	12.9

School 23	62	54	454	11.9
School 24	185	111	951	11.7
School 25	90	89	1062	8.4
School 26	18	42	600	7.0
School 27	46	20	326	6.1
School 28	96	88	1486	5.9
School 29	10	36	1162	3.1

It becomes obvious that a school with a boarding provision such as Sexey's would not have many fixed-term exclusions, but **why do some schools have such a low exclusion rate?**

The other very concerning issue is the increased rate of fixed term exclusion between 2017/18 and 2018/19, some schools (anonymised) below, have more than doubled their rate over past the two years and this is also illustrated in the data above.

National data on exclusion is not released until June 2020, knowing the above, **Somerset will continue to decline in the national performance tables.**

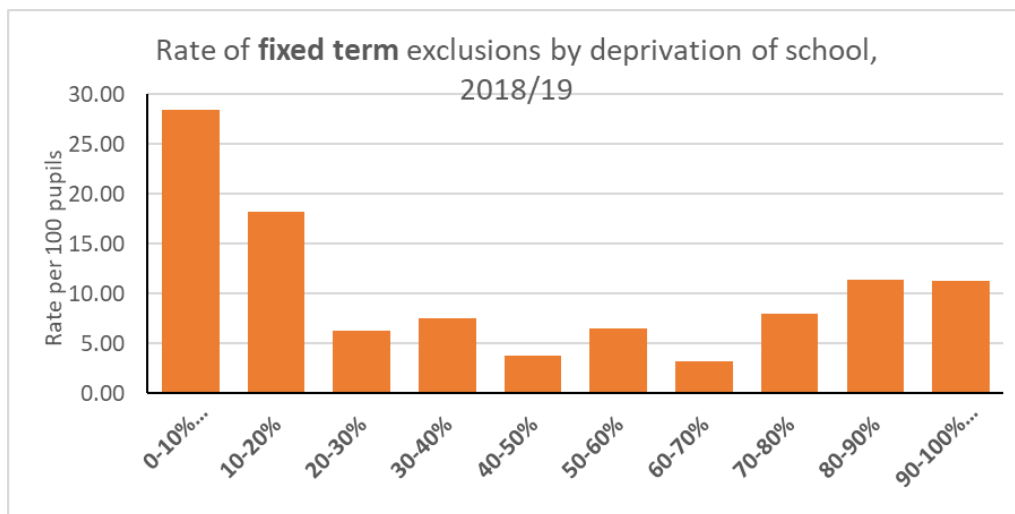
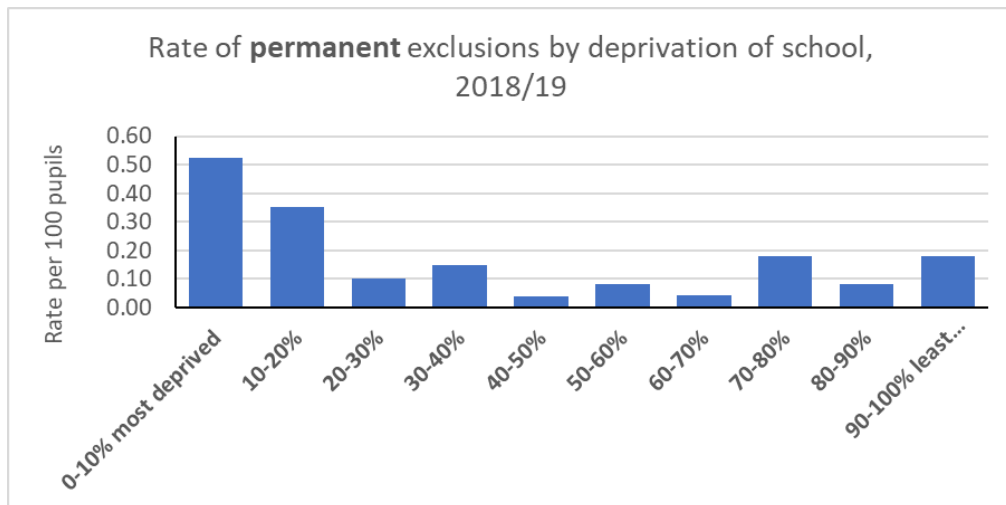
- School 1 – 69.8% increase
- School 3 – 81.5% increase
- School 4 – 93.5% increase
- School 7 – 129.2% increase
- School 10 – 87.2% increase
- School 20 – 127.6% increase

Deprivation and Exclusion in Somerset is there a link?

Within the DfE literature review of school exclusions³ it found that social class shaped the parent-school relationship, with poorer or working-class parents perceived as being the least effective in challenging exclusion decisions. It is apparent within Somerset that there is a link to deprivation, and this is evidenced in the table below, which shows Permanent and Fixed period exclusion by level of deprivation of school for Somerset state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. (It is probably more visible, in the bar-charts below the data table.) According to a blog written by Laura Partridge ⁵ of the Royal Society of the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), School Exclusions are a social justice issue, she comments that there is a strong correlation between attending a school in an area of high deprivation and being excluded from school and that pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals were four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school than their non-eligible peers and that pupils from schools in the 10% most deprived areas are roughly twice as likely to be excluded as their peers from schools in the 10% least deprived areas. These findings are mirrored in Somerset and demonstrated in the table and graphs below.

IDACI decile	Number of schools	Number on Roll	Number of permanent exclusions	Rate of permanent exclusions (per 100 pupils)	Number of fixed term exclusions	Rate of fixed term exclusions (per 100 pupils)
0-10% most deprived	11	5,140	27	0.53	1,459	28.39
10-20%	11	4,827	17	0.35	878	18.19
20-30%	19	4,896	5	0.10	306	6.25
30-40%	25	6,722	10	0.15	504	7.50
40-50%	24	5,227	2	0.04	199	3.81
50-60%	45	8,457	7	0.08	548	6.48
60-70%	38	9,721	4	0.04	315	3.24
70-80%	40	10,623	19	0.18	850	8.00
80-90%	28	7,209	6	0.08	823	11.42
90-100% least deprived	22	7,756	14	0.18	874	11.27
Total	263	70,578	111	0.16	6,756	9.57

Source: Capita One/2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) at Super Output Area level based on the location of the school



There are several secondary schools in Somerset who are within the top two deprivation areas but have low rates of exclusion, these are School 22 and School 24, both of these schools are based in South Somerset.

Links between Attainment and Exclusion

In the report Making the Difference – Breaking the link between School Exclusions and Social Exclusion, by the Institute of Public Policy Research⁶ it states that poor outcomes for excluded pupils stretch across a range of social dimensions including health, qualifications, employment and criminality. Their researchers found that it blights the educational opportunities or halts altogether the transition from school to further study and the world of work. It comments that only one per cent of excluded young people achieve five good GCSE's including Maths and English and that they have a very low average Attainment 8 score and that the majority of excluded pupils were not even enrolled in the two core English and maths GCSE's.

Exclusion and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) status

Data from Career South West (the company that checks our NEET status) for all young people from Somerset, who are currently classed as not in employment education or training, in National Curriculum Year twelve and thirteen was examined. Of which there was a total of thirteen young people who had received a permanent exclusion.

Of this small group: -

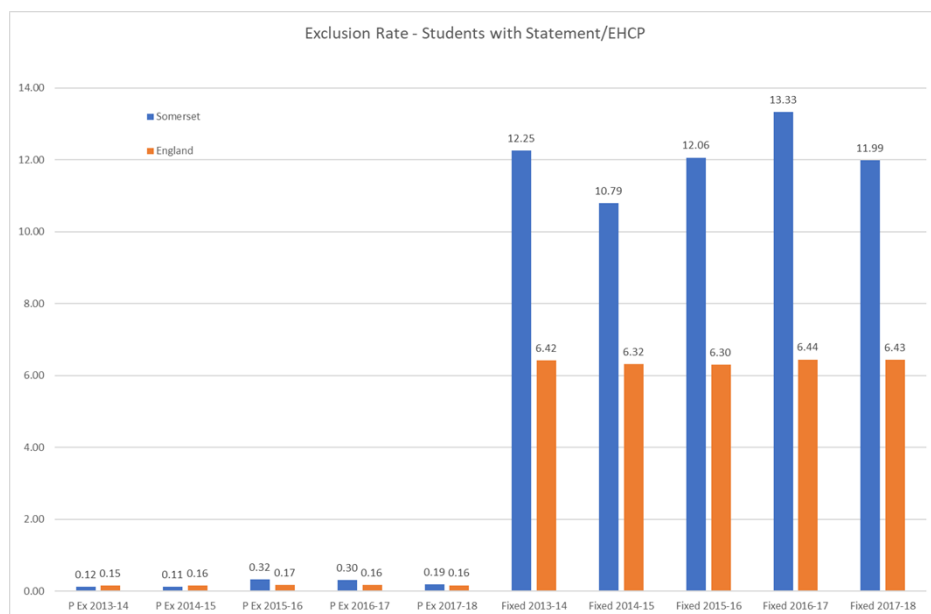
- Eleven are known to the Somerset Youth Offending Service (YOS), (nine had a referral after their exclusion)
- Only one young person had no SEN status
- 2 have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- 10 have a status of SEN Support
- three were previous children looked-after (CLA)
- five had a previous Child in need or Child Protection (CIN/CP) status

Ethnicity

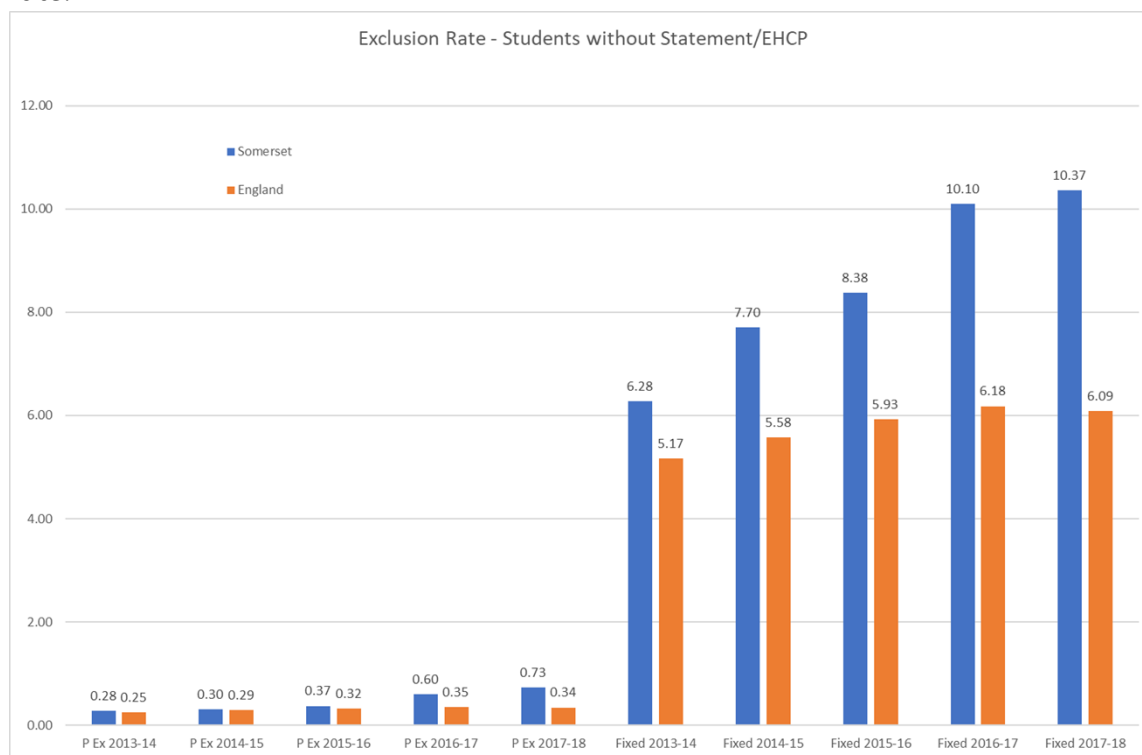
It is not considered that there are links between ethnicity and exclusion in Somerset, but the data is currently being analysed and will be available shortly.

SEN Children

What becomes very apparent when examining the exclusion data for Somerset children, is that there are some groups, that have much higher rates of exclusion than others, one of these is children with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disability. The exclusion rates in Somerset for children with an EHCP is **almost double** that of the England rate.



Again, for those children on SEN Support there are again stark differences between the Somerset rate of exclusion and the England rate.

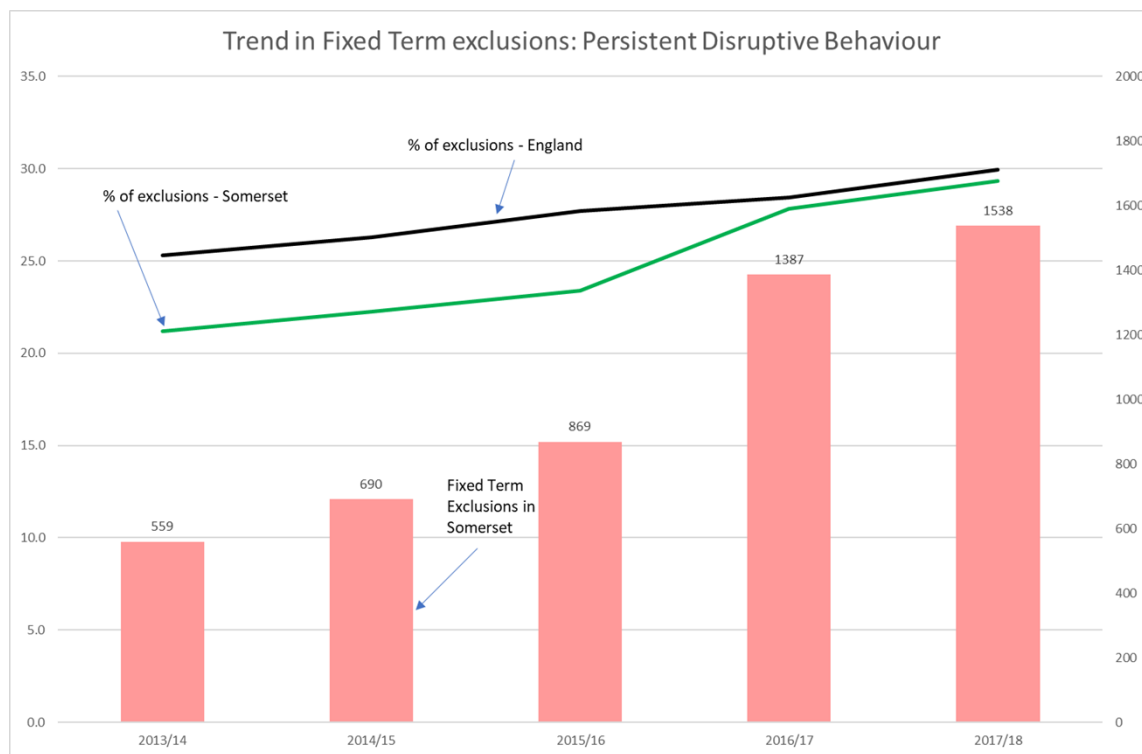


Reasons for exclusion

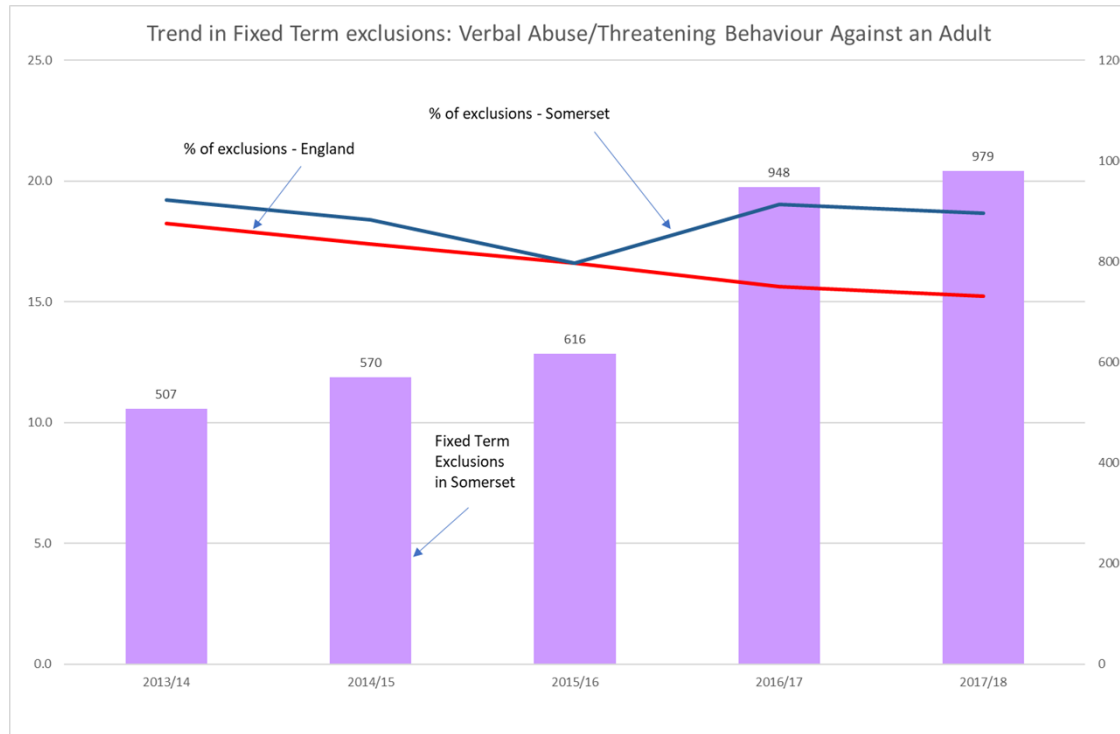
Persistent or disruptive behaviour is the largest reason category for exclusions from Somerset schools. This is both for Permanent and Fixed-term exclusions.

The graphs plot the trend of the reason AND show the percentage of all exclusions thereby demonstrating that Persistent Disruptive Behaviour is going up in number and as a percentage of the number of fixed term exclusions. Yet again, Somerset

follows the national upward trend, but it is concerning that in the last few years there was such a jump in the number for this reason, why is this?



It is also very concerning to see the rise in the number of fixed term exclusions for verbal abuse or threatening behaviour towards an adult and the actual assault of adults (assuming school staff), this is demonstrated in the follow graph. Plus, the rate again is higher than England, why?

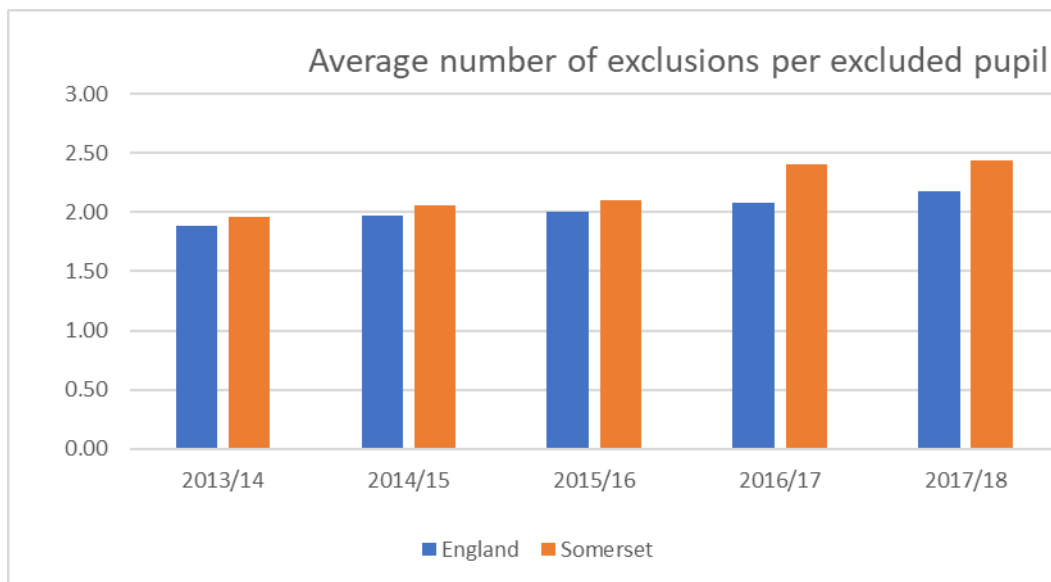


Length of school exclusion

Our average length of exclusion is shorter than the England average. Are we therefore giving pupils shorter temporary exclusions? Should schools be looking to exclude for longer time-periods and therefore bringing down the rate, rather than having so many exclusion episodes?

Number of School Exclusions per Excluded Pupil

In Somerset, not only is the overall exclusion rate higher than England but the number of times each excluded pupil is excluded. The graph below demonstrates that in Somerset in 2017/18 an excluded pupil would have on average 2.44 exclusions compared to England at 2.18. The average number of exclusions has been climbing for both Somerset and all England data since 2013/14. What is slightly better news is that Somerset schools do not exclude for long periods of time, it is an average of 4.04 days per pupil compared to England at 4.41. Somerset has consistently shorter periods of exclusion compared to England data.



Overview of one school in a deprived area

The data in this summary is for a secondary school named School 1 (from previous tables in this report), using data from 2018/19 captured on the Capita system in-house.

For this school in 2018/19 there were 482 exclusion episodes, including ten for permanent exclusions. In summary: -

- 95 young people received an exclusion episode from the school in one year
- 8 of the permanent exclusions were for boys
- 70.8% of all exclusion episodes were for boys
- 16 pupils received 10 or more exclusion episodes in the year
- The highest number of exclusion episodes received by one pupil was 31 in the year (male with EHCP)
- 6 of the young people excluded had an EHCP with 48 episodes in the year
- 39 of the young people excluded were on SEN support with 222 episodes
- 56% of all the exclusion episodes, were for children with SEN
- Persistent disruptive behaviour was the main reason for exclusion in this school, but NOT for SEN support young people, this was for more violent reasons – this will need examining for the whole exclusion cohort – are there differences for SEN young people?

References

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/641418/20170831_Exclusion_Stat_guidance_Web_version.pdf
2. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800028/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_literature_review.pdf
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4. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2019/03/27/excluded-teens-are-often-the-most-vulnerable-and-theyre-falling-through-the-gap/>
5. <https://www.thersa.org/discover/publications-and-articles/rsa-blogs/2019/08/exclusions>
6. <https://www.ippr.org/files/2017-10/making-the-difference-report-october-2017.pdf>