

We are still failing our most vulnerable young people

Strictly under embargo until 00.01 on 16.02.15

Statistics released by the Department for Education last month reveal that only **one percent** of pupils in 'alternative provision' and PRUs (pupil referral units) achieved five good GCSEs in 2013-14 (A*-C including English and Maths). Furthermore, of those entered for a GCSE in Maths or English, only one-in-ten achieved a C or above.

A new report published today - "*The Alternative Should Not Be Inferior: What now for pushed out learners?*" focuses on these pupils and those that sit on the margins within mainstream schools and argues they are entitled to a high quality education designed around their needs. It concludes with nine key recommendations.

The report points out that 'pushed out learners' struggle to make the most of learning because of a combination of hunger, low literacy, innumeracy, poor social skills and unsafe conditions. Too often such challenges are used to explain failure whereas the report emphasises such learners can be 'held' if their needs are catered for properly. As Duza Stosic, Education Director of the award winning charity Kids Company explains:

"If they don't have anywhere to sleep, if they don't have beds at home, if they don't have food how can you expect them to achieve academically?"

Exactly these issues are highlighted in the current BBC Documentary 'Excluded: Kicked out of school' which follows the fortunes and struggles of pupils at London's 'Bridge Academy', the executive head of which contributed to the report.

"The Alternative Should Not Be Inferior" - a report by the charity Inclusion Trust and think-and-action tank LKMco, draws together opinions from experts in the field and calls on schools and alternative providers to find innovative solutions that support England's forgotten pupils. It concludes that rather than being a necessary evil, high quality alternative providers like City Gateway, Kids Company and TBAP (tri-borough alternative provision) have valuable expertise to offer and should work with the mainstream including through school clusters, multi-academy trusts and federations. Sam Baars, report co-author and Research Associate at LKMco points out that:

"We should recognise that Alternative Provision is capable of achieving excellence and is a crucial component of our education system. At the moment it is too often sidelined"

According to Maggie Kalnins, Chief Executive of the Inclusion Trust, in many cases 'pushed out learners' can be brought into the mainstream so long as schools work with specialist services. However in other cases, alternative providers can be valuable partners in the design and delivery of education that better caters for pupils' needs and makes the most of their talents. The report warns schools not to be blind to hidden-need amongst pupils not eligible for the pupil premium, noting that disadvantage is not binary.

"The Alternative Should Not Be Inferior" draws together expert practitioners' views including Dominy Roe of City Gateway, one of the charities featured in the Evening Standard's 'Ladder for London' campaign, Anna Smee- Chief Executive of UK Youth and Peter Hughes, Head Teacher of Mossbourne Academy.

Loic Menzies, the report's lead author explains that:

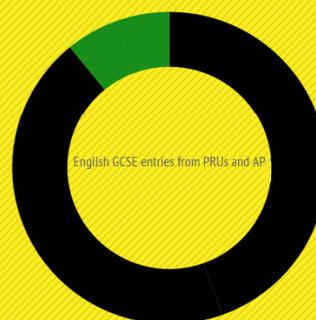
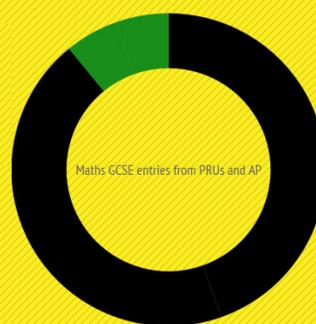
"Involving such an eclectic group of experts from different parts of the sector revealed some of the excellence that exists and showed that different pupils need varying levels of support in order to flourish."

PUSHED OUT YOUNG PEOPLE

 **20,000+**

More than 20,000 pupils are educated in Pupil Referral Units and LA Alternative Provision

Pupils in AP and PRUs



★ **14%**

Fourteen percent of PRUs are judged outstanding by Ofsted- less than special schools, primary schools and secondary schools

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Pupils are most likely to be permanently excluded when they are 14 years old

 **7/10**

Pupils with special educational needs account for seven in ten permanent exclusions

 **3x**

Boys are three times more likely to be excluded than girls

 **4x**

FSM pupils are 4x more likely to be permanently excluded than their peers

The report divides its recommendations into three areas: bringing pushed out learners into the mainstream, innovating within the mainstream and working outside of the mainstream.

As Menzies concludes

“Each of these approaches has its place but they need to be linked together and deployed appropriately so no pupil slips through the net.”

The recommendations:

Bringing ‘pushed out learners’ into the mainstream structure

1. Schools should ensure that pupils' basic needs are met by working more closely with social and mental health services.
2. Rather than focusing solely on those eligible for the pupil premium or with identified special needs, schools should be sensitive to the full range of factors that might lead to a pupil becoming a 'pushed out learner'.
3. Too often it takes the drastic step of exclusion to secure the resources and support that a 'pushed out learner' needs. Local authorities should be proactive rather than reactive in brokering support and funding.
4. It is easier to focus on pupil needs in a safe, secure environment. Establishing this should be a top priority in all schools and be seen as a route to inclusion.

Innovating within the mainstream structure

5. Pupils who are likely to find it difficult to adjust to the school environment should be carefully supported for example through nurture groups with lower pupil-teacher ratios. These groups should be staffed by the schools' best teachers and should combine a focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills, core academic subjects and social, emotional and behaviour development. They should be highly responsive to pupils' needs and prepare them to transition into the mainstream.
6. Schools should embrace opportunities to ‘hook in’ ‘pushed out learners’ through innovative outside-school and extra-curricula activities that appeal to the passions and interests of the learners. These should be ‘ways in’ rather than alternatives and the emphasis should be on excellence – whether in debating, sport, art or ‘real-world’ learning.

Working outside of the mainstream structure

7. All schools should develop strong relationships with alternative providers and share, rather than shift responsibility for the pupils they are unable to support. This could happen either through commissioning and accountability arrangements or by building school clusters, for example through federations and multi-academy trusts.
8. Alternative providers should not overlook achievement in their pursuit of engagement. High expectations should be the norm.
9. Alternative providers should be recognised as partners in delivery and valuable sources of expertise rather than a necessary evil.

Notes to editors

Performance data for pupil referral units and alternative provision was published by the DfE on the 29th of January 2015 and can be downloaded here: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/398917/SFR2_2015_AP_PRU_Tables.xlsx

Statistics on exclusions are published annually and the latest statistics can be downloaded here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2012-to-2013>

Ofsted reports on the performance of Pupil Referral Units as part of its annual report. The latest report published in December 2014 can be downloaded here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/384707/Ofsted_Annual_Report_201314_Schools.pdf

The School Census with the number of pupils educated in PRUs and AP is published annual and can be downloaded here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2014>

Inclusion Trust is a charity that exists to help young people who have become marginalised because traditional education systems are unable to provide for their specific individual needs. Inclusion Trust projects include Notschool, an online Alternative Provision service which has reached over 10,000 marginalised young people since 2000 and was recognised in 2007 by the OECD as a new model of learning, and Facework, a new, pilot research and development project, supported by the Nominet Trust, which seeks to transform Work Related Learning and Careers Education for marginalised young people.

www.inclusiontrust.org.uk / @InclusionTrust / info@inclusiontrust.org

LKMco is an education and youth-development ‘think and action tank’. We are a social enterprise and believe society has a duty to ensure children and young people receive the support they need in order to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work towards this belief by articulating a vision for a society which does so, inspiring a desire to pursue it and enabling organisations to achieve it. www.lkmco.org / @LKMco / info@lkmco.org

“The Alternative Should Not Be Inferior: What now for ‘pushed out learners’” emerged from a roundtable and interviews with the following participants:

Rosie Ferguson: London Youth
Louise Thomas: The Innovation Unit
Peter Hughes: Mossbourne Academy
Fiona McFarlane: Great Ormond Street Hospital
Keith Griffiths: Catch22
Dominy Roe: City Gateway
Val Gillies: Goldsmiths University
Peter Twining: The Open University
Sherine Mahmoud: Impetus
Jamal Campbell: Youth representative
Anna Smee: UK Youth
Cedric Whilby: Waltham Forest Alternative Provision
Stephen Carrick-Davies: Communications and Technology Consultant
Anna Hassan: Consultant Head
Kirstie Donnelly: City and Guilds
Jonny Dyer: Inclusion Trust
Alan Wood: Association of Directors of Children’s Services
Duza Stosic: Kids Company
Seamus Oates: Tri-borough Alternative Provision Multi-Academy Trust

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