

Too young



to leave behind

The long-term negative impact of exclusions
and suspensions in primary school

Full report. January 2024.

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1. Introduction

Suspension and permanent exclusion are less common among primary-aged pupils than secondary. As a result, much of the focus of research into the outcomes of pupils who experience such events has been on secondary-aged pupils. In this paper, we aim to fill this evidence gap, by focussing on the outcomes of pupils who were suspended or permanently excluded during primary school.

The population we use for this study is pupils born between 1st September 2003 and 31st August 2008. We divide pupils into cohorts according to the academic year in which they would have been expected to attend Reception. The cohorts are summarised below.

Born	Reception (age 4/5)	Year 6 (age 10/11)	Year 11 (age 15/16)
2003/04	2008/09	2014/15	2019/20
2004/05	2009/10	2015/16	2020/21
2005/06	2010/11	2016/17	2021/22
2006/07	2011/12	2017/18	2022/23
2007/08	2012/13	2018/19	2023/24

Where numbers are sufficiently large, we present results separately for each cohort. Where they are not, we present results for pupils in all cohorts combined.

Contextual data, such as exclusion history and pupil characteristics are presented for all cohorts.

Key Stage 4 outcomes are presented only for the oldest three cohorts, who completed Key Stage 4 between 2020 and 2022.

2. Data

2.1. Proportion of primary-aged pupils who experienced permanent exclusion/suspension


 Most pupils did not experience suspension or permanent exclusion in primary school

Table 2-1: Numbers and percentages of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school by cohort

Reception year	No. pupils			% of cohort		
	perm excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither	perm excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither
2008/09	773	13,279	601,933	0.13%	2.2%	97.7%
2009/10	814	13,576	616,119	0.13%	2.2%	97.7%
2010/11	947	14,831	630,420	0.15%	2.3%	97.6%
2011/12	990	15,872	651,761	0.15%	2.4%	97.5%
2012/13	1,163	16,748	679,150	0.17%	2.4%	97.4%
Total	4,687	74,306	3,179,383	0.14%	2.3%	97.6%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).


 Almost all pupils who were permanently excluded in primary school had previously been suspended. Most of them had been suspended at least four times before their first permanent exclusion.

Table 2-2: Percentage of pupils permanently excluded during primary school who were also suspended during primary school by cohort

Reception year	no. pupils perm excluded	% of pupils who were permanently excluded		
		suspended before perm exclusion	suspended after perm exclusion	not suspended
2008/09	773	90.3%	4.1%	5.6%
2009/10	814	91.3%	2.6%	6.1%
2010/11	947	90.9%	3.2%	5.9%
2011/12	990	91.8%	2.7%	5.5%
2012/13	1,163	91.8%	2.6%	5.6%
Total	4,687	91.3%	3.0%	5.7%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

Table 2-3: Percentage of pupils who were permanently excluded during primary school by the number of suspensions before first permanent exclusion

Reception year	no. pupils p. excl	% pupils by no. suspensions before first perm. exclusion									
		1+	2+	3+	4+	5+	6+	7+	8+	9+	10+
2008/09	773	90%	78%	66%	54%	41%	30%	24%	19%	14%	10%
2009/10	814	91%	80%	68%	57%	44%	33%	26%	20%	16%	12%
2010/11	947	91%	81%	67%	54%	45%	36%	29%	22%	17%	13%
2011/12	990	92%	82%	70%	58%	47%	38%	31%	23%	18%	14%
2012/13	1,163	92%	83%	70%	58%	47%	36%	28%	23%	18%	14%
Total	4,687	91%	81%	69%	56%	45%	35%	28%	22%	17%	13%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

2.2. Reason for first permanent exclusion/suspension

- ✘^{Bc} Most pupils' first permanent exclusion in primary school was caused by displaying persistently disruptive behaviour or physically assaulting an adult.
- ✘^{Bc} Most pupils' first suspension in primary school was caused by physically assaulting a pupil or displaying persistently disruptive behaviour (ignoring pupils who were later permanently excluded).

Table 2-4: Number and percentage of pupils by reason for first permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school

Reason for first perm exclusion or suspension	no. pupils		% of total	
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
persistent disruptive behaviour	1,591	17,361	33.9%	23.4%
physical assault against an adult	1,371	13,266	29.3%	17.9%
physical assault against a pupil	634	22,137	13.5%	29.8%
verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against an adult	392	6,215	8.4%	8.4%
other	367	6,138	7.8%	8.3%
verbal abuse/threatening behaviour against a pupil	199	4,042	4.2%	5.4%
damage	53	1,564	1.1%	2.1%
sexual misconduct	33	552	0.7%	0.7%
bullying	22	1,176	0.5%	1.6%
racist abuse	11	1,130	0.2%	1.5%
drug and alcohol related	supp	109	supp	0.1%
theft	supp	616	supp	0.8%
Total	4,687	74,306		

Notes: "supp" indicates suppression of data due to small numbers of pupils. Reason is recorded by a pupil's school at the time of permanent exclusion or suspension; only one reason is recorded per exclusion/suspension. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

2.3. Age at first permanent exclusion/suspension

- Permanent exclusions and suspensions before pupils reached Year 3 were relatively rare. Most pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school did so in Year 4, Year 5, or Year 6.

Table 2-5: Number and percentage of pupils by age at first permanent exclusion or suspension

Age	No. pupils		% of total	
	first permanent exclusion	first suspension (ignoring pupils who were perm excluded)	first permanent exclusion	first suspension (ignoring pupils who were perm excluded)
Reception	82	3,194	1.7%	4.3%
Year 1	272	5,908	5.8%	8.0%
Year 2	437	6,989	9.3%	9.4%
Year 3	705	9,625	15.0%	13.0%
Year 4	892	12,217	19.0%	16.4%
Year 5	1,213	16,080	25.9%	21.6%
Year 6	1,086	20,295	23.2%	27.3%
Total	4,687	74,308		

Notes: Age is expressed in national curriculum years, e.g. Reception = aged 4/5, Year 1 = aged 5/6 etc. A small number of pupils would have been enrolled in a national curriculum year not equivalent to their age at the time of their first exclusion/suspension. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

2.4. Interaction between age at first permanent exclusion/suspension and reason

- Among those who were permanently excluded, physical assault against an adult was the most common reason for exclusion among younger pupils, and persistent disruptive behaviour the most common among older pupils.
- Among those who were suspended but not permanently excluded, physical assault against an adult or a pupil were the most common reasons for suspension among younger pupils, and physical assault against a pupil and persistent disruptive behaviour the most common among older pupils.

Table 2-6: Percentage of pupils by age at first permanent exclusion or suspension and reason (continued in page 5)


		% of pupils by reason for first permanent exclusion/suspension						
		no. pupils	pers. disrupt. behav.	physical assault, adult	physical assault, pupil	verbal abuse, adult	verbal abuse, pupil	all other reasons
first perm. exclusion	Reception	82	22%	60%	supp	supp	supp	supp
	Year 1	272	28%	48%	supp	supp	supp	supp
	Year 2	437	29%	41%	10%	9%	supp	supp
	Year 3	705	33%	39%	12%	7%	2%	8%
	Year 4	892	36%	29%	13%	9%	4%	10%
	Year 5	1,213	34%	24%	15%	9%	6%	12%
	Year 6	1,086	37%	17%	15%	10%	6%	15%
total	4,687	34%	29%	14%	8%	4%	11%	

Table 2-6: Percentage of pupils by age at first permanent exclusion or suspension and reason (continued from page 4)

		% of pupils by reason for first permanent exclusion/suspension						
	age	no. pupils	pers. disrupt. behav.	physical assault, adult	physical assault, pupil	verbal abuse, adult	verbal abuse, pupil	all other reasons
first	Reception	3,194	14%	44%	31%	5%	2%	6%
susp.	Year 1	5,908	22%	38%	26%	6%	2%	7%
(ignoring	Year 2	6,989	24%	32%	26%	7%	3%	9%
p. excl)	Year 3	9,625	26%	23%	28%	8%	4%	12%
	Year 4	12,217	26%	16%	29%	9%	6%	14%
	Year 5	16,080	24%	12%	31%	9%	6%	19%
	Year 6	20,295	22%	7%	33%	10%	8%	21%
	total	74,308	23%	18%	30%	8%	5%	15%

Notes: "supp" indicates suppression of data due to small numbers of pupils. Reason is recorded by a pupil's school at the time of permanent exclusion or suspension; only one reason is recorded per exclusion/suspension. Age is expressed in national curriculum years, e.g. Reception = aged 4/5, Year 1 = aged 5/6 etc. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

2.5. Gender of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension

 Boys were much more likely than girls to experience permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school.

gender	Reception year	No. pupils			% of cohort	
		total	perm excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	perm excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
boys	2008/09	315,707	711	11,616	0.23%	3.7%
	2009/10	322,889	744	11,838	0.23%	3.7%
	2010/11	330,928	861	12,883	0.26%	3.9%
	2011/12	342,772	903	13,667	0.26%	4.0%
	2012/13	356,901	1,045	14,324	0.29%	4.0%
	Total	1,669,197	4,264	64,328	0.26%	3.9%
girls	2008/09	300,278	62	1,663	0.02%	0.6%
	2009/10	307,620	70	1,738	0.02%	0.6%
	2010/11	315,270	86	1,948	0.03%	0.6%
	2011/12	325,851	87	2,205	0.03%	0.7%
	2012/13	340,160	118	2,424	0.03%	0.7%
	Total	1,589,179	423	9,978	0.03%	0.6%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

2.6. Gender and ethnicity of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension

 Boys from White Irish Traveller, White Gypsy/Roma, Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean backgrounds were the groups most likely to experience permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school.

Table 2-8: Percentage of boys and girls from different ethnic backgrounds who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school

ethnic background	No. pupils		% pupils permanently excluded		% pupils suspended (not perm excluded)	
	boys	girls	boys	girls	boys	girls
White - Irish Traveller	1,827	1,751	2.24%	supp	17.8%	3.2%
White - Gypsy/Roma	7,099	6,738	0.87%	supp	10.8%	2.0%
Black - Caribbean	20,009	19,342	0.92%	0.08%	10.4%	2.4%
Mixed - white & black Ca	24,235	23,907	0.84%	0.09%	8.9%	1.7%
Black - other	11,694	10,988	0.20%	supp	5.9%	1.2%
Mixed - white & black Af	12,199	12,103	0.35%	supp	5.6%	0.9%
Black - African	66,469	65,335	0.13%	0.02%	4.6%	0.9%
Mixed - other	33,150	31,685	0.26%	0.03%	4.2%	0.8%
White - British	1,113,370	1,056,820	0.30%	0.03%	4.1%	0.7%
White - Irish	4,929	4,755	0.20%	supp	3.0%	0.6%
Mixed - white & Asian	22,055	20,745	0.15%	supp	2.8%	0.4%
Other	34,175	32,253	0.06%	supp	2.4%	0.3%
Asian - Pakistani	72,733	69,637	0.05%	supp	2.4%	0.3%
White - other	108,529	103,151	0.09%	supp	2.1%	0.3%
Not obtained / refused	19,083	17,894	0.14%	supp	2.1%	supp
Asian - Bangladeshi	28,343	27,293	supp	supp	1.3%	0.2%
Asian - other	31,411	29,404	0.03%	supp	1.2%	0.1%
Asian - Chinese	7,261	7,334	supp	supp	0.7%	supp
Asian - Indian	50,626	48,044	supp	supp	0.7%	0.1%
Total	1,669,197	1,589,179	0.26%	0.03%	3.9%	0.6%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

2.7. Other characteristics of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension


 Pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school were more likely than those who experienced neither to have characteristics associated with lower Key Stage 4 outcomes, such as being eligible for free school meals, having an identified special educational need or disability (SEND), and being looked after.

Table 2-9: Percentage of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school by different characteristics compared with those who experienced neither (continued in page 7)

	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither
Number of pupils	4,687	74,306	3,179,383
<i>% pupils by attainment</i>			
Foundation Stage: good level of development	14.9%	20.0%	45.6%
Key Stage 1: reading level 2c+	56.2%	65.8%	81.7%
Key Stage 1: writing level 2c+	46.3%	56.4%	78.5%
Key Stage 1: maths level 2c+	67.9%	75.2%	84.3%

Table 2-9: Percentage of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school by different characteristics compared with those who experienced neither (continued from page 6)

	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither
Number of pupils	4,687	74,306	3,179,383
<i>% pupils by other characteristics</i>			
English as an additional language	5.0%	12.6%	21.9%
ever had a special educational need	96.9%	82.3%	30.4%
ever had an EHCP or statement of need	48.2%	24.1%	2.9%
ever eligible for free school meals	77.3%	65.9%	29.4%
long-term disadvantaged	38.6%	29.5%	9.4%

Notes: All “ever” measures are observed between Reception and Year 6. “EHCP” = education, health and care plan. “Long-term disadvantaged” = eligible for free school meals in 80% or more of primary school terms. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census record during primary school.

Table 2-10: Percentage of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school who were ever looked after or in need between Reception and Year 11 vs those who experienced neither

	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither
Number of pupils	4,690	74,310	3,179,380
ever looked after (Reception to Year 11)	17%	12%	2%
ever in need (Reception to Year 11)	75%	58%	17%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census record during primary school.

3. Outcomes

3.1. End of Key Stage 4 school type



-  Pupils who were permanently excluded in primary school were most likely to finish Key Stage 4 in a state-funded special school.
-  Most pupils who were suspended (but not permanently excluded) in primary school finished Key Stage 4 in a state-funded mainstream school, though they were less likely to do so than pupils who were not suspended or permanently excluded in primary school.

Table 3-1: Percentage of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school by Key Stage 4 destination compared with those who experienced neither

Key Stage 4 destination	% of total		
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	neither
state-funded mainstream	26.4%	59.2%	86.2%
state-funded special	31.8%	14.6%	1.6%
state-funded alternative provision	8.7%	7.2%	0.7%
independent (including independent special)	16.1%	6.7%	3.9%
any other school type	8.1%	4.4%	0.7%
no Key Stage 4 destination	9.0%	8.0%	6.9%
total	2,534	41,686	1,848,472

Notes: Key Stage 4 destination is the type of school recorded for pupils who completed Key Stage 4 exams between 2020 and 2022. Pupils who did not complete Key Stage 4 are shown as “no Key Stage 4 destination”. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school.

3.2. End of Key Stage 4 attainment overall

Very few pupils who were permanently excluded in primary school achieved at least a grade 4 in English and maths at Key Stage 4; achievement rates in Maths were higher than English.

Most pupils who were suspended (but not permanently excluded) in primary school did not achieve at least a grade 4 in English and Maths at Key Stage 4. Around a third of such pupils achieved at least a grade 4 in English, and around a third achieved at least a grade 4 in Maths.

Table 3-2: Key Stage 4 achievement of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school and reached the end of Key Stage 4

	no. pupils	% pupils who achieved			average Att 8
		English 4+	maths 4+	Eng & mat 4+	
permanently excluded	2,305	12.3%	20.3%	9.0%	12.4
suspended (but not perm excluded)	38,351	28.7%	33.6%	22.7%	22.7
neither	1,720,205	75.3%	73.0%	66.7%	49.4

Notes: “Att 8” = attainment 8, the sum of pupils’ grades in eight subjects. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and completed Key Stage 4 between 2020 and 2022. Due to the pandemic, results in 2020 were awarded via Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs), in 2021 by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs), and were much higher than results awarded via external exams in previous years. Results in 2022 were awarded via external exams, but remained elevated compared with pre-pandemic years.

3.3. End of Key Stage 4 attainment by destination

- Key Stage 4 attainment was much higher among pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school if they completed Key Stage 4 in a mainstream school than if they completed Key Stage 4 elsewhere.
- However, their attainment was still substantially below peers who were not permanently excluded nor suspended during primary school.

Table 3-3: Key Stage 4 achievement of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school and reached the end of Key Stage 4 by Key Stage 4 destination type

	Key Stage 4 destination	no. pupils	% pupils who achieved			
			Eng 4+	maths 4+	Eng & mat 4+	av Att 8
permanently excluded	state-funded mainstream	669	32.0%	38.6%	23.6%	26.2
	state-funded special	805	4.8%	13.0%	3.2%	7.5
	any other school type*	831	3.6%	12.6%	2.8%	6
suspended (not p excluded)	state-funded mainstream	24,690	42.3%	45.6%	33.7%	31.5
	state-funded special	6,068	4.2%	10.8%	2.7%	6.6
	state-funded alternative provision	2,995	3.8%	12.5%	2.5%	7.4
	independent (including special)	2,774	6.4%	18.3%	4.9%	9.3
	any other school type	1,824	0.8%	5.6%	0.8%	2.2
neither	state-funded mainstream	1,592,916	79.3%	76.9%	70.9%	51.4
	state-funded special	29,669	1.9%	4.1%	1.3%	2.7
	state-funded alternative provision	13,131	8.4%	19.9%	5.7%	10.6
	independent (including special)	72,370	39.6%	34.8%	23.8%	39.2
	any other school type	12,119	7.7%	20.2%	5.7%	8.5

Notes: * = state-funded alternative provision, independent, and all other school types have been grouped due to small numbers. "Att 8" = attainment 8, the sum of pupils' grades in eight subjects. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and completed Key Stage 4 between 2020 and 2022. Due to the pandemic, results in 2020 were awarded via Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs), in 2021 by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs), and were much higher than results awarded via external exams in previous years. Results in 2022 were awarded via external exams, but remained elevated compared with pre-pandemic years.

3.4. Main SEND type in secondary school

- Pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school were much more likely to have an identified SEND in secondary school than those who experienced neither.
- Social, emotional and mental health needs were the most common SEND type among those who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school; prevalence of this SEND type was much higher among these pupils than those who had not been permanently excluded or suspended.
- Prevalence of autistic spectrum disorder was higher among pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school than those who experienced neither.

Table 3-4: Main SEND type in secondary school of those who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Main SEND type	% of total		neither
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	
No identified SEND	16.8%	29.4%	79.0%
Social, emotional and mental health	58.8%	39.6%	4.0%
Autistic spectrum disorder	10.6%	9.5%	2.1%
Moderate learning difficulty	3.8%	6.9%	4.3%
Speech, language and communication needs	2.6%	3.7%	2.1%
SEN support but no specialist assessment	2.4%	3.4%	2.2%
Specific learning difficulty	2.4%	3.9%	3.6%
Other difficulty/disability	1.7%	2.1%	1.1%
Severe learning difficulty	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%
Physical disability	supp	0.3%	0.5%
Hearing impairment	supp	0.3%	0.4%
Multi-sensory impairment	supp	<0.1%	<0.1%
Visual impairment	supp	0.2%	0.2%
Profound & multiple learning difficulty	supp	<0.1%	0.1%
Total	4,590	72,807	3,068,543

Notes: "supp" indicates suppression of data due to small numbers of pupils. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and secondary school.

Pupils who were never observed in secondary school are not included in Table 3-4, above. This is 97 of 4,687 (2%) of pupils who were permanently excluded in primary school, 1,499 of 74,306 (2%) pupils who were suspended but not permanently excluded in primary school, and 188,237 of 3,179,383 (6%) of those who were neither permanently excluded nor suspended in primary school.

3.5. Absence in secondary school


 Pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school had much higher rates of absence and persistent absence in secondary school than those who experienced neither. Rates among those who had been permanently excluded were particularly high.

Table 3-5: Average absence rates in each year of secondary school – pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Reception year		no. pupils	average % sessions missed due to absence				
			Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
2008/09	permanently excluded	678	16.6%	22.6%	26.3%	29.9%	-
	suspended (not perm excl)	12,648	9.9%	13.0%	16.0%	18.4%	-
	neither	556,435	4.3%	5.2%	6.2%	6.8%	-
2009/10	permanently excluded	735	16.3%	20.0%	24.6%	-	36.8%
	suspended (not perm excl)	12,886	10.8%	13.9%	16.4%	-	25.4%
	neither	569,420	4.4%	5.5%	6.2%	-	9.8%
2010/11	permanently excluded	822	18.1%	21.6%	-	33.2%	36.2%
	suspended (not perm excl)	14,067	11.4%	14.1%	-	23.0%	25.3%
	neither	581,314	4.5%	5.4%	-	8.8%	11.3%

Notes: No absence data was published in 2019/20 due to the pandemic. In 2020/21 and onwards, sessions missed due to Covid isolation ("X" codes in registers) are not counted as absences but are counted as possible sessions. % sessions missed due to absence is only shown for pupils who had absence data in the relevant academic year. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and had at least one year of absence data in secondary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

Table 3-6: Percentage of pupils who were persistently absent by secondary school year – pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Reception year		no.pupils	% pupils persistently absent					any year
			Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	
2008/09	permanently excluded	678	50.8%	58.4%	62.3%	63.8%	-	81.0%
	suspended (not perm excl)	12,648	30.7%	38.6%	44.6%	46.7%	-	63.5%
	neither	556,435	8.4%	11.7%	14.5%	15.9%	-	25.6%
2009/10	permanently excluded	735	48.2%	55.7%	59.5%	-	74.6%	85.3%
	suspended (not perm excl)	12,886	32.9%	40.3%	44.3%	-	59.3%	72.4%
	neither	569,420	8.8%	12.3%	14.3%	-	27.1%	35.1%
2010/11	permanently excluded	822	50.7%	54.3%	-	72.2%	74.9%	88.1%
	suspended (not perm excl)	14,067	34.2%	39.9%	-	56.8%	59.6%	74.5%
	neither	581,314	9.2%	11.9%	-	24.0%	32.9%	41.9%

Notes: No absence data was published for the 2019/20 academic year due to the pandemic. In 2020/21 and onwards, sessions missed due to Covid isolation ("X" codes in registers) are not counted as absences but are counted as possible sessions. Persistent absence is defined as missing at least 10% of sessions in an academic year. Calculations only include pupils who had absence data in the relevant year. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and had at least one year of absence data in secondary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

Table 3-7: Percentage of initial cohort who had absence data in each secondary year group – pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Reception year		initial cohort	% initial cohort with absence data by year group				
			Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
2008/09	permanently excluded	773	84%	81%	75%	69%	-
	suspended (not perm excl)	13,279	94%	92%	89%	86%	-
	neither	601,933	92%	91%	91%	90%	-
2009/10	permanently excluded	814	85%	81%	77%	-	70%
	suspended (not perm excl)	13,576	93%	91%	88%	-	82%
	neither	616,119	91%	91%	90%	-	89%
2010/11	permanently excluded	947	83%	80%	-	71%	68%
	suspended (not perm excl)	14,831	93%	91%	-	86%	83%
	neither	630,420	91%	91%	-	89%	89%

Notes: No absence data was published in 2019/20 due to the pandemic. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

3.6. Suspensions and permanent exclusions in secondary school

- A^BC** Pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school were much more likely to be suspended or permanently excluded in secondary school than those who experienced neither.
- A^BC** The risk of suspension was highest in Year 7 among pupils who were permanently excluded during primary school, in Year 8 among those who were suspended during primary school, and in Year 10 among those who were neither permanently excluded nor suspended in primary school.

Table 3-8: Percentage of pupils with at least one suspension by secondary school year, and/or who were ever permanently excluded during secondary school – pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Recep. year		no. pupils	% pupils with 1+ suspension by year group					any year	p excl any year
			Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11		
2008/09	permanently excluded	763	41.8%	39.8%	35.9%	25.0%	17.6%	68.9%	10.1%
	suspended (not p excl)	13,088	32.1%	36.4%	33.7%	31.3%	21.0%	65.6%	9.1%
	neither	576,063	2.3%	4.2%	5.6%	6.6%	4.7%	13.8%	0.9%
2009/10	permanently excluded	803	42.6%	39.4%	34.9%	24.3%	14.9%	68.9%	11.6%
	suspended (not p excl)	13,361	34.5%	35.5%	33.9%	25.1%	18.4%	63.9%	8.1%
	neither	589,723	2.5%	4.2%	5.9%	4.9%	4.2%	12.9%	0.7%
2010/11	permanently excluded	929	39.1%	37.5%	26.6%	23.6%	21.4%	60.7%	7.3%
	suspended (not p excl)	14,553	32.6%	35.1%	26.9%	26.6%	23.7%	59.0%	6.6%
	neither	601,961	2.5%	4.5%	4.2%	5.6%	5.9%	10.8%	0.6%

Notes: The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school and had at least one census record in secondary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

Table 3-9: Percentage of initial cohort who were on-roll in each secondary year group – pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension in primary school vs those who experienced neither

Reception year		initial cohort	% initial cohort on-roll by year group				
			Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11
2008/09	permanently excluded	773	99%	98%	97%	95%	93%
	suspended (not p excl)	13,279	99%	98%	97%	95%	93%
	neither	601,933	96%	95%	95%	94%	94%
2009/10	permanently excluded	814	99%	98%	97%	96%	94%
	suspended (not p excl)	13,576	98%	98%	97%	95%	94%
	neither	616,119	96%	95%	95%	94%	94%
2010/11	permanently excluded	947	98%	97%	96%	95%	93%
	suspended (not p excl)	14,831	98%	97%	96%	95%	94%
	neither	630,420	96%	95%	94%	94%	93%

Notes: A pupil is defined as being “on-roll” if they had at least one census record. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pupils are divided into cohorts by the academic year in which they would have been expected to be in Reception (i.e. aged 4/5).

4. Changes in SEND provision following permanent exclusion / suspension

4.1. The timing of SEND identification and permanent exclusion / suspension


 Most pupils who experienced a permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school had been identified as having special educational needs or a disability (SEND) at least six months before their first exclusion / suspension.

Table 4-1: Percentage of pupils by the timing of their first permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school and the first time they were identified as having a special educational need or disability (SEND)

Timing of first SEND vs first perm exclusion/suspension	% of total	
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
SEND more than 6 months before exclusion/suspension	83.9%	64.0%
SEND within 6 months of exclusion/suspension	10.7%	13.5%
SEND more than 6 months after exclusion/suspension	3.9%	9.2%
never SEND	1.4%	13.3%
Total	4,687	74,306

Notes: SEND = special educational needs or disability. SEND identification is observed between Reception and Year 11. Not all pupils who were identified with SEND for the first time before their first exclusion / suspension had an identified SEND at the time of their first exclusion / suspension. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

4.2. Changes to SEND status following permanent exclusion / suspension

4.2.1. SEND status in the year of first permanent exclusion / suspension

^A^B^C Most pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school were receiving SEN support in the academic year their first exclusion / suspension took place.

Table 4-2: Percentage of pupils by their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) status in the academic year of their first permanent exclusion or suspension

SEND status in year of first exclusion/suspension	no. pupils		% of total	
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
EHCP or Statement	773	5,763	16.5%	7.8%
SEN Support	3,090	40,300	65.9%	54.2%
No identified SEND	824	28,243	17.6%	38.0%
Total	4,687	74,306		

Notes: SEND = special educational needs or disability. EHCP = education, health and care plan. SEND status is taken from the Spring Census record in the year a pupil was permanently excluded or suspended. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

4.2.2. SEND status in the year following first permanent exclusion / suspension

^A^B^C Almost all pupils with an EHCP or Statement in the year of their first permanent exclusion / suspension in primary school kept it in the following year.

^A^B^C Some pupils who were receiving SEN Support in the year of their first permanent exclusion / suspension in primary school had an EHCP or Statement the following year. This was more common among those who were permanently excluded than those who were suspended.

^A^B^C Most pupils who were suspended in primary school and had no identified SEND in the year of their first suspension had no identified SEND the following year either.

Table 4-3: Percentage of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school by their SEND status in the year of, and following, their first exclusion/suspension (continued on page 15)

SEND status in year of first exclusion/suspension	SEND status in the year following first exclusion/suspension	% of subtotal	
		permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
No identified SEND	EHCP or Statement	10.9%	1.1%
	SEN Support	43.4%	25.6%
	No identified SEND	34.6%	71.4%
	No record	11.0%	1.9%
	Subtotal	824	28,243

Table 4-3: Percentage of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school by their SEND status in the year of, and following, their first exclusion/suspension (continued from page 14)

SEND status in year of first exclusion/suspension	SEND status in the year following first exclusion/suspension	% of subtotal	
		permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)
SEN Support	EHCP or Statement	32.6%	13.2%
	SEN Support	53.7%	75.3%
	No identified SEND	9.3%	10.0%
	No record	4.4%	1.5%
	Subtotal	3,090	40,300
EHCP or Statement	EHCP or Statement	85.0%	93.0%
	SEN Support	supp	0.7%
	No identified SEND	supp	0.3%
	No record	12.8%	6.0%
	Subtotal	773	5,763

Notes: SEND = special educational needs or disability. EHCP = education, health and care plan. SEND status is taken from the Spring Census record in, and following, the year in which a pupil was permanently excluded or suspended. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

4.3. Changes to primary SEND type after permanent exclusion / suspension

A^BC Most pupils with an identified SEND at the time of their first permanent exclusion / suspension did not change their primary SEND type between the year they were first permanently excluded / suspended and the following year.

A^BC Of those whose primary SEND type did change, “social, emotional and mental health” was the type most commonly changed to.

Table 4-4: Percentage of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school by their main SEND type in the year they were first excluded / suspended and their main SEND type in the following year

Main SEND type in year of first exclusion/ suspension	No. pupils		% perm excluded pupils by SEND type in following year			% suspended pupils by SEND type in following year		
	permanently excluded	suspended (not perm excluded)	remained the same	changed to SEMH	changed to another type	remained the same	changed to SEMH	changed to another type
Social, emotional and mental health	1,630	12,488	80.2%	-	19.8%	80.3%	-	19.7%
Behaviour, emotional & social difficulties	820	9,117	37.4%	46.0%	16.6%	55.6%	28.1%	16.3%
No identified SEND	733	27,693	38.9%	42.3%	18.8%	72.8%	14.5%	12.7%
Any other SEND type	354	8,852	18.6%	40.4%	41.0%	37.4%	17.4%	45.2%
Moderate learning difficulty	318	5,650	36.2%	39.9%	23.9%	64.3%	13.7%	22.0%
Autistic spectrum disorder	213	2,772	68.5%	17.4%	14.1%	87.3%	4.7%	8.0%
Speech, language and communication needs	192	4,252	41.7%	31.3%	27.1%	65.5%	9.7%	24.8%
Specific learning difficulty	100	1,969	27.0%	49.0%	24.0%	63.9%	12.0%	24.0%
Total	4,360	72,793	53.5%	25.3%	21.2%	66.9%	13.3%	19.8%

Notes: SEND = special educational needs or disability. SEMH = social, emotional and mental health. The SEND type “behaviour, emotional & social difficulties” was retired in 2013/14, and “social, emotional and mental health” was introduced in 2014/15. SEND status is taken from the Spring Census record in, and following, the year in which a pupil was permanently excluded or suspended. The population is pupils born between Sep 2003 and Aug 2008 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school, and feature in the Spring Census in the year of and the year following their permanent exclusion/suspension.

5. Matching

5.1. Methodology

Results presented thus far have compared outcomes of pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school with pupils who experienced neither.

However, as we saw in sections 2.5, 2.6, and 2.7, pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school were more likely than others to have other characteristics associated with lower Key Stage 4 outcomes, such as being eligible for free school meals, having an identified special educational need or disability (SEND), and being looked after.

To account for these differences, we use a method known as “propensity score matching”. Simply put, this generates a “matched” group of pupils who were neither permanently excluded nor suspended, but who are demographically similar to the pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended.

Hypothetically, then, any differences in outcomes between pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended and pupils in the matched group are due to the exclusion / suspension, rather than differences in other characteristics. However, we warn against such a causal interpretation, as there are likely to be unobservable variables which are correlated both with exclusion / suspension and poor outcomes, such as pupil behaviour and parental support.

The characteristics we account for in the matching process are as follows:

- ✖^Bc Gender
- ✖^Bc First language is other than English
- ✖^Bc Proportion of terms spent eligible for Free School Meals (0%, 1-25%, 26-50%, 51-79%, 80%+)
- ✖^Bc Ethnicity
- ✖^Bc Region
- ✖^Bc Ever looked after
- ✖^Bc Ever in need
- ✖^Bc Number of referrals to social services
- ✖^Bc Highest SEND status (No SEN/SEN Support/SEN with a Statement or EHCP)
- ✖^Bc Month of birth
- ✖^Bc Number of previous suspensions
- ✖^Bc Average absence rate
- ✖^Bc Prior attainment (Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) good level of development, fine national curriculum level in Key Stage 1 reading, writing and maths tests)

We run the matching process on a single cohort of pupils: those who were of Reception age in 2010/11. Matching is carried out separately for pupils who were first permanently excluded / suspended in Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6, using values for the above characteristics calculated from the beginning of Reception up to the year in which their first exclusion / suspension occurred. The small number of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended for the first time in Reception are not able to be included in the matching as they have no historical census records.

Within each year, we match separately for pupils who do and do not have prior attainment data. This is necessary because the matching method requires that all pupils have data for all of the characteristics.

We use nearest neighbour matching, with a requirement for an exact match on gender, ever looked after, ever in need, proportion of terms eligible for FSM, and FSP attainment (where available), a “caliper” of 0.2, and the option to discard pupils from both the “treatment” and “control” groups after matching enabled. The caliper ensures that only sufficiently “close” matches are used in the subsequent analysis.

5.2. Data




Not all pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school had a sufficiently close match. This is summarised in Table 5-1. Pupils without a match are not included in the analysis in the following section.

Table 5-1: The number and percentage of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended in primary school able to be matched with a similar pupil

	no. pupils	no. pupils with a match	% pupils matched
permanently excluded	947	427	45%
suspended (but not permanently excluded)	14,831	13,656	92%
total	15,778	14,083	89%

Notes: Matching has been carried out using nearest neighbour propensity score matching with a caliper of 0.2. The population is pupils born between Sep 2005 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records and were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school.

For each outcome we report, we are unable to include pupils where one or both members of a matched pair do not meet the following criteria:

-  End of Key Stage 4 attainment: both members of each matched pair must have completed Key Stage 4.
-  Absence at secondary school: both members of each matched pair must have at least one year of absence data during secondary school.
-  Permanent exclusion and suspension at secondary school: both members of each matched pair must have appeared in school census at least once during secondary school.

We summarise the impact of these criteria on the number of pupils included for each outcome in Table 5-2, below:

Table 5-2: The number and percentage of matched pupils included in each outcome measure

	no. matched pupils	no. matched pupils included by outcome measure			% matched pupils included by outcome measure		
		KS4 attainment	secondary absence	secondary exclusions	KS4 attainment	secondary absence	secondary exclusions
perm excluded	427	348	350	407	81.5%	82.0%	95.3%
suspended (but not perm excl)	13,656	11,920	12,669	13,216	87.3%	92.8%	96.8%
total	14,083	12,268	13,019	13,623	87.1%	92.4%	96.7%

Notes: "KS4" = Key Stage 4. The population is matched pairs of pupils born between Sep 2005 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Pairs of pupils are included in a given outcome measure if both members of each pair fulfil the following criteria: for Key Stage 4 attainment, both pupils completed Key Stage 4; for absence during secondary school both pupils must have at least one year of absence data; for exclusions at secondary both pupils must have at least one school census record during secondary school.

5.3. Outcomes

^A^B^C Broadly, differences between pupils who experienced permanent exclusion or suspension during primary school and those who experienced neither are smaller after matching than before. However, outcomes are still worse for those who were excluded / suspended than their matched counterparts.

5.3.1. End of Key Stage 4 school type

^A^B^C Pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended in primary school were much less likely to finish Key Stage 4 in a state-funded mainstream school than those in the matched group, and much more likely to complete Key Stage 4 in a state-funded special school or state-funded alternative provision.

Table 5-3: Key Stage 4 destinations of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school and a matched set of similar pupils

Key Stage 4 destination	permanently excluded		suspended (not p. exc)	
	excluded pupils	matched pupils	suspended pupils	matched pupils
state-funded mainstream	34.0%	73.5%	61.2%	83.0%
state-funded special	27.4%	8.2%	14.2%	6.4%
state-funded alternative provision	7.3%	3.5%	6.2%	1.6%
independent (including ind special)	16.6%	supp	6.4%	1.9%
any other school type	6.1%	supp	4.5%	1.3%
no Key Stage 4 destination	8.7%	10.1%	7.5%	5.9%
total	427	427	13,656	13,656

Notes: "supp" indicates suppression of data due to small numbers of pupils. Key Stage 4 destination is the type of school recorded for pupils who completed Key Stage 4 exams in 2022. Pupils who did not complete Key Stage 4 are shown as "no Key Stage 4 destination". The population is matched pairs of pupils born between Sep 2005 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school.

5.3.2. End of Key Stage 4 attainment

A^BC Achievement among pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school was lower than those in the matched group. The difference was bigger for those who were permanently excluded than those who were suspended.

A^BC These differences were lower than those reported in section 3.2 due to lower attainment among the matched group of pupils who did not experience permanent exclusion or suspension than in the general pupil population.

Table 5-4: Key Stage 4 achievement of pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school and a matched set of similar pupils

Key Stage 4 attainment measure	permanently excluded		suspended (not p. exc)	
	excluded pupils	matched pupils	suspended pupils	matched pupils
achieved English 4+	9.8%	39.7%	27.0%	47.4%
achieved maths 4+	18.4%	43.1%	30.7%	49.5%
achieved English and maths 4+	7.2%	32.2%	21.1%	39.7%
average Attainment 8 score	12.5	29.2	21.6	33.9
no. pupils	348	348	11,920	11,920

Notes: "Att 8" = attainment 8, the sum of pupils' grades in eight subjects. The population is matched pairs of pupils born between Sep 2005 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. Both of the pupils in each matched pair must have completed Key Stage 4 in 2022 to be included in this table.

5.3.3. Absence and exclusions in secondary school

A^BC Pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school were somewhat more likely to be persistently absent in secondary school than those in the matched group.

A^BC Pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended in primary school were much more likely to be suspended or permanently excluded in secondary school than those in the matched group.

Table 5-5: Secondary school absence and suspension/permanent exclusion outcomes for pupils who were permanently excluded or suspended during primary school and a matched set of similar pupils

secondary school outcome	permanently excluded			suspended (not p. exc)		
	no. pupils in measure	% excluded pupils	% matched pupils	no. pupils in measure	% susp. pupils	% matched pupils
ever persistently absent	350	86.6%	61.7%	12,669	75.8%	56.7%
ever suspended	407	61.2%	35.4%	13,216	63.5%	26.7%
ever perm. excluded	407	5.7%	2.9%	13,216	6.7%	1.6%

Notes: The population is matched pairs of pupils born between Sep 2005 and Aug 2006 who appeared in School Census records during primary school. For the "ever persistently absent" measure, both pupils in each matched pair must have absence data in at least one secondary school academic year. For the "ever suspended" and "ever permanently excluded" measures, both pupils in each matched pair must have at least one census record at secondary school.

6. Acknowledgments

This work contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright (Department of Education, released 12 June 2023, ONS Secure Research Service, dataset, Bespoke National Pupil Database extract).

The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

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Too young



to leave behind