# Thinking about children and education

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What does the standard say ?

- The education standard is that children make **measurable progress** towards achieving their educational potential and are helped to do so.

- In particular, the standard requires the registered person to ensure—(a) that staff—

- (i) **help** each child to achieve the child's education and training targets, as recorded in the child's relevant plans;

- (ii) support each child's learning and development, including **helping the child to develop independent study skills** and, where appropriate, helping the child to complete independent study;

- (iii) **understand the barriers** to learning that each child may face and take appropriate action to help the child to overcome any such barriers;

- (iv) help each child to **understand the importance and value** of education, learning, training and employment;

- (v) promote opportunities for each child to learn informally;

- (vi**) maintain regular contact with each child's education and training provider**, including engaging with the provider and the placing authority to support the child's education and training and to maximise the child's achievement;

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What does the standard say?

- (vii) raise any need for further assessment or specialist provision in relation to a child with the child's education or training provider and the child's placing authority;

- (viii) help a child who is excluded from school, or who is of compulsory school age but not attending school, to access educational and training support throughout the period of exclusion or nonattendance and to return to school as soon as possible;

- (ix) help each child who is above compulsory school age **to participate in further education, training or employment** and to prepare for future care, education or employment;

- (x) help each child to attend education or training in accordance with the expectations in the child's relevant plans; and (b) that each child has access to appropriate equipment, facilities and resources to support the child's learning

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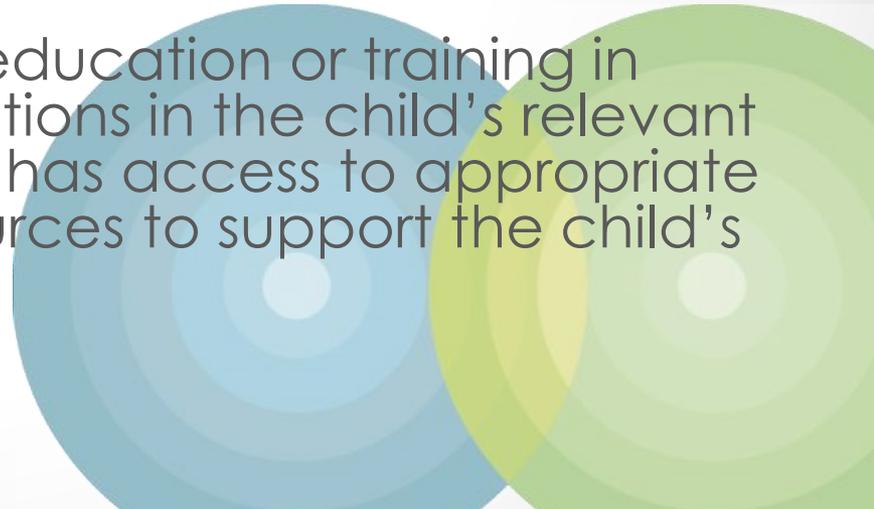
How many children in school ?

- In January 2024 there were approx. 7.7 million children up to the age of 16 years in school.

Who should be in school ?

- According to the Department for Education, the number of children aged between three and 16 years old who should be in education is:

- 4,510,374 (Nursery and primary)
- 3,244,230 (Secondary)
- 7,754,604 (Total)

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Who should be in school ......

- In February 2024, 20.53% of this number failed to attend school on a regular basis.

- In addition, there are at least another 5,000 who attend school on an irregular basis, arriving late or going home early.

- The number of persistent absences has soared by 133% since the pandemic, with no sign of positive changes.

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Why is it so important?

- Research issued in May 2023[4] is clear in its summary of persistent absence's impact on learning outcomes:

- 90% of attendance is 'of concern'. This is 19 days of absence, meaning 3 weeks and four days of learning missed and less chance of success.

- 85% of attendance is 'very concerning'. This is 20 days of absence, meaning 5 weeks and three days of learning missed (almost half a term), with serious implications for learning and progress.

- 80% of attendance is 'extremely concerning'. This is 38 days of absence, meaning 7 weeks and three days of learning missed, or half a term's worth of learning.

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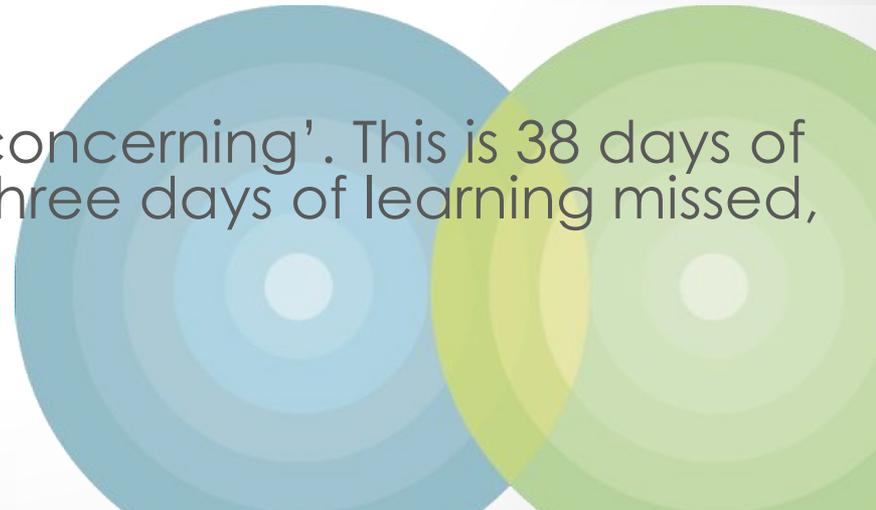
What does that mean in reality?

- Persistent Absence (10%+ sessions missed): 17.63% of pupils (Autumn/Spring 2024/25).

- Severe Absence (50%+ sessions missed): 2.26% of pupils (Autumn/Spring 2024/25), nearly 160,000 children.

- Absence by School Type: 5.19%–5.22% in primary, 7.99% in secondary, and 12.9% in special schools
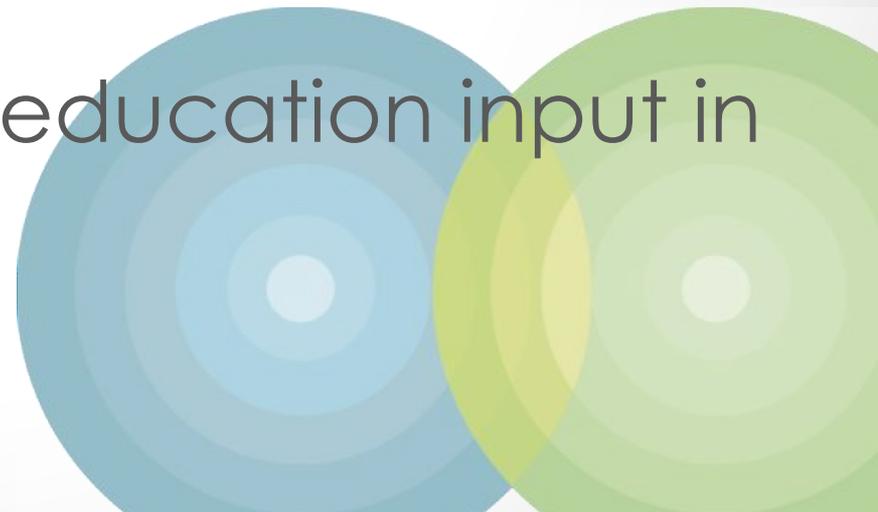
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Legitimate reasons not to go:

Are limited

- May need to be authorised
- If the child is ill
- Has to attend court
- Doctor or hospital appointment
- Family crisis
- Traveler lifestyle with education input in place

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Barriers to learning

Prior to the pandemic there were a range of reasons why children would refuse to go to school and most of those still exist post pandemic including:

- Poverty
- Access
- Accommodation
- Bullying
- Disability
- Trauma
- SEND and difference
- Family circumstances
- Children in care

Added barriers post pandemic

- Environmental challenge
- Rise in diagnoses of neurodivergence and associated difficulties/ barriers
- Anxiety
- EBSA-emotionally based school avoidance
- Elective home education
- Parental choices
- Stress
- Wider mental health issues
- Yung carers
- Parental mental health , the impact of so called "gentle parenting", changed view of the relevance of education
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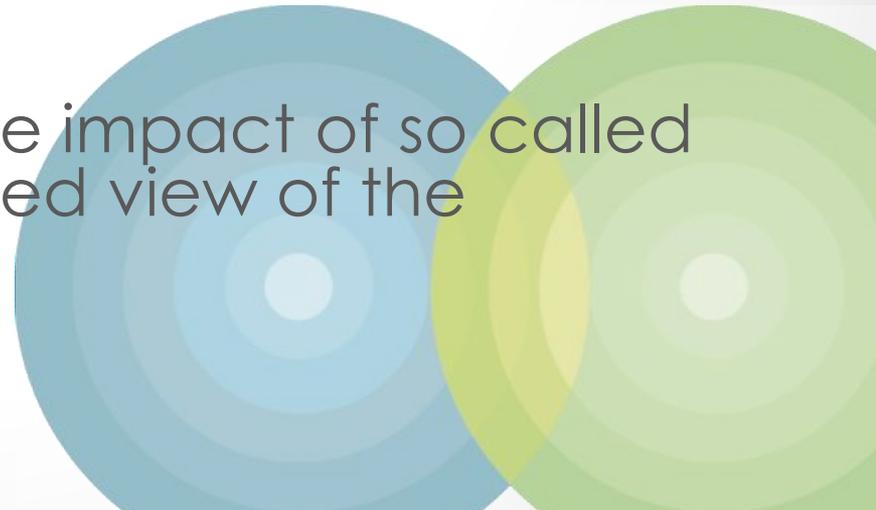
The challenge

- Children in residential care often have the lowest educational outcomes of all looked-after children, with 50% of 16–18-year-olds in residential care in some regions having no qualifications. They are more likely to have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Potentially multiple school moves
- Being a teenager
- Trauma
- School places pressure
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The challenge

- unstable and disruptive environments
- time spent out of school
- starting school part-way through an academic year
- poor additional educational support
- lack of understanding by education and care staff of their specific mental and emotional health needs. In relation to education
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Small group work

- Why may your children not be attending school?

- Discuss the range of communication you would anticipate having with any education provision?

- Remember this is two way.

- DISCUSSION

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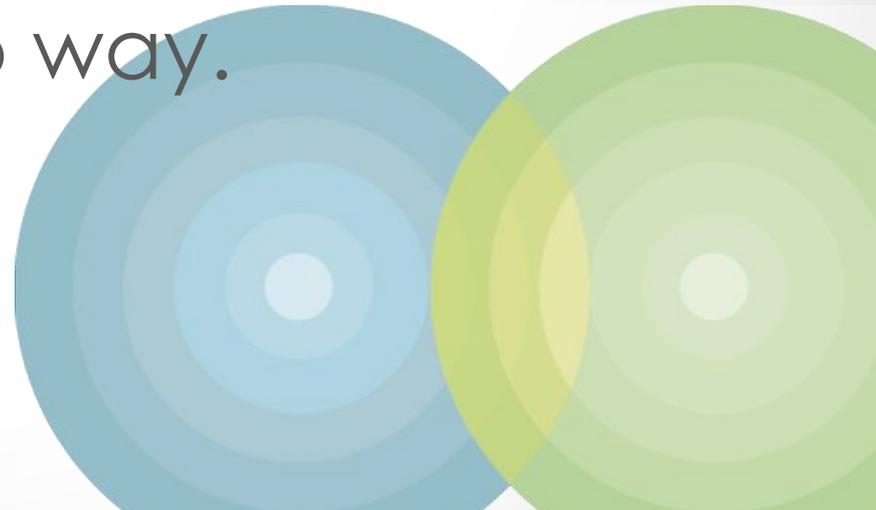
Changes coming up

- Some already identified in the sector updates
- At the moment we are still waiting for the updated gender identity guidance.

Current KCSiE guidance

- It recommended that when families/carers are making decisions about support for gender questioning children, they should be encouraged to seek clinical help and advice.

- When parents are supporting pre-pubertal children, clinical services should ensure that they can be seen as early as possible by a clinical professional with relevant experience.

- As such, when supporting a gender questioning child, schools should take a cautious approach and consider the broad range of their individual needs, in partnership with the child's parents (other than in the exceptionally rare circumstances where involving parents would constitute a significant risk of harm to the child), including any clinical advice that is available and how to address wider vulnerabilities such as the risk of bullying.

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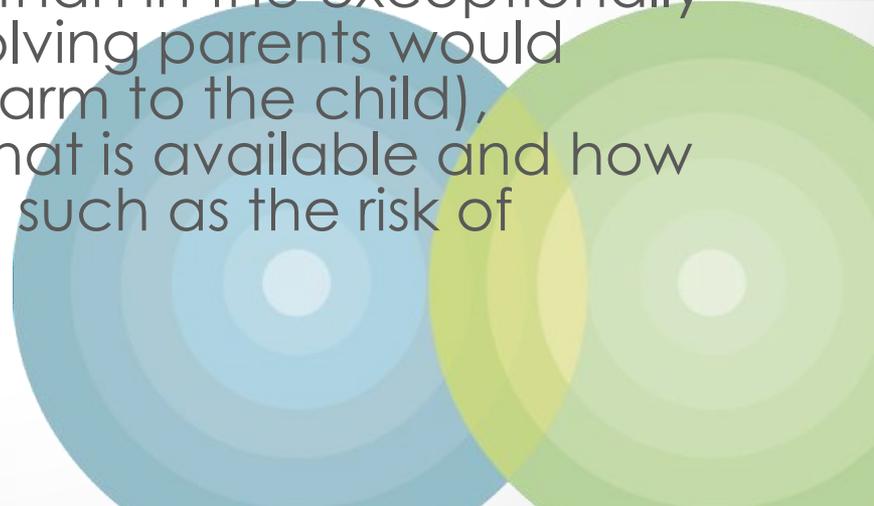
Restrictive practice changes 1.4.26

- Area of focus and change - seclusion

Seclusion- now defined more clearly

- Seclusion - a non-disciplinary intervention involving keeping a pupil confined to a place away from others and prevented from leaving - should only be used as a safety measure to protect others from harm when a pupil is experiencing high levels of emotional or behavioural dysregulation.

- In such circumstances, the pupil is not acting with intent.

- Seclusion should not be implemented by staff through threat of punishment.

- The place to which the pupil is confined should be safe and not feel threatening or intimidating to the pupil.

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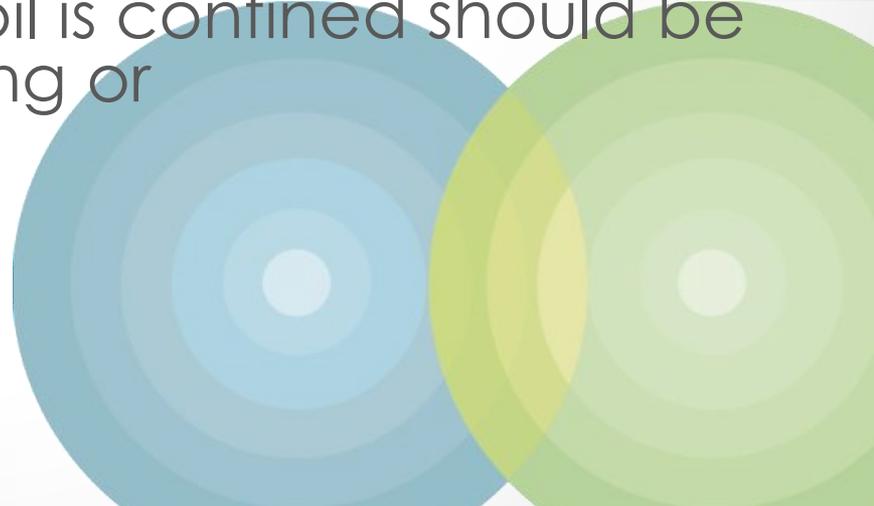
Seclusion

- The pupil should be supervised at all times during the period of seclusion.

- As soon as the immediate risk of harm has reduced, the pupil should be allowed to leave.

- NEED TO BE AWARE – Iin your "parent role. "

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Seclusion

- There are varying approaches used by schools with respect to seclusion and many names. These include: -

- *Calm room*

- *Time out*

- *Reflection room*

- *Consequences room*

- *Safe room*

- *Safe shelter*

- *Isolation room*

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Seclusion

- Times that children can spend in these spaces varies according to policy.

- Up until April 1st, 2026, the use of seclusion has not needed to be reported and recorded, parents necessarily informed.

- The government also appear to be intending, longer term, that many suspended (fixed term excluded) pupils will remain in school, so a reflection on your seclusion approach will be useful.

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What should seclusion achieve?

- ARE THESE THE INTENDED CONSEQUENCES?
  - Lowering levels of stimulation
  - Reducing risk of harm
  - De-escalation

What should be taken into account?

- The impacts of seclusion / consequences for the child: -
  - It is involuntary and isolating
  - Longer term psychological and emotional trauma develops
  - Future behaviours will heighten more rapidly
  - May be breaches of human rights
  - Disproportionate use in respect of children with difference / SEND
  - Loss of learning time

What about children with difference / SEND?

- Research and data shows us that children with difference / SEND are disproportionally affected in terms of the use of seclusion
- We recognise this pattern in social care too in relation to heightened behaviours and responses
- The school should:
  - Considering the child's communication needs
  - Taking an individual approach
  - Considering whether the use of seclusion for the child becomes another barrier to learning
  - Does seclusion add to a cycle of harm
  - Is seclusion a method of "behaviour" control?

Principles of practice

- Young people, with or without a learning disability, must be in full-time education or training until at least the age of 16. In England, they must then do one of the following until they are 18: stay in full-time education, e.g. at a college; start an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Principles of practice

- The law asks schools to prioritise Children in Care in their admissions oversubscription criteria so in most schools they would be at the top of a waiting list for a place. This, however, is not the case for faith schools

- Responsibility of parents (including Corporate Parent)

- Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly

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Principles of practice

- Every school has their own behaviour policy which sets out the levels of exclusion depending on the incident, e.g. isolation, fixed-term exclusion or permanent exclusion, and have a right to apply the published sanction. This includes incidents that occur when a child is travelling to and from school wearing school uniform
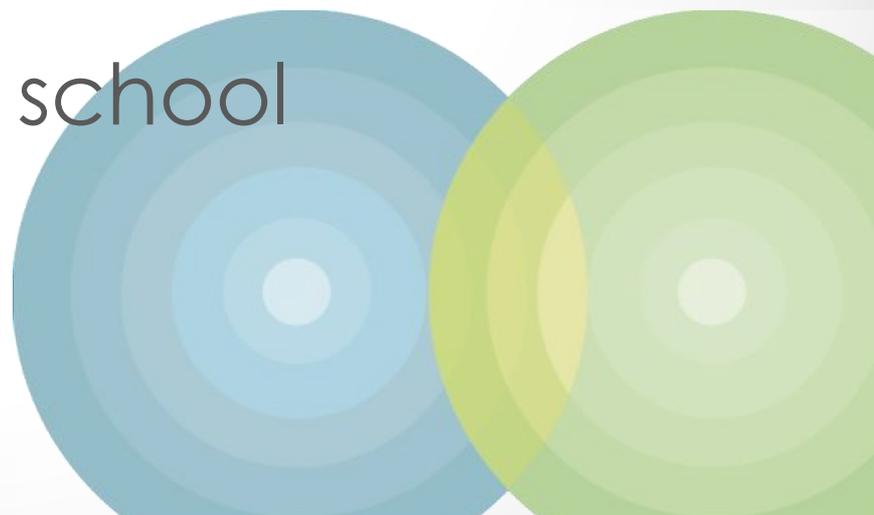
Principles of practice

- Alternative provisions-are you working with the school and the provider .
- Ofsted has a clear focus on APs especially unregistered provisions.
- Is yours registered with Ofsted?
- Is there a defined plan in place for both progress and timescales?
- Are you involved in all reviews?
- Do you know if the LA or school has a secure QA process in place ?
- OPEN DISCUSSION

Principles of practice

- Good communication and positive relationships with:
- DSL
- Designated teacher
- Tutor
- SENDCO
- Virtual Head / Virtual school
- Other stakeholders

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Principles of practice

- Attending school events/ parents evening etc

- Supporting the child in expressing their views and wishes.

- Taking part in EHCP, PEP reviews

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Lots to think about

- OPEN DISCUSSION

- Any thoughts or queries?

Thank you- Chris