



MISSION 44

Nothing
Happens
In Isolation

**Building a more
inclusive education
system**

November 2024

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About Mission 44

Launched by seven-time Formula One World Champion Sir Lewis Hamilton in 2021, Mission 44 is working to build a fairer, more inclusive future for young people around the world. We invest in solutions that empower young people to overcome social injustice and succeed.

Mission 44 has a particular focus on developing an inclusive education system, providing grants to schools and organisations, commissioning research, convening organisations and young people and campaigning to ensure young people feel they belong in education and can reach their full potential. Through its 'Preventing Exclusions Fund', Mission 44 has been working with a variety of partners dedicated to preventing exclusions and making sure more young people access and complete their education. Mission 44 is also part of the 'Who's Losing Learning?' coalition, alongside The Difference, Impetus and IPPR, a group of charities aiming to identify and address the scale and impact of children losing learning in England and highlight the injustice of its disproportionate impact on the most disadvantaged or marginalised young people.

Acknowledgements

Mission 44 would like to thank its 'Preventing Exclusions Fund' partners, Mission 44's Youth Advisory Board and the other stakeholders and critical friends whose views and experiences have led to the design of these recommendations.

Executive summary

Schools should be a place of safety and belonging, where young people feel included and supported to access their learning, whatever barriers they might be facing. This is increasingly not the case.

Record-high school exclusions are a pressing issue, limiting children's futures while only addressing symptoms of deeper problems. A recent 'Who's Losing Learning?' report found that up to the Easter holidays, there was a rise of over 20 per cent in suspensions and exclusions compared to the same time in the previous year. In total, 32 million days of learning have been lost to suspension and unauthorised absence in 2022/23 – up from 19 million pre-pandemic (2018/19).¹

Children facing disadvantage or discrimination are far more likely to be excluded from school!²

1.5x

more likely to be
Black Caribbean

2x

more likely to be
mixed White and
Black Caribbean

5x

more likely to be
eligible for Free
School Meals

3x

more likely to be
Irish traveller

3x

more likely to have
special needs

4x

more likely to be
Romani (Gypsy)
or Roma

8x

more likely to have
had contact with
social services

17x

more likely to
have a mental
health issue

¹Who's Losing Learning report: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

²Who's Losing Learning report: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

The impact of exclusions

School exclusions have far-reaching consequences that extend beyond the immediate loss of education. These impacts can have lasting effects on excluded young people's lives, limiting their future opportunities and contributing to societal inequities.

Increased costs to the state

It is estimated that permanent exclusion costs the state at least £170,000 in lifetime costs per excluded child, due to increased education and youth justice costs, alongside high levels of unemployment and reduced earnings.³

Educational disadvantage

There are overwhelmingly poor outcomes for excluded children, with over half of children not entered for maths and English GCSEs in alternative provision schools and fewer than five per cent gaining a standard pass.⁴

Worsening mental health

Excluded young people are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation.⁵

Youth violence

Government data⁶ shows how periods of absence and suspension from mainstream school pre-date first offending and serious violent offences. Nine in 10 teenagers in custody have been excluded.

³ Who's Losing Learning report: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

⁴ Who's Losing Learning report: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/who-is-losing-learning>

⁵ Hawker, D. S., & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years' research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross-sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*

⁶ Education, children's social care and offending: multi-level modelling Research report July 2023



An inclusive education **for all**

The debate surrounding school exclusions often polarises into two opposing camps: those who advocate for a liberal use of exclusions as a disciplinary measure and those who believe they should be banned altogether.

At Mission 44, we believe that we must move beyond these binary positions, look at the root causes of rising school exclusions, and equip schools with effective alternatives.

Educators, policymakers, and communities must work together to create and implement strategies that prioritise early intervention, prevention, and support, while also ensuring that schools have the resources and authority to maintain classroom discipline.

That's why Mission 44 has launched the 'Nothing Happens in Isolation' campaign, bringing together our partners, young people, parents, teachers and school leaders to advocate for ways to reduce preventable school exclusions and build a more inclusive education system that benefits every child.

Achieving a society where every young person has the chance to succeed, regardless of their background, is impossible if the current system continues to exclude our most vulnerable students.

By addressing the root causes of exclusions and implementing policies that foster inclusive, supportive learning environments, the government can ensure that its commitment to opportunity extends to every child, no matter their circumstances.



Mission 44's policy recommendations

Policymakers, educators, and the community must work together to address the growing rate of school exclusions and keep more young people in the classroom.

Mission 44's recommends four key priority areas of work to tackle this challenge, along with 13 policy recommendations:

Priority area 1

Embed inclusion into accountability and the curriculum

Policy recommendations

- Publish a national framework for inclusive education practice for schools
- Introduce a national student experience survey
- Mandate all schools publish data on the use of unaccountable exclusions, like off-rolling and managed moves
- Update guidance to ensure all local authority schools and MATs follow the same school exclusion procedures, with involvement from the local authority from pre-decision to appeal
- Ensure that any changes to the curriculum focus on increasing students' sense of belonging in education

Priority area 2

Increase personalised support for vulnerable learners

Policy recommendations

- Ensure every child at risk of exclusion has a trusted adult relationship and mentorship offer
- Ensure any new SEND strategy leads to improved provision in mainstream education
- Create a national framework for schools and MATs to raise the quality and consistency of internal and external alternative provision
- Phase out the use of poor quality alternative provision by the end of the parliament

Priority area 3

Build a more diverse, inclusive workforce

Policy recommendations

- Match-fund Mission 44's investment in increasing diversity in teaching and senior school leadership
- Introduce mandatory inclusive practice and anti-racism training for all teachers and school governors

Priority area 4

Tackle exclusions beyond the school gates

Policy recommendations

- Commit funding for schools to collaborate with external partners to prevent school exclusions
- Provide greater transparency of the exclusions process and rights to appeal with parents and carers

The further chapters of this report provide our rationale for these areas and our recommendations for policy change as well as examples of how Mission 44's partners are already achieving progress in these areas.

1. Embed inclusion into accountability and the curriculum

We're advocating for systemic changes to create a more equitable and supportive student environment. Giving young people agency and choice in their education journey will foster a greater sense of ownership and engagement, potentially improving both their academic experience and overall wellbeing.

Mission 44's recommendations

- Publish a national framework for inclusive education practice for schools
- Introduce a national student experience survey
- Mandate published data on 'off-rolling' to disincentive illegal exclusions
- Update guidance to ensure all local authority schools and MATs follow the same school exclusion procedures, with involvement from the local authority from pre-decision to appeal
- Ensure that any changes to the curriculum focus on increasing students' sense of belonging in education

Rationale

A framework to benefit all children

Whilst we are encouraged to see the Government moving in the right direction with curriculum, Ofsted and SEND reform, we still believe more needs to be done to guarantee an inclusive, adaptive approach to teaching and learning. This will benefit all children regardless of their abilities. Currently, there is no national framework for inclusive practice. Mission 44 is already working with its partners to identify essential indicators of inclusion that could serve as the basis for a national inclusion framework to hold schools to account.



The Power of Belonging

A recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, organised by the OECD⁷ highlights a concerning trend in UK schools: only 64% of students feel they belong at school, significantly below the OECD average of 75%. This lack of belonging can have far-reaching consequences.

A recent Pro Bono Economics report⁸ proposes a roadmap for the rollout of a universal measurement of children's wellbeing, which has been backed by a broad coalition of charities, young people's organisations and mental health experts. A national student experience survey could also build on insights from the BeeWell programme which has listened to the voices of more than 85,000 young people across Greater Manchester and Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton since it launched in 2021. Addressing this belonging gap is crucial for improving educational outcomes and student wellbeing.

Improving Transparency

Under-reporting and lack of transparency of some of the levers that schools use, which can be exclusionary, is a real problem. 'Off-rolling' is the practice of removing pupils from school rolls without formal exclusion, often to artificially boost school performance. EPI reports show the growing number of pupils leaving school rolls in England, moving to a different school or leaving the state school system completely, for entirely unknown reasons. As schools attempt to reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions, the use of Internal AP within mainstream schools has also risen; where alternative provision is provided within an existing school's environment. This is neither officially defined nor measured.

⁷ Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results:
<https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/pisa.html>

⁸ Charting a happier course for England's children: the case for universal wellbeing measurement, Pro Bono Economics, 2024

Mandating published data on these practices, and others like managed moves, isolation will discourage illegal practice and hold schools accountable. Additionally, implementing a standardised exclusion process across all schools will ensure fairness and consistency in disciplinary measures, regardless of a school's location or governance structure. For example, currently, pupils excluded from MATs do not have a representative from the Local Authority, whereas pupils in Local Authority schools do.

Engaging every student

By implementing a flexible curriculum that is driven by and reflects diverse experiences and interests, we can better engage all students and make learning more relevant. This approach increases student participation in school activities, deepens their engagement with education, and in turn fosters a stronger sense of belonging. In addition, diverse classrooms that promote inclusion help bridge cultural differences, promoting understanding and cohesion among students from all backgrounds. This approach must be supported by exam boards that embrace flexibility to respond to the needs of a diverse student body.

Mission 44's partners in action

- **The Black Curriculum** is working to embed Black history in the national curriculum for students aged 3-25. By providing comprehensive resources and training, they ensure that all young people learn about the rich tapestry of Black British history, fostering a more inclusive understanding of our shared past.
- **The Fair Education Alliance** is a coalition of organisations working with Mission 44 to embed youth voice in the education system.
- **Rekindle** supports the strategic growth of the supplementary school model to reconnect young people with a love of learning and create a virtual home for teaching, learning, training, youth-led research and activism around education reform.
- **The Who is Losing Learning Coalition**, of which Mission44 is a member - will set out a definition of whole-school inclusion when its Solutions Report is published in March 2025.

2. Increase personalised support for vulnerable learners

Vulnerable students, including those from low-income backgrounds, those with special educational needs, and those affected by trauma, often face unique challenges that can impact their behaviour and engagement in the classroom. Teachers alone cannot address these complex socio-economic drivers of exclusions. Dedicated mentors could facilitate early intervention, reducing the risk of legal - and illegal - exclusions and alleviating the workload on teachers.

For those children for whom mainstream education isn't suitable, standards and outcomes in Alternative Provision (AP) often fall short of mainstream education. By ensuring that alternative provisions are a constructive, well-funded choice, we can create an environment where all students, regardless of their background or challenges, have the support needed to succeed both in school and beyond.

Mission 44's recommendations

- Ensure every child at risk of exclusion has a trusted adult relationship and mentorship offer
- Ensure any new SEND strategy leads to improved provision in mainstream education
- Create a national framework for schools and MATs to raise the quality and consistency of internal and external alternative provision
- Mandate all schools to publish their data on the use of internal alternative provision and other more exclusionary practices
- Phase out the use of poor quality alternative provision by the end of the parliament

Rationale

The Power of Trusted Adults and Mentorship

Children at risk of exclusion often face complex challenges inside and outside of school. Mentorship offers personalised guidance and support that helps them navigate these struggles. Research by the Youth Endowment Foundation shows that mentorship programmes have a robust and demonstrable impact on reducing exclusions. Public First research also reveals that tackling the root causes of poor behaviour and providing mentoring are the most popular interventions among educators and parents to reduce exclusions. By providing a trusted adult relationship and mentorship, we can offer the support young people need to stay engaged in education as well as a positive role model, advice, encouragement, and emotional support that may not be available from other sources.

Mission 44 worked with IPPR to cost the roll out of a mentorship offer to children at risk at between £75-£150m for the academic year 2025/26. In comparison, recent analysis finds lifetime costs of at least £170,000 per child directly associated with permanent exclusion - for last year's excluded cohort alone this means costs to the state of £1.6 billion over a lifetime.

Recognising Early Warning Signs

Whilst 97% of teachers who have known an excluded child well, notice signs of a pupil heading towards exclusion, nearly two-thirds of these teachers (64%) think signs could have been picked up several months before exclusion, with 39% saying they could have been picked up at least a year before⁹. Introducing dedicated mentors could enable early intervention, helping to prevent many exclusions before they happen and easing the pressure on teachers.

Implementing this policy requires partnerships between schools, local organisations, and specialist youth sector groups. These collaborations can provide crucial support to young people at risk of exclusion and ensure any mentorship programme is designed with the relevant and culturally competent needs of young people in mind.

The SEND Crisis

Improvements in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in England should prioritise mainstream education to ensure that all students, regardless of ability, can access high-quality, inclusive learning environments. Mainstream settings offer opportunities for social integration, fostering empathy, respect, and understanding among all students while reducing stigma around disabilities.

When SEND provision is strengthened within mainstream schools, students with SEND can benefit from tailored support without being segregated or isolated from their peers. This inclusive approach also prepares students for diverse real-world environments by encouraging adaptive teaching methods that benefit all learners, such as differentiated

⁹ Nothing Happens In Isolation, Public First, 2024

instruction and universal design for learning. Investing in robust SEND support within mainstream schools not only enhances educational outcomes for SEND students but also promotes a culture of inclusivity and equality, helping to reduce reliance on special schools and ensuring that all students can thrive together in supportive, well-equipped learning spaces.

The AP Challenge

The number of pupils in state-funded AP schools increased by 20% to over 15,000 in 2024. Pupils in AP are among those with the highest levels of need and most significant vulnerabilities in our education system. The stark reality is that only 4% of pupils who finished Key Stage 4 in state-funded AP schools achieved GCSEs in English and Maths in grades 9-4 in 2019, compared with 64.6% in mainstream and state-funded special schools (CSJ). With the number of pupils in state-funded AP schools at its highest since the pandemic, we must urgently address the quality and consistency of this provision to ensure it truly serves the needs of these young people.

Despite current poor outcomes, AP has the potential to offer specialist capacity and alternative education to the young people that need it most. With better resourcing and implementation of best practices, AP could significantly improve outcomes for pupils who experience school exclusion.

Mission 44's partners in Action

- **CAPE Mentors** provides quality tuition and mentoring to help children impacted by poverty, poor mental health, social service intervention and institutional racism.
- **Milk Honey Bees** offers a creative safe space for Black girls to focus on H.E.R (Healing, Empowerment and Resilience).
- **Oasis**, operating 52 academies across England, has partnered with Mission 44 to support Black Caribbean students and reduce the rate of exclusions within this community group. This collaboration focuses on teacher training, parent engagement, and mentoring programmes to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.
- **The Difference** works to elevate the status of AP teaching, addressing recruitment challenges in AP schools. They aim to get high-quality teachers into AP and promote working in AP as a high-status career choice, countering the rising proportion of unqualified teachers and the doubling of senior leadership vacancies in AP over the past five years.

3. Build a more diverse, inclusive workforce

Our education system must reflect the diversity of our student population, offering students valuable, varied perspectives and role models. We want to see classrooms where every student feels a sense of belonging, seeing themselves and their communities reflected in their teachers. Achieving this means enhancing diversity across the education workforce - in background and training. Additionally, mandatory training in inclusion is essential to equip every educator with the skills to foster an inclusive environment. Every teacher plays a critical role in creating an educational system where all students are supported, represented, and valued.

Mission 44's recommendations

- Match-fund Mission 44's investment in increasing diversity in teaching and senior school leadership
- Introduce mandatory inclusive practice and anti-racism training for all teachers and school governors

The Diversity Gap

The diversity gap in our education workforce is stark. NFER¹⁰ research shows that while candidates of colour are over-represented in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) applications, this is not reflected in the classroom. 60% of schools have an all-white teaching workforce, and the situation worsens at the leadership level, with 86% of senior leadership teams being all-white. This imbalance is further exacerbated by unique retention challenges faced by teachers of colour, including bias and discrimination.

Mission 44 has committed to invest £5m in diversity in teaching and senior school leadership, and worked in partnership with Teach First to double their proportion of Black STEM teacher intake. Mission 44 has recently launched a Diversity in Education Fund to build on this work. We would like the Government to match this commitment to pilot approaches to improve the representation of ethnically diverse teachers in schools; promote the adoption of racially inclusive practice in schools to support the retention of ethnically diverse teachers and leaders; and support the progression of ethnically diverse school leaders.

¹⁰ Ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce: evidence review, NFER, 2024

Why Diversity Matters

Teachers from diverse backgrounds bring varied perspectives and experiences to the classroom, enriching the learning environment for all. Moreover, studies - including those by the Runnymede Trust - indicate that students often perform better academically when taught by teachers of the same race, highlighting the importance of a diverse teaching workforce in fostering educational equity.

Equipping Teachers for Inclusion

Exclusion statistics reveal disproportionate impact across various vulnerable groups, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and some ethnic minority groups. The Pearson School Report 2023 showed more than two thirds of teachers say that pupils with SEND or additional needs are being ineffectively supported by the current education system. Just under three in five teachers said the same for disadvantaged pupils. Our research with Public First also finds that teachers feel least confident in supporting pupils from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller backgrounds. Pupils in all these groups have higher rates of exclusion - highlighting a critical area for improvement.

Breaking the Silence on Racism and Discrimination

While the relationship between race and exclusions is complex, data shows significant disparities. For instance, mixed White and Black Caribbean backgrounds pupils are excluded at twice the rate of their White British peers. We advocate for implementing anti-racism and cultural competency training because it promotes fairness, equity, and inclusivity in education. It equips educators with the skills to challenge their biases, support diverse students, and foster a learning environment where all students can thrive regardless of their racial or ethnic background.

Mission 44's Partners in Action

- In partnership with **Teach First**, we've doubled the proportion of Black STEM teacher intake, demonstrating the impact of targeted recruitment efforts.
- Our collaboration with **Aspiring Heads** aims to increase diversity in school leadership roles, helping to create a more representative education workforce.
- **The Difference** and **Power the Fight** train school leaders to recognise and challenge bias, fostering more inclusive school environments.
- **Class 13** supports dedicated educators to build equitable practices while navigating a stressful environment. Their affirming approach fuels systemic transformation, nurturing mental health, and reducing exclusions.

4. Tackle exclusion beyond the school gates

Tackling exclusions requires a collaborative approach that extends beyond the school gates. Schools alone cannot address the complex socio-economic drivers of exclusions, such as experiences in the care system, mental ill-health and poverty. We need policymakers, educators, and communities to work together to support vulnerable students and create an inclusive environment for all.

Mission 44's recommendations

- Commit funding for schools to collaborate with external partners to prevent school exclusions
- Provide greater transparency of the exclusions process and rights to appeal with parents and carers

Rationale

The Power of Collaboration

External factors driving exclusions are difficult for schools to address in isolation. Coordinated support from other services such as mental health providers, social services, and community organisations. By partnering with these agencies, schools can ensure that vulnerable students and their families receive the holistic support they need to address underlying challenges. Programmes, like the London Inclusion Charter and Young Futures, demonstrate the effectiveness of a local collaborative approach. These initiatives ensure that at-risk young people receive consistent, long-term support by embedding it within communities and fostering strong relationships with schools.

The Wider Impact of Exclusions

While crucial to a child's development, schools lack the resources and capacity to address deeply rooted socio-economic issues that can lead to exclusions. Poverty, which impacts everything from food security to access to technology, demands broader economic reforms, welfare support, and housing solutions that schools alone cannot provide. Public health crises, like the rise in mental ill health amongst young people, similarly require the expertise of healthcare systems, mental health professionals, and policymakers. To effectively combat these drivers of exclusion, a holistic, multi-agency approach is essential, where schools collaborate with external organisations to ensure children receive the full spectrum of support needed.

In addition, excluded young people have just a 4% chance of achieving GCSEs needed for employment, with two-thirds out of education or work by age 17. Alarmingly, 9 in 10 teenagers in custody have been excluded. Each exclusion is estimated to cost the state £170,000 in lifetime education, benefits, and healthcare. Working together to reduce exclusions will benefit society as a whole.

Empowering Parents

Public First research highlights that school behaviour policies and exclusion processes are often inaccessible or unclear, leading to low parental engagement. Less than half have read their child's school's code of conduct or behaviour policy. This lack of knowledge and a complex and time-consuming process puts many families at a disadvantage when advocating for their children.

Greater transparency in the exclusion process is crucial for ensuring fairness, accountability, and trust. When parents understand their rights and procedures, they can better advocate for their children, guaranteeing any exclusion is justified and in the student's best interest.

Mission 44's partners in Action

- **Co-op Academy Leeds** is working with the local Roma community in Leeds to reduce exclusions of Roma students.
- **Coram's** School Exclusions Hub provides free information and resources to professionals and community organisations supporting families in challenging school exclusions.
- **Oasis** is working with Mission 44 to design, deliver and evaluate a new volunteer community mentoring programme to create long-lasting, trusted relationships.

What next?

Mission 44 is committed to working with the Government, its partners, and the education sector to drive forward solutions that address the root causes of school exclusions. By prioritising early intervention, enhancing support for students with diverse needs, and ensuring that schools have the resources to foster inclusive environments, we aim to reduce exclusion rates.

Together, we can build a system that offers all students the support they need to thrive within the education system.

Find out more about the Nothing Happens In Isolation campaign, Mission 44's policy recommendations and how you can join us in building a more inclusive education system at: www.preventingexclusions.com



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mission44.org
info@mission44.org