

Primary school pupil exclusions doubles in two years

The number of primary school pupils excluded in Midlothian has doubled in the last two years with nearly one in a 100 taken out of classes, a new report has revealed.

The average number of exclusions has risen sharply over the last year with 9.2 exclusions per 1,000 children.

A report on education performance presented to councillors today revealed changes in behaviour in younger students post Covid has had an impact with fewer than 5 in a 1000 excluded in 2022.

Michelle Strong, from the council's education service, said work was being done to provide support to schools where the issue has been identified telling elected members: "This is a small number of children in particular primary schools and we are working with those schools to identify what support can be provided."

Councillor Derek Milligan said he was taken aback by the high number of exclusions in primary schools across the county.

Ms Strong said: "We have seen in recent years a change in the level of need across schools and some of the behaviour and disregulations we have seen is post Covid."

The report also revealed attendance in primary schools

remained lower than it had been pre Covid while the number of children with additional support needs (ASN) had increased by more than eight per cent with almost a third of primary aged children in classes identified as ASN pupils.

In secondary schools across Midlothian the number of ASN students rose by twice as many bringing the number identified to almost half of all pupils.

The report also identified problems finding teaching staff which were having an impact on student's learning experience in schools.

It said: "Increased difficulties of attracting and retaining subject specialists especially Maths, Science, Technologies is having an impact on service delivery in a number of secondary schools.

"Attracting and retaining teaching and non-teaching staff into ASN provisions is having an impact on service delivery. Attracting suitably qualified staff for early learning due to national demand is also proving a challenge and having an impact on service delivery."

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter