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ABSTRACT
There has been growing concern about the rising numbers of students being excluded from school in England – a trend that is often set against the declining levels of exclusion elsewhere. In Wales and Scotland, for example, numbers of students permanently excluded from school have fallen dramatically. However, we argue that simple system-level comparisons might be misleading. Drawing on data derived from interviews with headteachers in Wales, this paper probes beneath the surface of official statistics and explores the diverse, and often hidden, forms of exclusion that are taking place. Without wishing to deny the damaging consequences of official exclusion from school, it argues that the other forms of exclusion may also carry negative consequences. It concludes that until the effects of these other forms of exclusion are known – at individual, institutional and system level – we should not assume that a school or a system is necessarily any more or less 'inclusive' on the basis of official data on school exclusions.

Introduction

There is some very powerful evidence of the damaging consequences of school exclusion. In terms of pupils' own experiences, Munn, Cullen, and Lloyd (2000), Munn and Lloyd (2005) show how school exclusions create a range of short- and longer-term difficulties for excluded students, which range from personal feelings of rejection and injustice, conflict with parents at home, stigmatisation within neighbourhoods and anxieties over future job prospects. These anxieties are not groundless. As Pirrie et al.'s (2011) longitudinal research shows, school exclusion is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including prolonged periods out of employment, poor mental and physical health, involvement in crime and homelessness. A recent report by the IPPR (Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift 2017) draws attention the fact that those who are most likely to be excluded are already the most vulnerable in society – four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and ten times more likely to have poor mental health.

It is not surprising therefore that rates of school exclusion are a major cause for concern – not only because of the negative consequences for the individual student, but because they are often taken as a 'barometer' of the social inclusiveness of the education system as a whole. More specifically, rising levels of school exclusions are often taken to be

symptomatic of an education system in crisis. This would certainly appear to be the case in England, where recent data indicate that the number of permanent school exclusions has risen significantly in recent years – a trend that is taken to compare unfavourably with the other nations of the UK, where the rate of exclusion is not only proportionately lower but also falling. Explanations of these divergent patterns often focus on the different policy regimes across the UK, holding that Wales and Scotland in particular have more 'inclusive' education systems. However, in this paper, we argue that simple system-level comparisons might be misleading. Delving beneath the official data to explore the extent of 'unofficial' and 'internal' exclusions confirms not only that official data reveal only the 'tip of the iceberg' (Gazeley et al. 2015), but also that they are the product of different social and political pressures (Vulliamy and Webb 2001).

The paper begins by briefly laying out the official data on school exclusions across the UK, along with the common explanations that might explain these contrasting levels. It then draws on data from our own research in Wales. These data indicate that if the definition of what counts as 'exclusion' is expanded to include a range of practices that schools use to remove students from mainstream classrooms while keeping them on the school register, the rate of exclusion in Wales would be considerably higher than the official data indicate. Without wishing to deny the damaging consequences of official exclusions from school, we argue that these other forms of exclusion may also carry negative consequences. The paper concludes that until the effects of these other forms of exclusion are known – at individual, institutional and system level – we should not assume that a school or system is necessarily any more or less 'inclusive' on the basis of official data on school exclusions alone.

The uneven profile of school exclusions across the UK

National figures released by England's Department for Education show that nearly 7000 pupils were permanently excluded from schools in 2015–16. While most are in the final years of secondary schooling, there are growing numbers of primary school children also being excluded. Overall, the rate of exclusions has increased in England by 40% over the last three years to the extent that, on average, 35 children each day are being permanently excluded from school (Weale and Duncan 2017).

This pattern is not reflected elsewhere in the UK. As Table 1 reveals, England has the highest rates of both fixed term and permanent exclusions. Of course, England has the largest school population so it is not really useful to compare crude numbers. Nevertheless, it is notable that in 2015/6, while many thousands of pupils were permanently excluded in England, this was the case for only five pupils in Scotland.

Not only are the overall rates of fixed term and permanent exclusions higher, but while the rate is increasing in England, it has been falling elsewhere. In Wales and Scotland, for

Table 1. Rates of fixed term and permanent exclusion across the UK.

| 2015/2016	School population	Fixed term exclusion	%	Permanent exclusion	%
England	8559540	339360	4.0	6685	0.08
Scotland	680007	18430	2.7	5	
Wales	466555	15051	3.2	109	0.02
Northern Ireland	339785	4147	1.2	19	0.0006

example, numbers of students permanently excluded from school have fallen dramatically. In Wales, which is the context we are focusing on in this paper, the rates of permanent (and to a lesser extent, fixed-term) exclusions have been generally declining in recent years. While this was the case in England until 2012, recent years have seen a significant rise (Figure 1).

Explanations for these divergent profiles of school exclusion often focus on the contrasting reform agenda of the four nations of the UK, and in particular the negative consequences of education policies in England (e.g. Parsons 2005). For example, the 'marketisation' of education is more pronounced in England than elsewhere in the UK. It is claimed that this creates pressures for schools to exclude any students who will negatively affect their performance data and 'league table' position (e.g. Booth, Ainscow, and Dyson 1997). Kevin Courtney, General Secretary of the National Education Union, argues that:

> Requiring schools to compete as if they are supermarket chains treats children as commodities and leads to pressure on schools to select their intake and increase pupil exclusions. (quoted in Weale 2017)

Gazeley's (2010) qualitative research in one English local authority found that some schools found it difficult to reconcile the need to meet academic attainment targets and do well in Ofsted inspections with more inclusive approaches to behaviour management. It is also the case that the growth of academies and free schools, which operate outside the control of local authorities, may feel more inclined to exclude than other types of school (West and Bailey 2013; Gorard 2014).

Additionally, the cultural restorationism (Ball 1993) of the recent Conservative-controlled administrations has led to a reinvigorated traditionalism and a 'high stakes' testing regime. It might be argued that this not only leads to disengagement of students who struggle academically but also requires greater levels of conformity to school rules. There is, for instance, frequent press coverage of students who have allegedly been excluded from schools in England for not wearing the right uniform or wearing too much make-up[1] (e.g. Burrows 2017; Horton 2017). Relatedly, the huge expansion of schools that are state-funded but which operate outside of local authority control, and the devolution of nearly all government funding down to individual schools, has meant
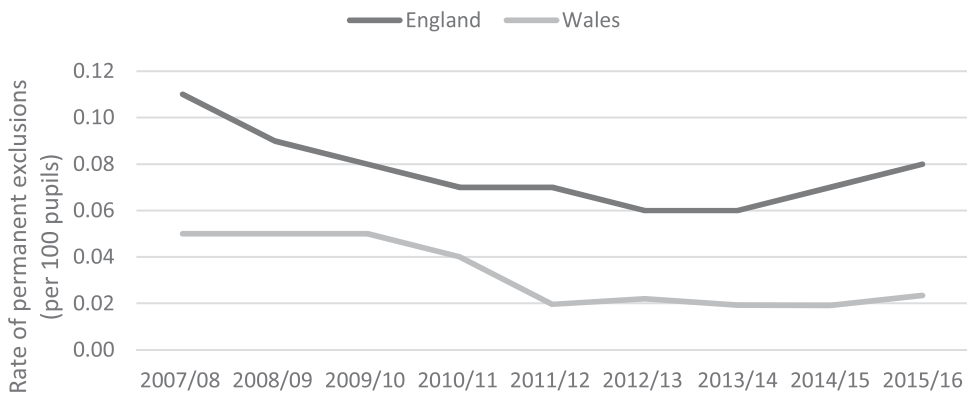
Figure 1. Divergent trends in school exclusions in England and Wales.

that there are very little centralised resources left at local government level to support students 'at risk' of exclusion (Gazeley et al. 2015).

The other nations of the UK have chosen not to pursue these kinds of reforms. Certainly in Wales, education policy has a very different feel. After democratic devolution in 1999, Morgan (2002) promised to put 'clear red water' between Wales and England. Welsh education policy would be based on the Welsh Government's core principles of a strong government, cooperation rather than competition, universalism rather than choice and diversity, and progressivism rather than traditionalism (Drakeford 2007). This means that local authority control of education remains relatively strong; there is no official publication of performance data through which 'league tables' can be compiled; there are no free schools, academies or grammar schools; and there is an increasingly student-centred curriculum (Author 2016).

In terms of legislation and guidance on school exclusion, Wales is very similar to England. In both countries, the governments make it clear that a decision to exclude a learner should be taken only in response to serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy, *and* if allowing the learner to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the learner or others in the school (Welsh Government 2012; DfE 2017). However, while the official policies may be similar, the political commitment and accountability regimes of the two countries is somewhat different. The Welsh Government actively encourages alternative 'solutions', such as 'internal exclusions' and 'managed' moves, in which local authorities play a mediating role. In addition to Government guidance, Wales has an annual school categorisation system that could well penalise schools that exclude. Schools are hierarchically classified using a colour coded system of Green, Yellow, Orange and Red on a complex range of factors, which include attendance and exclusion. Schools in Wales are therefore under pressure *not* to exclude.

There is little doubt that the very different policy agenda in Wales might account for the fairly rapid decline in official school exclusions, and particularly permanent exclusions. But this does not mean that schools in Wales have suddenly become inclusive. There is recognition that schools have developed other approaches to dealing with troubled and troublesome students that fall short of what counts as an official exclusion but which are, nonetheless, exclusionary.

The research

vIn order to throw light on what is happening in Wales, we interviewed headteachers of twelve secondary schools. These schools are part of the WISERDEducation Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS) and have been selected to include diverse communities (advantaged and disadvantaged, rural and urban, Welsh and English-speaking). Interviews were conducted in 2017 in either Welsh or English using a semi-structured schedule that included questions on the challenges the school faced in terms of discipline, the various approaches the school used when dealing with challenging behaviour and the extent to which they used fixed term and permanent exclusions. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout.

It should be noted that finding out about the nature and extent of exclusionary practices that operate beneath the level of official statistics is extremely difficult. The data we present here probably significantly underplay the range and frequency of different practices that

effectively exclude a student from the mainstream classroom. Not surprisingly, the inter-views also revealed no instances of the various forms of illegal exclusion (such as sending students home early), even though it is widely acknowledged that these practices are wide-spread (Butler 2011).

In the following sections, we outline the ways in which we think the definition of what counts as exclusion needs to be broadened, before going on to consider how schools' reluc-tance to exclude from school is matched by practices that exclude pupils from mainstream classes. We then describe how these diverse practices vary in terms of duration, location and educational content.

Broadening the definition of school exclusion

It has long been recognised that official data on exclusions do not tell the whole story and that there is widespread use of other forms of exclusion – variously termed 'illegal', 'unofficial' or 'informal'. The IPPR report (Gill, Quilter-Pinner, and Swift 2017) claims that, in England, five times as many children are being 'educated' off school registers than the official data would suggest – with many tens of thousands more being 'lost' from school registers illegally. In addition to these kinds of unofficial exclusions, where students are removed from the school altogether, we want to broaden the definition out even further to include practices were students are removed from the mainstream class-room but remain within the school building.[2]

Although these kinds of practices are likely to occur all over the UK, it is probable that they are more pronounced in those contexts where official exclusions are actively discour-aged. As Munn, Cullen, and Lloyd (2000, 76) 'if pressure is placed on schools to reduce formal exclusion we can anticipate an increase in informal exclusion and in internal exclu-sions'. Where policies punish, rather than reward, levels of exclusion – as they do in Wales, schools are incentivised to find other ways of dealing with 'difficult' students that may also have deleterious – but hidden – consequences for students (and schools).

In the following section we present a compilation of these diverse forms of exclusion and how they vary in terms of how long the period of exclusion is, where the excluded pupil goes, and what they are supposed to do while excluded.

The pressure to avoid exclusions: 'managed moves' between and within schools

It was clear that all of the headteachers we interviewed were reluctant to exclude students. For a large part, this was because they recognised that, to some extent, the need to exclude a student was to some extent a failure on their part. As the headteacher of Ysgol St Non puts it:

> I'm more along the lines of trying to tell my staff if you make the lessons interesting and enga-ging and differentiated so the children can access things: a) they're going to want to turn up, so attendance levels will rise, and b) the low-level disruption will be minimal because they are doing something that they find interesting as well.

Heateachers also recognised not only the relative ineffectiveness of a school exclusion, but the potential long-term damage for a student:

> And because they don't have that sort of sense of seeing the consequences of anything that's going to have any major impact on them, then it has less impact … you take an exclusion, for example, and say 'this is going to be on your school record and in the future, we may be asked to write a reference about you and that will go on your reference'. (Burrington High)

Schools are not only concerned about the legacy of having an official exclusion on the student's school record, but also about their own data profile. For the school, as well as the student, there is an incentive to find alternative strategies. Indeed, several headteachers mentioned this, e.g.:

> Schools are under pressure regarding inclusion. (Portside)

In line with Welsh Government guidance, 'managed moves' are seen as a viable way of avoiding having a formal record of exclusion. Freshfield uses managed moves for 'one-off serious incidents':

> That's like a permanent exclusion. But the way the LA does them, they don't have a permanent exclusion on their record. The LA manages their exit out of here and then tries to get them into another school. (Freshfield)

Other schools use them more proactively with students who are 'at risk' of exclusion:

> … it's quite clear that where somebody is on the verge of it, the Local Authority will step in and persuade the parents to take their child to another school. (Merryvale)

Sometimes schools try to arrange these moves themselves, rather than going through the local authority:

> There isn't always someone managing this process in the Council – so the schools need to work together on this instead. We need to know what the wider situation is across the [local authority] to know where they could be moved. (Ysgol Glan)

Far more common, though, than managed moves between schools are the various ways in which schools relocate students *within* school – otherwise known as 'internal exclusions'. Internal exclusions can take many forms and in the following section we outline the extent of this variation in terms of (a) how long the period of exclusion is, (b) where the excluded pupil goes, and (c) what they are supposed to do while excluded.

The duration

Students can be removed from the mainstream classroom but stay within the school for varying periods of time. At one end of the spectrum are the short periods of exclusion, from five minutes:

> We have for low level disruptions a warning. And then a maximum of 5 min standing outside the door to reflect. (Ysgol Llyn Du)

… to a day or two, e.g.:

> A third low level disruption means that they get taken to a room that we call 'Ynys' – now ynys means island in Welsh – and basically it just means that they're isolated for just that one lesson. And the level above that is if they get sent there a second time in a day, they stay there for the rest of the day. (Ysgol Llyn Du)

> We have an inclusion unit where pupils might go for a day or two days if they've been involved in a behaviour incident. (Freshfield)

At the other end of the spectrum is 'special' provision within schools – often in the form of 'Nurture' groups, where pupils can spend most or all of their time:

> We have developed our own 'Nurture' facility in school because we've had to. Quite a significant group of our pupils are either taught in this nurture facility for 100% of the time. (Bridgetown)

Location

As with duration, there is wide variation in the spaces to which the students are moved once they are taken out of the classrooms. For short duration removals, this can simply be the corridor, or sitting outside a senior teacher's office. Students are variously sent:

> Standing outside the door (Ysgol Llyn Du)

> They might end up outside my office (Burrington High)

Other schools have special 'isolation units' put aside to which students are sent:

> They're in a particular room. … it's boothed off, so they obviously know they have work to do. Basically, they can't communicate.' (Burrington High)

> A large classroom with reduced classroom tables and then reduced seating in there, so that the children are spaced out. (Merryvale)

Some have the equivalent of internal pupil referral units (PRU), e.g.:

> We have 'extended opps', so people who are high tariff they move into our 'extended opps' provision, which is bit like an onsite PRU which we run. (Freshfield)

And some schools even hire buildings where the students can be sent.

> We have off-site provision where we rent a room and we educate students off-site. For example, in year 11, if there was an exclusion, it could be a small group of students who are persistently misbehaving, who are disturbing the learning of others and all the various interventions have been put in place, and they still are not working. Then we can educate them off-site. (Portside)

In these circumstances, although the student is not actually in the school building, they are still on the school register. The implications of this removal for the student are unclear. We cannot know whether know whether the 'off-site' education that they experience in the rented room is any worse or better than that provided within the mainstream class. However, as we discuss later, research evidence on the educational outcomes of other kinds of alternative provision is not encouraging.

Activities undertaken while excluded from the mainstream class

Just as there is wide variation in terms of how long and to where students are moved, there is also variation in what they are expected to do once they have been removed from the mainstream class. Sometimes schools expect their students to undertake their 'regular' school work, but just in a different setting, e.g.:

> … we've taken him off timetable and he's working in a department for a day, making sure his course work is completed. So rather than end up with nine incomplete GCSEs were trying to get him to complete one, then another one then another one. (Freshfield)

Even where they are given their usual work, there must be some concerns about the quality of the learning experience these students receive. Several schools make up 'packs' for students to follow themselves:

> They're given the work appropriate to the lesson that they're not actually sitting in the lesson for. … We produce a pack of work for one day, three days and five days. In that pack there are basic literacy and numeracy, and conflict resolution, PSE type activities. And then in addition to that then there's a task whereby the children need to go through their books of the lessons that they're missing and review the work that they've done over the last couple of weeks. So when they do return, they're expected to bring those work packs with them, completed. (Merryvale)

For the most part, though, students are removed from mainstream classes to participate in kinds of activities that can be loosely grouped together as 'alternative curricula' and 'therapeutic approaches'.

Of course, a whole variety of activities can be classed as 'alternative curricula', but we are using the term to refer largely to the variety of vocational, work-based and sports-focused provision that is offered to school students instead of the usual selection of conventional subjects leading to GCSE qualifications. Again, the students participating in these schemes will still be registered to the school, but will be experiencing a very different kind of provision either on a part- or full-time basis.

Students might attend the local further education college. For instance, at Ysgol St Non, students study for a level 2 qualification in bricklaying, catering and hair and beauty. Merryvale finds 'work placements' at local businesses, such as hairdressers. Brynglas Comprehensive and Freshfield have an arrangement with a not-for-profit provider which runs courses using rugby, boxing and strongman courses, with a curriculum of 'powerful life lessons'

In addition to these sports- and vocationally-orientated alternative curricula, nearly all of the schools offered what might be termed a more 'therapeutic' approach through providing time set aside for reflection (even 'mindfulness' exercises) and self-esteem raising. The least structured provision is probably the kind provided by Ysgol Llyn Du, where:

> … they just sit in the little cubicle just to have time to reflect on what went wrong.

Many of the schools use 'restorative practices' to help the student in question reflect on their behaviour. Freshfield has a whole range of approaches:

> The inclusion manager obviously will do some work on behaviour. He'll do circles and behaviour trials and mentoring … . They have Nurture on their time table. … it's like a specialist provision with a capital 'N' and it's for children who … they're not very good at socialising with other children. Something there a little bit mis-fitty. … So they would have Nurture on their timetable and they would go to the Nurture House. They would have that specialist provision – but it's on their timetable as opposed to being taken out of lessons – but obviously they're not attending other lessons while they're in that.

In short, it would appear that schools are developing many strategies that do not entail officially excluding students from school and do not count as 'illegal' exclusions but *do*

entail removing students from mainstream classes. Sometimes this may only be for a few minutes in a corridor or to a separate room where they carry on with their regular school work. But it may also involve what is effectively a full-time and permanent move, even to an off-site location. In the next section, we raise some concerns about these kinds of practices.

Does it matter?

On the one hand, it is possible to claim that the consequences of being officially excluded from school are so damaging that anything that a school can do to avoid this is worthwhile. It might be argued that keeping the student 'in' school marks a step in the right direction. This may be the case, but it needs to be demonstrated rather than asserted. In the following section we examine such evidence as there is on the efficacy of these alternative strategies, and raise concerns we have about their potentially negative consequences at (a) individual; (b) institutional; and (c) system-wide levels.

For the student

Managed moves may seem to provide the ideal solution – in that the student experiences a 'fresh start' without the stigma of a record of school exclusion, and has the opportunity to follow a regular curriculum in a mainstream classroom. Small scale research from one English authority (Harris et al. 2008) indicates that, for some pupils, managed moves *can* provide a fresh start. However, other research (e.g. Bagley and Hallam, 2015) identified significant challenges. Certainly the headteachers we spoke to reported delays and problems finding schools willing to take these students, e.g.:

> Because if they don't get into another school fairly quickly they can sort of waft around on tuition for a long period of time just getting a few hours tuition … sometimes we take children in and they've been on tuition for 18 months. (Freshfield)

While keeping students within the school but in an on-site, and largely unofficial, PRU, will avoid some of these problems, it is also likely to bring limited benefits. The outcomes of official, properly staffed PRUs, have been disappointing (e.g. Meo and Parker 2004). A survey of young people attending PRUs in Wales reported high levels of boredom and a lack of activities (Children's Commissioner of Wales 2014). It is difficult to see how less well-resourced provision within schools will be better, but because it may fall under the radar of external scrutiny, we simply do not know.

The education benefits of these kinds of provision are also questionable. Parsons (2005) divides approaches to students' challenging behaviour as either 'punitive/exclusionary' or 'therapeutic/restorative'. Similarly, in their categorisation of student perspectives on dealing with behaviour, Munn, Cullen, and Lloyd (2000, 16) divide school responses to 'supportive' approaches (e.g. anger management, relaxation therapy, internal support units) with 'punitive' approaches (e.g. detentions, internal exclusions with work to do). We think that this kind of division is problematic because the boundary between the two is not always that clearcut and students are also likely to experience *both* kinds of approach, but also because it implies that one approach is 'good' (supportive/therapeutic) and one 'bad' (punitive/exclusionary). There is not the space here to discuss the debates

about what some see as the damaging growth in recourse to 'therapeutic' solutions (e.g. Furedi 2003; Ecclestone and Hayes 2009). It might be argued that 'punitive' approaches are preferable in that the criteria for punishment, and the resulting sanction, are usually explicit. The more therapeutic 'support' is often allocated on implicit criteria – as the quote from the headteacher of Freshfield describes it – for those who are 'a little bit mis-fitty'. There is also the danger with therapeutic approaches that objectives relating to educational attainment (e.g. passing GCSEs) are replaced with 'softer' objectives, such as increased self-esteem. While increasing self-esteem may be important, it does not appear to have any straightforward pay-off in terms of educational outcomes (Gorard, See, and Davies 2012).

While there is some evidence that interventions such as 'Nurture Groups' can have a positive impact with younger children, there is thus far little evidence to indicate this is so for secondary school students (Hughes and Schlösser 2014). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that 15-year-old students will find it anything other than stigmatising to participate in Nurture Groups.

Munn, Cullen, and Lloyd (2000) are surely right to argue that internal exclusions at least have the benefit of keeping the student in the routine of attending school. Barker *et al.*'s (2010) study of an 'exclusion unit' in one English academy found that 'secluded' students *did* apply themselves to their school work while they were in the unit, but that they 'reverted' to their usual behaviour once they left. Their study concludes that any gains are 'short term and partially successful at best' (383).

These various studies suggest that keeping the student in the school may be a necessary condition for securing future positive outcomes, but that it is not in itself sufficient. Sanders, Munford, and Thimasarn-Anwar (2016) tracked over 600 'vulnerable' students from 13 to 17 in New Zealand. They found that staying in school *was* a major factor in keeping the young person 'on track' in the longer term. However, this was the case *only* when coupled with attending mainstream classes. The provision of additional educational resources outside the mainstream class did *not* lead to positive outcomes.

This would suggest that simply keeping students in school, and providing different kinds of provision, will not improve their levels of educational attainment. These other forms of provision, whether they are therapeutic interventions or alternative curricula, have opportunity costs for the young person. Given that the young people most at risk of exclusion and most likely to be in these forms of alternative provision are already amongst the most vulnerable (Malcolm 2018), limiting their access to the full range of the curriculum may be seen as another form of denial.

At the institutional level

It might be argued that one of the benefits of excluding a student is that the school no longer carries the responsibility for their education. Keeping a student on the school register but not in mainstream classes creates an additional resource demand. All of the schools we spoke to felt that resource was a major issue for them. While local authorities may have a more central role in education in Wales than they do in England, they are severely stretched financially (Wales Audit Office 2014). Schools felt that when provision at local authority level was removed, they carried the burden, e.g.:

> So there's a balance between an inclusive education and dealing with the more serious issues. But then when there's a funding issue and a lack of resources and there's no capacity to deal with these young adults, then obviously it becomes increasingly more difficult for the school. (Portside)

For Portside, the closure of the local authority's PRU has meant that, without exclusion, the school has no choice but to keep its 'difficult' students on the register:

> We've got a pupil referral unit [in this authority]. But the unit is closing. Well the KS3 unit is not running at the moment. So obviously students somehow need to be managed by schools. (Portside)

The headteacher at Ysgol Llyn Du reported how they no longer had access to an educational psychologist because their local authority had failed to appoint one, so instead they used one of their learning coaches to fill in:

> They have advertised a few times, but we just don't have then now because there's nobody employed to do it … it's been 3 years now that they've been trying to fill that position. A youth worker, she comes in for one lunch time once a week. And we have a counsellor who comes in one day a week. I can't call her a counsellor but that effectively is what she does, her correct title is 'Learning Coach'.

The more intensive support, whether in Nurture Groups or for restorative practice, was resource-heavy:

> Well the Nurture Facility … for example the year 11 class that's in there, I think it's seven pupils, you can often have two members of staff in there with the seven pupils. These are extremely challenging pupils. It's a really expensive provision. (Freshfield)

Portside hired its own off-site premises to place its more disruptive pupils, but this created other pressures which meant that students in this facility got supervised 'packages' rather than access to teachers:

> Fortunately the authority has a number of buildings around for us to use. So the cost implication isn't huge. I mean the major cost implication is getting staff to go to educate them. What we tend to do is we try to arrange an educational package (Portside)

Where the resources weren't available, the level of support was reduced:

> We used to have a teacher who worked with children out of class – but now there's no money for it so we've had to cut it except for the most serious circumstances. So now it's a desk outside the principal's room. (Ysgol Glan)

Clark et al.'s (1999) analysis of schools that were making moves towards being more inclusive found a number of key challenges that were rarely talked about in the literature on school changes. These included 'the intractable problem of behaviour' and 'the inadequate technology of inclusion'. They noted that in all the schools they looked at, moves towards greater inclusion inevitably involved distributing resources away from other areas.

It is also the case that the process of 'managed moves' can affect schools unevenly. The headteacher of Merryvale pointed out that they were one of the most socio-economically deprived schools in the borough, but because they were 'under capacity' they were not able to refuse students that were 'managed' out of other schools by the local authority – students that he felt would be better off in a PRU.

Given the pressures put on schools, it is not surprising that they turn to the increasing number of private providers who promise to take difficult students out of the classroom or offer therapeutic remedies to reengage them with their learning. Many of schools we interviewed had 'bought' into schemes that promised just that and used resources of activities provided by organisations such as the *School of Hard Knocks*, the *Hawn Foundation Mind-Up* programme, *International Institute for Restorative Practice*. The widespread use of these programmes potentially has system-wide implications.

At the system level

As we argued at the outset, the divergent profiles of exclusion rates across the UK are sometimes used to make judgements about the inclusiveness – or otherwise – of education systems. It *is* possible that various curriculum and disciplinary regimes can account for some of the system-wide differences. Some policies may lead to more system-wide stress and fragmentation of support – which is what is claimed to be happening in England (Gazeley et al. 2015)). Some curricula may increase student engagement and well-being. For example, evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study suggests that the subjective well-being of children in Wales *is* higher than that of children in England (Taylor, Rees, and Davies 2013). However, it is difficult to see how this can account for the scale of the difference across the UK. There is likely to be relatively little variation between the home nations in terms of young people's capacity to become disengaged and/or disruptive in school. This does not mean there are *no* differences, but that the amount of difference is likely to be marginal – and certainly cannot provide the explanation for the wide and relatively recent variation in rates of permanent exclusion.

In relation to Wales, the variation is more likely to be explained by government policies and accountability mechanisms that discourage exclusion than by schools full of engaged students and/or well-resourced local authority support. In order to cope with the competing demands of inclusion and the 'regular' business of schooling, schools have resorted to the widespread use of exclusionary practices that fall 'short of' an official school exclusion.

This in turn raises system-level issues. Firstly, it tells us something about the unintended consequences of government policies that put pressure on schools to be 'inclusive' without having adequate resources in place to support them. And building targets around exclusions is only likely to mask various practices, make them less visible, and actually prevent more effectively targeted resources and structures being made available.

In conclusion, we think it is important that the relative risks and benefits of these various practices – for the individual, their classmates, the school as a whole are properly researched. This is not to argue for a return to a climate where schools feel able to exclude without scrutiny, but for an understanding of the best ways of dealing with the 'wicked problem' (Armstrong 2018) of behaviour in schools while at the same time trying to make what Slee (2014) calls 'the illusory promise' of inclusion less illusory.

Notes

1. In spite of the fact that neither of these reasons constitute 'legal' grounds for exclusion.
2. We recognise that exclusion can also be used to refer to a variety of structures and processes that marginalise disadvantaged young people (e.g. Whitty 2001). Although, as Daniels and

Cole (2019) point out, school exclusion may be a precursor to these 'deeper' forms of exclusion, for the purposes of this paper we are using the term to refer to a decisive act of removal on the part of the teacher or school.

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