

***Experiences of Persistently Absent Children:
Access to SEND Support & Unexplained School Exits***

Jo Hutchinson, Director for Vulnerable Learners
24th November 2021

EDUCATION
POLICY
INSTITUTE



1. SEND Identification in Primary School

Who gets access to SEND support?

Modelled probability of being identified with SEND in years 1-6

- Most important factor (accounting for over half of variation) was which school attended
- True for 'School Support' assessed by the school but *also for EHCPs* assessed by the LA
- SENDCOP defines SEND as *individual* need above that of other same-age children, but individual factors are dominated by the school attended = dysfunctional system
- Academisation stood out as a key school-level *and LA-level* factor affecting probability of SEND identification

1. SEND Identification in Primary School

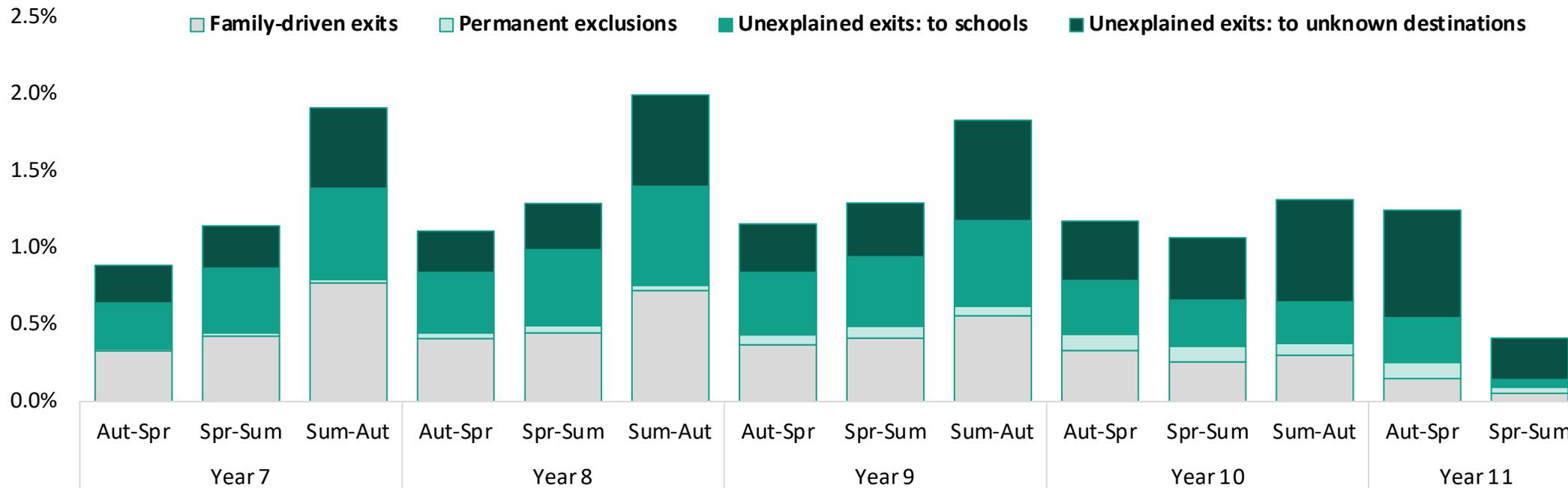
After accounting for schools, what individual child factors matter?

- Disadvantaged children more likely to be identified with SEND, but there was evidence of *rationing in favour of the more affluent* within the most deprived local authorities
- Problem of *less visible children* who were more likely to miss out on SEND support than similarly vulnerable children
- The less visible groups were: children who moved schools, those in contact with social care, and those who were absent for longer percentages of the school year
- Puzzling because children already recorded with SEND have higher absence
- The graduated and iterative nature of the 'assess, plan, do, review' SEND model does not work well for children who are mobile or struggle to attend school

2. Unexplained Exits from School

61,000 children in the Y11 2017 cohort had an unexplained exit

- That is one in ten, or three per class of 30 (on average)
- Does not include: official exclusions or those that left for ‘family reasons’
- Does include: moves to another school, to AP and exits from state schools sector



What happens after an unexplained exit?

There are 24,000 kids from the 2017 cohort where we do not know what happened to them

- 52% of the 61,000 are not immediately enrolled in another school
- 4 in 10 have not returned to a state school by the end of Y11
- Of those that move into Alternative Provision, only 1 in 10 are reintegrated to a mainstream school later

For those who do move straight to another school:

- 1 in 4 move to a school rated lower by Ofsted than their original school
- 1 in 6 move from a school that is good or better to a school that is less than good

Which pupils are at greater risk?

- > 1 in 3 kids who experienced permanent exclusion
- Almost 1 in 3 of Looked After Children and of kids with SEMH special needs
- 1 in 4 kids with fixed period exclusions or significant absence
- 1 in 5 Children In Need of local authority social services
- 1 in 6 kids with any type of SEND and of those who are ever eligible for FSM
- 1 in 7 black children and of children with low prior attainment



3. Some Policy Implications

Helping children with additional needs stay in school

- Specialist SEND training for every school leader
- Better access to specialists such as educational psychologists
- Curriculum and pedagogies to foster social and emotional wellbeing
- National framework of reasonable adjustments to be offered by all schools
- Pilot smaller class sizes in early primary to evaluate benefits

Adjusting the system to engage with children outside of school

- SEND assessment and support available in the family home
- Similar access issues with CAMHS as the 'teams in schools' model is slow to roll out