

Interventions can reduce school exclusion but the effect is temporary



Some interventions - enhancement of academic skills, counselling, mentoring/monitoring, and skills training for teachers – appear to have significant effects on exclusion

What is the aim of this review?

This Campbell systematic review examines the impact of interventions to reduce exclusion from school. School exclusion, also known as suspension in some countries, is a disciplinary sanction imposed by a responsible school authority, in reaction to students' misbehaviour. Exclusion entails the removal of pupils from regular teaching for a period during which they are not allowed to be present in the classroom (in-school) or on school premises (out-of-school). In some extreme cases the student is not allowed to come back to the same school (expulsion). The review summarises findings from 37 reports covering nine different types of intervention. Most studies were from the USA, and the remainder from the UK.

Interventions to reduce school exclusion are intended to mitigate the adverse effects of this school sanction. Some approaches, namely those involving enhancement of academic skills, counselling, mentoring/monitoring and those targeting skills training for teachers, have a temporary effect in reducing exclusion. More evaluations are needed to identify the most effective types of intervention; and whether similar effects are also found in different countries.

What did the review study?

School exclusion is associated with undesirable effects on developmental outcomes. It increases the likelihood of poor academic performance, antisocial behavior, and poor employment prospects. This school sanction disproportionately affects males, ethnic minorities, those who come from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, and those with special educational needs.

This review assesses the effectiveness of programmes to reduce the prevalence of exclusion.

What studies are included?

Included studies evaluated school-based interventions or school-supported interventions to reduce the rates of exclusion. Interventions were implemented in mainstream schools and targeted school-aged children from four to 18, irrespective of nationality or social background. Only randomised controlled trials are included.

The evidence base covers 37 studies. Thirty-three studies were from the USA, three from the UK, and for one study the country was not clear.

What are the main results in this review?

School-based interventions cause a small and significant drop in exclusion rates during the first six months after intervention (on average), but this effect is not sustained. Interventions seemed



How up-to-date is this review?

The review authors searched for studies published up to December 2015. This Campbell Systematic Review was published in January 2018.

What is the Campbell Collaboration?

The Campbell Collaboration is an international, voluntary, non-profit research network that publishes systematic reviews. We summarise and evaluate the quality of evidence about programmes in the social and behavioural sciences. Our aim is to help people make better choices and better policy decisions.

About this summary

This summary was prepared by Howard White (Campbell Collaboration) based on the Campbell Systematic Review 2018:01 School-based Interventions for Reducing Disciplinary School Exclusion: A Systematic Review by S Valdebenito, M Eisner, D P Farrington, M Tfofi, and A Sutherland (DOI 10.4073/csr.2018:01). Tanya Kristiansen designed and edited the summary. This project was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation. Financial support from the American Institutes for Research for the production of this summary is gratefully acknowledged.



to be more effective at reducing some types of exclusion such as expulsion and in-school exclusion.

Four intervention types - enhancement of academic skills, counselling, mentoring/ monitoring, and skills training for teachers – had significant desirable effects on exclusion. However, the number of studies in each case is low, so this result needs to be treated with caution.

There is no impact of the interventions on antisocial behaviour.

Variations in effect sizes are not explained by participants' characteristics, the theoretical basis of the interventions, or the quality of the intervention. Independent evaluator teams reported lower effect sizes than research teams who were also involved in the design and/or delivery of the intervention.

What do the findings in this review mean?

School-based interventions are effective at reducing school exclusion immediately after, and for a few months after, the intervention (6 months on average). Four interventions presented promising and significant results in reducing exclusion, that is, enhancement of academic skills, counselling, mentoring/ monitoring, skills training for teachers. However, since the number of studies for each sub-type of intervention was low, we suggest these results should be treated with caution.

Most of the studies come from the USA. Evaluations are needed from other countries in which exclusion is common. Further research should take advantage of the possibility of conducting cluster-randomised controlled trials, whilst ensuring that the sample size is sufficiently large.