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Yorkshire Schools Face Surge in Suspensions Amid Behaviour Challenges

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A troubling rise in school suspensions across Yorkshire and Humber has sparked concern, with official figures revealing a record 139,722 suspensions in the 2023-24 academic year. This marks a sharp increase from 114,885 the previous year, according to Department for Education data, making it the highest since regional records began in 2006-07. The suspension rate now stands at 16.5 per 100 pupils, highlighting a growing challenge in maintaining classroom discipline. Experts argue that while schools bear some

responsibility, the root of this issue often lies with inadequate parenting and broader societal failures.

Nationally, the picture is equally grim, with 955,000 suspensions recorded across England, alongside 10,900 permanent exclusions, including 1,173 in Yorkshire and Humber. The data underscores a particular impact on vulnerable groups. Pupils eligible for free school meals faced a suspension rate of 38.9 per 100, nearly five times higher than their peers not on free school meals. Similarly, children with special educational needs (SEN) were suspended at a rate of 41.1 per 100, over three times higher than those without SEN support.

Avnee Morjaria, associate director at the Institute for Public Policy Research, stated in a recent interview: “There has been a fundamental breakdown in the school-parent social contract. Parents must take greater responsibility for their children’s behaviour.” She highlighted that disadvantaged groups, including low-income families and minority ethnic backgrounds, are disproportionately affected, warning that without systemic reform, this “crisis of lost learning” could have lasting consequences.

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the NAHT school leaders’ union, echoed this sentiment, noting that “many factors contributing to disruptive behaviour lie beyond the school gates.” He called for urgent investment in social care, mental health services, and SEN provision, arguing that schools cannot address these challenges alone after years of underfunding.

The current Labour government, which has been in power since July 2024, claims to be tackling the issue through initiatives like mental health support in schools, breakfast clubs, and attendance hubs. Education Minister Stephen Morgan has stated that these measures aim to restore order in “classrooms in chaos.” However, critics argue that such policies fail to address the deeper societal issues fuelling poor behaviour and place undue pressure on already overstretched schools.

To explore the suspension rates in your local authority, refer to the interactive map and detailed statistics available through the Department for Education’s portal. These figures serve as a stark reminder that while schools play a critical role, the responsibility for addressing this behavioural crisis extends to parents, communities, and policymakers alike. Without a concerted effort to tackle the root causes, Yorkshire’s classrooms risk becoming battlegrounds rather than places of learning.