TOWARD ZERO EXCLUSION

AN ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOLS AND POLICY MAKERS

JODIE REED

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About the author

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About the project

The enormous long-term costs of school exclusion, both to some of the most vulnerable individuals and to society, are widely known. Thus, the project's starting point is that no child should, as a response to their behaviour, be excluded from educational provision that meets their social and emotional wellbeing or learning needs. However, the project does not aim to achieve inclusion within the mainstream at all costs. Successfully moving 'toward zero exclusion', means meeting the needs of those with challenging behaviour without compromising the needs and entitlements of the wider school community.

Through primary research, a literature review and seminar discussion, the project aims to formulate an ambitious but realistic and long-term action-plan for education decision makers.

Acknowledgements

Introduction: The problem of exclusion

9,880	Number of permanent exclusions in 2003/04 (DfES, 2005)
1.3 million	Pupil days out of the classroom due to fixed term exclusion 2003/04 (DfES, 2005)
10,000	Children estimated "missing" from school registers (Ofsted, 2004)
4x	Cost of educating a pupil in a Pupil Referral Unit *vs.* cost in mainstream
25%	Increase in pupils educated in Pupil Referral Units from 2001 to 2003 (Ofsted, 2005)
15	Days a pupil can be excluded before entering a supervised full-time alternative
50%	Proportion of local authorities 'always' able to give full-time alternative provision after 15 days of exclusion (Atkinson et al, 2004)
6.6%	Average annual real terms growth education spending 1999–2006
3.6%	Average annual real terms growth education spending 2006–2008

Exclusion is regarded as the 'ultimate sanction' for challenging behaviour in schools. But given the financial cost, and a consistent failure to achieve a high standard of alternative provision for all those outside the mainstream, it has failed to offer any solution to the problem of challenging behaviour on progressive terms. As the snapshot of figures above illustrates, even putting 'full inclusion' arguments to one side, those who are committed to achieving an education system that meets the needs of every child must now look for a new solution to dealing with challenging behaviour in schools.

This action plan aims to renew the drive to reduce school exclusion. It is meant for policy makers, teachers and educationalists who are committed to meeting the social and emotional wellbeing and learning needs of those with challenging behaviour, without compromising the needs and entitlements of the wider school community. It aims to be ambitious and inclusive, but does not promote inclusion at all costs, nor does it justify schools switching to alternative forms of exclusion.

Toward zero exclusion: toward better behaviour

Our research shows that teachers hate excluding pupils. Though most feel it essential to be able to have a pupil removed for a short period, the virtual consensus amongst school staff and pupils on the useless and/or negative long-term effects of fixed-term exclusion on the pupil in question is striking. While schools have different thresholds on what is considered acceptable, permanent exclusion is always seen as a last resort. As one Head told us: 'If we can't manage behaviour we have failed…Throwing them out raises standards in the school but not in the community'.

But though in theory the will to minimise exclusions exists in most schools, permanent exclusions have risen since exclusions targets were dropped in 2001. It is therefore clear that getting serious about reducing exclusions means getting serious about improving behaviour outcomes. But what is really happening to behaviour in schools?

Indicators such as Ofsted reports, teacher retention data and exclusions figures reflect outcomes which are the product of both behaviour brought into schools and the system's capacity to respond to and cope with that behaviour. In contrast to some media portrayals, overall the picture they paint is not too bleak. The long-term deterioration in behaviour-related mental health conditions of young people evident in some studies (such as Collishaw et al, 2004) may have been troubling, but it does not appear to have overwhelmed English schools. Research from a wide variety of sources suggests that behaviour is only a significant problem in a small minority of schools – Ofsted put the figure at one in ten (Ofsted, 2005). Within this broad picture, there are some clearly definable trends:

- There has been some improvement overall in schools' behaviour outcomes since 2001. Fewer teachers identify behaviour as a major problem now than at the beginning of the decade (Smithers and Robinson, 2001, 2005). The pattern of steady improvement is reflected in parents' views and, with the exception of 2003/04, in Ofsted judgements over time (DfES and COI, 2005; Reed, 2004).

- Strong teacher anxiety about behaviour remains, but much of it tends to be concentrated in a minority of schools and amongst a minority of teachers across the system. Teachers in schools with challenging intakes and poor exam results are likely to face the greatest difficulties, though unsatisfactory behaviour outcomes are not confined to these schools (Bush, 2005).

- Low level disruption is a persistent problem across a wide number of schools. While the number of secondary schools failing Ofsted inspections on the basis of unsatisfactory behaviour has waned, the proportion being rated as good or better has also declined. Violent incidents do occur but are very rare in the majority of schools (Ofsted, 2005).

- Behaviour outcomes are far less positive in secondary schools than in primary schools (Ofsted, 2005). This has always been the case but in recent years school inspection results indicate that the gap has widened.

Qualitative research

A team of ippr researchers conducted interviews and focus groups in ten secondary schools across the country. They spoke to a total of 251 headteachers, governors, teachers, support staff and pupils in interviews and focus groups. The aim was to explore and understand the experience and narrative of each school in relation to behaviour and exclusion in order to:

i. Gain insight into the attitudes of pupils and school staff on the value and practice of behaviour related school exclusion in its current forms.

ii. Develop a fuller understanding of why it is that schools have such varied outcomes in terms of exclusions.

iii. Develop a fuller understanding of why it is that schools have such varied outcomes in terms of behaviour.

A full report of the research and other work associated with the Toward Zero Exclusion project is available at www.ippr.org/toward0exclusion

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A four-pronged attack on exclusion

So how should we respond to this? The rhetoric of 'respect', which enjoyed a resurgence following the May 2005 election, has led some to call for a return to controlling methods of discipline within the classroom. Yet from a progressive perspective, the notion of any 'Golden Age' is clearly a myth. No benefit can be reaped from a return to non-curative solutions which simply push the problem into another area. Reports of the growing problem of informal exclusions from the late 1990s (Daniels et al, 2003; Pavey and Visser, 2003) indicate that a return to the past in the form of a target-based drive, which does not create the necessary support for pupils and schools and puts all the onus on teachers, cannot be successful either.

Looking to the future it is tempting to simply go down the route of "spreading best practice". There is a lot of well established knowledge on the most effective discipline and behaviour strategies (see for example Harden et al, 2003 & 2003a and the DfES Key Stage 3 Behaviour and Attendance toolkit). Disseminating understanding of these methods amongst schools is of course vital. But, given the wide variation in practice, pursuing this approach too narrowly risks turning into a search for the Holy Grail. Through questioning why it is that some schools are already good at implementing 'good practice' and not others, as we did through our primary research, it becomes apparent that wider factors that affect schools play a critical role. Hence, there are no easy solutions. A long-term, workable plan for moving toward zero exclusion must fully take into account the complex realities of pupil behaviour. It must seek to establish new ways forward within the context of the wider policy framework, including in education, mental health, social services and youth justice systems.

This pamphlet focuses on the broader steps which can be taken within the education system. It draws from literature and from the findings of our primary research. It proposes that the Government should spearhead a four-pronged drive which responds to the challenge from behaviour outlined above. The objectives should be to:

1 create the conditions for better behaviour outcomes early on;

2 build secondary schools' capacity on behaviour management;

3 reduce the burden on schools with the greatest need;

4 strengthen the alternative offer.

1. Create the conditions for better behaviour early on

Exclusion rates remain low in primary schools, yet by the time pupils reach secondary school many of the negative patterns of behaviour are already set in place. Our primary research highlights the role that self-esteem, educational aspirations and community conflict all have in influencing the behaviour pupils bring into the school. Further, studies have consistently shown that conduct disorders and aggressive tendencies often set in at a young age and become much harder to influence as a child grows older (Francis et al, 1991; Sutton et al, 2004). Negative behaviour patterns often crystallise around the age of eight (Eron, 1990).

In recent years, UK policy has focused increasingly on early intervention and prevention in order to maximise life chances. If developed in the right way, these policies could also help reap significant rewards in terms of the behaviour of pupils reaching secondary schools in the future.

Early years and childcare

The Government's Ten-Year Childcare Strategy has promised to increase the amount of state supported childcare to 15 hours a week of integrated care for three and four year olds, for 38 weeks per year by 2010, with a long-term goal of 20 hours per week. In addition it has introduced pilot schemes to extend the free education element to two year olds in disadvantaged areas. Given that US research shows that many of the longest lasting gains from high quality centre-based early care initiatives aimed at disadvantaged children are measurable in terms of factors such as delinquency and crime (Carneiro and Heckman, 2003), there could be some big wins for school behaviour.

Care must be taken, however, to keep behaviour outcomes centre stage. Prioritising cognitive outcomes or maternal employment would complement behaviour outcomes to a great degree, but there are some subtle areas of divergence which will have to be handled with care. A wide-ranging review of US and UK research suggests that while there are no adverse effects of maternal employment on cognitive development when children are one and two, there may be adverse effects on behaviour if the children are in poor quality care for long hours (Waldfogel, 2005). This heightens the importance of building a high skilled workforce to provide that care. Ensuring that carers are highly trained benefits both behavioural and cognitive outcomes, but the impact on behaviour is greatest (Taggart et al, 2000). Continued investment in a quality childcare workforce should therefore be seen as central to any long-term drive on behaviour.

It is now widely recognised that parents' involvement has a significant positive effect on children's behaviour, even when background influences such as social class have been factored out. Consistency in discipline policies, avoidance of overly harsh treatment and showing 'interest in the child', all have a great potential to put a check on the early development of behavioural problems. The Government's new commitment to roll out paid maternity leave to the first 12 months will allow many more parents the space to get on the right track with their children from the start. Again however, in order to reap wide, long-lasting positive impacts on children's emotional stability, the development of provision will have to be handled with care.

The question of how successfully parenting styles can be influenced by policy interventions remains a matter of debate. While early evaluation indicates that SureStart is having a tangible impact on the warmth with which mothers treat their children, it is not yet reaping hard gains across the board in terms of parent/child conflict or closeness or parental discipline (NESS, 2004). This is partially an issue around the diversity of practices and standards within the centres. As Children's Centres are rolled out, it highlights the need to identify very carefully and replicate those local SureStart schemes which have been successful, and to consider the potential for incorporating the kinds of targeted parent and family interventions from the United States which do appear to have a long-lasting impact on later behaviours (see Webster-Stratton and Taylor, 2001).

Home and school

The Primary National Strategy pilot to promote children's social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing and development marks a welcome recognition that primary schools have a unique and important role to play in shaping the behaviours carried into secondary schools. Carrying this notion forward, primary schools also need to recognise their potential in helping secondary schools to manage behaviour effectively through building strong and sustainable relationships with parents early on.

Our research illustrates the importance that many secondary school staff attach to parental buy-in for the successful implementation of behaviour policies. Yet it also indicates that few schools have a culture of broader parental engagement and, while most parents engage with the school in matters relating directly to their own child, this interaction can often be defensive and hostile as opposed to supportive. The problem varies between schools but appears consistently acute in relation to a small core of 'hard to reach' parents who reject formal written or verbal communication with the school.

Studies exploring the quality of parent/school relationships point toward two broad determining factors: parents' views of what their own role should be in relation to their child and parents' degree of comfort in communicating with teachers (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1997; Kohl, 2000). Recent schools initiatives such as home/school agreements and parenting contracts have been focused on influencing the former, through aiming to engender a greater sense of responsibility amongst parents. Yet the complex social, cultural and often historical influences that shape parents' views of their roles and responsibilities makes this arguably the more difficult of the two factors for schools policy to influence. Focusing efforts on improving parent comfort in communicating with teachers could prove more fruitful in the short to medium term.

Primary schools have a key role to play here. Spreading good practice amongst secondary schools in terms of formal communication about individual progress (such as pupil reports and parents evenings) could help foster a shift away from a situation where, for many parents, all significant interactions with the school form part of a hierarchy of punitive sanctions (for examples see Hallgarten 2001 and Desforge, 2003). But importantly, the primary stage is when the greatest opportunities for informal 'as and when' communication are available to schools (Hallgarten, 2001). For example, the primary school playground at home-time provides a regular, captive parent audience that secondary schools are not able to access. This puts primary school staff in a strong position to build the kind of mutually supportive home/school relationships necessary for successful behaviour management in secondary schools, even with the parents who are most inclined to feel negatively towards a school. Many primary teachers already see this as integral to their role, but the importance of building bridges with these parents needs to be more systematically embedded in the role of a primary teacher. Primary heads must seek to encourage their staff to capitalise fully on their relative ease of access to parents and should prioritise parental communication in their training budgets.

For primary home/school relationships to have a sustainable impact which pays off in terms of behaviour in secondary schools, however, efforts need to be increased to ensure that ground won at the primary stage is not lost in primary/secondary transition. While it is inevitable that parental engagement declines as young people begin to live more independent lives, with the switch to more formal communication channels, the primary/secondary transition often creates an all too abrupt breakdown of communication. Indeed, this is an issue that emerged in the evaluation of home-school agreements, where secondary teach-

ers complained that written communication is no substitute for face-to-face interaction (Coldwell et al, 2003). If relationships between home and school can be consolidated at school transition through the personal transition of parental relationships, secondary schools' capacity to successfully manage behaviour could be enhanced. Initiating secondary school/home relations with a meeting between the parent/carer, primary school teacher and new secondary form teacher could help secure continued support from a broader range of parents. The meeting could be hosted by the primary school and would provide an opportunity for introductions and a time to explain the terms of the home-school agreement.

In terms of enabling schools to deliver this level of personal input at primary/secondary transition, the Government has proposed that by 2007 all schools work together in groups to manage behaviour (Kelly, 2005). If these collaboratives, sometimes referred to as 'Education Improvement Partnerships' (EIPs) (DfES, 2005a), incorporate both primary and secondary schools, they could be an ideal vehicle for facilitating cross-phase information sharing and organising transition meetings with parents. Yet, our research raises warning signs around the difficulties that increased school choice could pose. The more that secondary schools draw from a wide geographical spread of primary schools, the greater the number of institutional relationships that need to be managed. If it is not possible for EIPs to cover consistent pupil populations across the primary and secondary phases, additional resources, such as primary liaison officers, will be required to assist primary/secondary dialogue and set up meetings.

Recommendation

Primary schools must recognise their central role in improving both the behaviour of their pupils going into secondary schools and secondary schools' capacity to manage behaviour effectively.

- Primary schools should maximise informal dialogue with parents of challenging pupils and work with secondary schools to manage the successful transition of home/school relationships. Every primary school should host a meeting between the parent/carer, primary school teacher and new secondary form teacher at the point of transition.

- Primary schools and secondary schools should utilise the opportunity provided by Education Improvement Partnerships to form cross-phase collaborations so that they can facilitate transition meetings with parents and manage all aspects of the primary/secondary transition more effectively.

- Any changes to the admissions system that lead secondary schools to draw from a wider diversity of primary schools, will make managing all aspects of the primary/secondary transition more resource intensive. The need for more primary/secondary liaison workers must be acknowledged if the Government takes this route in the Autumn 2005 White Paper.

2. Build secondary schools' capacity on behaviour management

The level of variation in behaviour and exclusion outcomes, including between apparently similar schools, shows that the processes that take place inside schools matter greatly. Largely thanks to Government initiatives, the language of a 'whole-school approach' to behaviour is well entrenched, and strategies exist to put relevant measures in place in most schools. Yet our research showed that not all schools, or all policy makers, appreciate the school culture that successfully implementing such an approach demands, nor the sophisticated skills necessary to turn theory into action. Strikingly, in many schools the relationships between staff, and between staff and pupils, are not strong enough. As a consequence, expectations can be communicated inconsistently and not all staff and pupils are signed up to behaviour management systems. To make more schools capable of successfully implementing whole-school approaches to behaviour, there needs to be greater focus on the wider policy framework. In particular, there is a need to create more confident and able school workforces, with better behaviour handling skills and to engender a greater sense of responsibility amongst pupils.

Confident and able school staff

We found wide variations between how good individual school staff are at nurturing positive behaviour and coping successfully with challenging situations. Mirroring research on school and teacher effectiveness and pupil attainment (Machin and Vignoles, 2005), pupils and senior staff tended to portray teacher skills in particular as the single most important factor in determining classroom behaviour outcomes. Behaviour management skills, personal style, teaching skills and individual motivation all emerged as potentially 'make or break' variables. Underpinning this, levels of staff confidence, both in their own ability and in their institution's capacity to affect behaviour outcomes positively, emerged as crucial.

Policy initiatives which aim to shift toward professional autonomy and decreased bureaucracy bode well for boosting teacher confidence. Surveys have consistently shown that issues around workload have an effect on teacher retention over and above behaviour (Smithers and Robinson, 2001, 2003). Related to this, the increased number of teaching assistants within the classroom was welcomed by teachers in our research. While no major evaluations have explored the impact of paid support staff on behaviour directly, and there is limited evidence on their impact on pupil attainment, research does suggest that they could be lifting the burden on teachers through fulfilling important roles as mediators and helping to facilitate inclusion (Howes et al, 2003). Perhaps even more critically, the freeing up of teacher time through the National Agreement on Workload Reform may help unleash the energy and sense of priority required for managing behaviour effectively and confidently. However, the full and successful realisation of the Agreement is largely in the hands of schools themselves. It is vital that all schools put into action the final stage of the National Agreement, which requires a guaranteed minimum ten per cent of timetabled teaching time for teachers to undertake planning, preparation and assessment from September 2005.

School leaders also have a critical role to play in creating confident and able staff. Our findings reflect previous work which shows that schools which are most successful at managing behaviour have staff who are pulling in the same direction, consistent rules and teachers who feel 'backed up'. If behaviour is a priority for the school leadership, and staff communications are good, these conditions are far more likely to emerge naturally. Yet just as classroom teachers have faced increasing pressures in recent years, the task of leading schools has become more complex and in our research this appeared to be leading some Heads to take their eye off the ball in terms of behaviour. The rationalisation of accountability streams through the 'Single Conversation' could help create the necessary space for headteachers to remain centred on behaviour, but there is also a need to increase leadership capacity in this area in a number of other ways. Our primary research lends weight to interim findings of the Government's targeted Behaviour Improvement Programme which highlights the value of senior level Lead Behaviour Professionals (Hallam, 2004). Where a senior member of staff is appointed to this role, and given allocated time to take on the necessary responsibilities, they can be an invaluable resource for coordinating schools' behaviour strategies, easing channels of communication on behaviour issues and ensuring that teachers get on-going support and training.

Beyond creating the right kind of environment to optimise teacher confidence, putting behaviour handling skills at the centre of the concept of what it is to be a 'good teacher' could have a significant impact on outcomes. However, when envisioning a workforce where every single teacher has the necessary understanding and skills to identify and act on the full spectrum of challenging behaviour they are faced with, at least three potential areas for action emerge.

The first is the need for a cadre of recognised behaviour specialists to set an example to colleagues, provide critical mass in the most challenging schools and play a role in staff development. Evidence on the value of peer learning amongst teachers (Cordingley et al, 2003), leads to the conclusion that if every department in every school had at least one behaviour specialist there could be significant improvements in behaviour outcomes. Identifying and attracting teachers who already display the qualities necessary for advanced behaviour handling skills could be one option. Yet, while many pupils in our research gave the impression that they felt ability to manage behaviour is a "natural" quality, research on teacher effectiveness indicates that accurately identifying the precise combination of personal strengths and qualities is not always possible at the recruitment stage (Aaronson et al, 2002; Rivkin et al, 2002). Anecdotally we also know that many teachers grow into their roles. A method which relied on a combination of recruitment, training and appraisal could overcome this. ITT providers could offer trainees a 'Behaviour First' route, which would be targeted in particular at those from a variety of backgrounds with experience of managing people and dispute resolution. Initial training would include greater emphasis on managing behaviour and on implementing senior level strategies for understanding and coping with particular groups of challenging pupils. This knowledge-base could be built upon through accredited Continuing Professional Development courses for qualified teachers and certified on the basis of appraisal by a Lead Behaviour Professional after at least two to three years teaching practice. An adapted version of the scheme could also be targeted at teaching assistants.

The second area for action is improving Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for all teachers. Since 2002 new standards have increased the emphasis on behaviour management in ITT. However, the change only appears to have achieved a small improvement and 35 per cent of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) who completed their training in 2003/04 still did not feel that it had equipped them to deal well with classroom management issues adequately (TTA, 2005). Ofsted reflect a similar picture (Ofsted, 2005). Whilst the sheer variety of practise reported in our primary research indicates that increasing efforts to spread good practise amongst ITT providers, for example around emotional literacy, may be the best option in the short term, it may be time to question the current doctrine of teacher training. Evidence shows that teachers' understanding of behaviour greatly impacts on their ability to respond well to it (Poulou and Norwich, 2002). Yet emphasis in recent years has been on behaviour management strategies first, with a focus on understanding child and adolescent development a secondary consideration. This is in sharp contrast to Nordic countries where the pedagogue model makes understanding of child and adolescent development and the ways in which children learn a central consideration (Stephens et al, 2004). While it is impossible to measure the extent to which the superior behaviour outcomes in these countries are down to different teacher training, as opposed to other country differences, this model seems worth exploring further. A deeper, and broader, theoretical understanding could give teachers the necessary tools to understand why children behave the way they do and to sustain commitment to re-engaging with the most difficult young people day after day. If greater emphasis was put on socio-cultural analyses, teachers would feel better equipped to respond to certain high risk groups like black boys. These kinds of understandings could enable and encourage teachers to be more than classroom technicians, thereby enhancing their ability to personalise learning and, crucially, personalise responses to behaviour. A detailed investigation of the value of such a shift, and the practical implications, is required.

The third area is stronger behaviour focused Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for all school staff. All teachers and support staff need to be supported to sustain and develop behaviour handling and management techniques throughout their career. Evidence points to the strong relationship between sustained, collaborative teacher learning, where teachers learn with their peers, and improving pupil behaviour (Cordingly et al, 2005). A systematic approach to behaviour related CPD, based on joint sessions for subject departments, could have a very positive impact (Bush, 2005). If learning support assistants and special needs staff are attached to departments, they could also be included, enriching the peer exchange (Peacey, 2005). In cases where particular staff members show persistent weaknesses in behaviour management, additional training should be triggered at the

appraisal stage. This could be provided through external courses or peer observation. Most teachers in this position would be likely to accept such support gladly, but it will also be necessary to develop ways that head teachers or Lead Behaviour Professionals can require members of staff to attend additional training, if needed.

The Teacher Training Agency, in its new guise as the Teacher Training and Development Agency, is well placed to take forward a number of proposals recommended here.

Recommendations

A school workforce must be created where every individual feels confident and able in responding to and dealing with pupil behaviour.

- Every secondary school should appoint a Lead Behaviour Professional at senior management level to coordinate behaviour strategies, ease channels of communication on behaviour issues and ensure that teachers get on-going support and training.

- The Government should look into the creation of a new stream of teachers who are Behaviour Specialists. The Teacher Training and Development Agency should help ITT providers and schools to create a 'Behaviour First' route which is built upon through accredited CPD courses and certified on the basis of school appraisal after at least two to three years practice.

- The Teacher Training and Development Agency should make a detailed investigation of the potential impact, and practicalities, of moving toward a more Nordic style model of Initial Teacher Training which emphasises understanding child development and socio-cultural factors more strongly.

- Sustained, collaborative Continuing Professional Development focusing on behaviour should be more deeply embedded. Additional collaborative CPD should be given to those staff who show persistent weaknesses in behaviour management. This should be triggered through appraisal.

Responsible pupils

As well as skilled and energised school staff, the foundation of positive relationships in schools relies on responsible and responsive pupils. Our research supports previous findings in reflecting the power of schools that nurture these qualities through pupil participation and through teaching and learning that meets each individuals' needs. Yet major deficits currently exist in both these areas.

Evidence on student participative activities strongly suggests that it strengthens relationships and has great potential to improve behaviour through making pupils feel more independent, trusted and responsible and building a sense of ownership for school policies (Pearce and Hallgarten, 2000; Hannam, 2001; Osler 2000). Yet despite the Citizenship agenda that has been pursued in recent years, both our findings and wider research (Ofsted, 2003; Kerr et al, 2004) indicate that a deep culture of pupil participation is yet to take root within most schools. We found that school councils are often seen as tokenistic by pupils and even those which do have impact often do not actively involve the majority of pupils. In order to give pupil voice and participation a much needed boost, school leaders need to be convinced of its value and made aware of some of the more successful practices, such as pupil leadership programmes which our research showed are already reaping significant rewards in terms of creating an overall culture of positive behaviour in some schools.

A systematic engagement of pupils in behaviour management within schools could engender a sense of pupil responsibility in a way that gets to the crux of the issue. The effectiveness of restorative approaches, which aim to repair the harm done and create opportunities to make amends rather than retaliate against the perpetrator, are well acknowledged within the youth justice system. In a school setting, small scale trials in the UK and larger initiatives in countries such as Australia provide convincing evidence of the benefits, in terms of successfully resolving conflicts, preventing victimisation and developing young people's communication and empathy skills. They also enhance teachers' behaviour management skills beyond traditional 'control' techniques (YJB, 2004). A project conducted by the Youth Justice Board across 26 schools found important 'within school' improvements in pupils' attitudes in schools that had made a concerted whole-school drive to implement restorative approaches. Techniques used ranged from circle time and peer mediation to restorative conferencing where family members and other significant friends are also invited.

To make this happen, pupils and teachers need to be supported to build strong skills in conflict resolu-

tion, active listening and restorative enquiry. Training costs are estimated at only £1,500 per annum (YJB, 2004) and would be a good way for schools to use their staff development budgets. Both the Youth Justice Board project conclusions and international experience tell us that there must also be broad institutional support in order to realise the potential of restorative approaches within schools (Ritchie and O'Connell, 2001). Many of the vehicles already exist. Knowledge in restorative techniques currently resides with Young Offenders Teams (YOTs) and a vanguard of schools are already engaging with their local YOTs for the purposes of CPD. Children's Trusts could help further inter-agency working in this area. Some schools are also already using the citizenship curriculum to build skills amongst pupils, with anger management sessions and training in 'no-blame' approaches. Restorative conferencing is the only area that would demand significant additional funding for personnel, though mixed reports about its effectiveness in schools indicate the need for caution before significant funding is committed here (Morrison, 2001).

Ultimately however, creating well behaved, responsible pupils is largely about delivering good teaching and learning. The connection between challenging behaviour and disengagement has been recognised and has informed a great deal of policy and practice since commentators started to raise the issue in the late 1990s (Pearce and Hillman, 1998). Our research indicated that many teachers now see improving outcomes on behaviour as dependent on meeting individual learning needs through good quality, differentiated teaching and some schools have gone so far as to amalgamate their teaching and learning policies and behaviour policies.

Yet particular learning needs are still not adequately met within the mainstream and disaffection remains a significant problem (Peacey, 2005; Ofsted, 2004b). Groups at high risk of exclusion such as black boys, those with language and communication difficulties and young people from deprived backgrounds are known to be under-achieving. The first ever individual pupil level data shows that, on average, the gap in attainment between those on free school meals and others at age 11 actually widened slightly from 1998/04 (DfES, 2005b). This is despite the fact that, overall, those schools with disadvantaged intakes have improved faster than other schools. A similar pattern is also mirrored in earlier OECD findings about secondary schools (PISA, 2001) which indicate that the UK's large achievement gap is due more to differences occurring in individuals' attainment within schools, than differences between them. Finding solutions to these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, but they do raise some profound questions for Government about how to create levers within schools which secure more equitable outcomes in the

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Recommendations

Schools should maximise efforts to nurture responsive and responsible pupils.

- The Government should revive the Citizenship agenda through promoting knowledge about the benefits that pupil participation in school decision-making have on behaviour, and spreading best practice in reliable pupil participation techniques that involve the whole school.

- Schools should introduce restorative approaches to dealing with discipline issues. They should invest in the necessary staff training and capitalise on expertise in the Youth Justice System by making contact with their local Young Offender Teams. Children's Trusts should help facilitate this.

- In the long-term, the Government needs to be prepared to think radically about how to achieve more equitable learning outcomes. There should be a particular focus on developing the right levers within schools.

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future.

3. Reduce the burden of schools with greatest need

Not all schools suffer the same burden of dealing with challenging behaviour. Targeted programmes such as Excellence in Cities and the Behaviour Improvement Programme have sought to recognise this through providing additional support in areas with the most deprived intakes.

Our research highlighted, however, that a number of significant factors associated with intake, but not necessarily obvious through intake statistics, mean that the level of challenge is still much greater for some schools. Achieving better behaviour outcomes across all schools is dependent on ensuring that no school is prevented from putting effective behaviour policies into action because of its wider circumstances.

Stable staff, stable pupils

Our research highlighted instability of pupils, and instability of staff, as powerful undermining factors in the establishment of good behaviour in some schools. Both issues need to be tackled.

Schools that face the most challenging incoming behaviour need to be staffed by a stable workforce with the strongest behaviour management skills. This is an uncontroversial statement, yet currently, many of the most vulnerable schools face significant problems with recruitment and retention. Ofsted suggest that an annual teacher turnover exceeding 12 per cent creates difficulties. However, research indicates that over 60 per cent of challenging schools have turnover at this level and one in four have more than double this rate (Bush, 2005). This leaves these schools with a heavy dependency on supply teachers, who pupils in our study often report to be less engaged and committed and poorer at keeping order within the class. And, while 'tough schools' do attract some of the best teachers, the laws of the teacher market often also leave a significant minority of uncommitted, low motivated teachers who are in challenging schools by default (Bush et al, 2005). Our research indicated that levels of staff commitment is a major factor underpinning school pride and, hence pupils' sense of responsibility.

There are a range of measures that could help address the problem of high teacher turnover in challenging schools (see Bush, 2005). Specifically in relation to behaviour, an effective approach to channelling a far greater number of teachers with the strongest behaviour handling skills into the schools that need them most could help provide the critical mass of teachers who are committed, able and suited to the job. The School Teachers Review Body is looking into how factors such as successful experience in challenging classrooms should determine pay and career progression and this could help retention. However, headteachers also need to learn how to pitch their schools at the recruitment stage to people who would be successful in them. Through using advertising and recruitment material which appeals to those teachers, some schools are already doing this (Bush, 2005). A potential 'Behaviour First' route, as recommended above, would provide an obvious pool of workers for challenging schools to target.

Mirroring staff stability issues, the same schools also often face problems with pupil mobility. The problem of a one-way traffic of excluded pupils and pupils with disrupted backgrounds from popular schools to those with low rolls emerged in six of the ten schools that took part in our research. Both the character and background of these pupils, and disruptive effects to the pupil and class caused by intake at irregular times of year, can create difficulties and unfairly polarises the level of behaviour challenge that schools face. The Government has recognised this issue and the call for Admissions Protocols which require all maintained schools to take an equal share of excluded pupils and looked after children to be in place by September 2007 is an extremely welcome intervention. Our research indicates that if the protocols are eventually extended to cover all vulnerable pupils who are admitted to schools at irregular times of year, for example due to domestic violence or the fact that they are seeking asylum, they could become a vital lever for helping ease the behaviour burden on schools with the greatest need.

Nonetheless, significant questions about how this will be achieved in reality remain. We know anecdotally that locally initiated protocols have not been successful in securing the buy-in of some more popular schools who can simply plead infeasibility due to a full school-roll or specific selection criteria. With a far greater proportion of schools set to become their own admissions authorities, this problem could well grow. The plan for groups of schools to join together in 'Education Improvement Partnerships' and take joint responsibility for devolved behaviour support funding could begin to help embed further far reaching collaborative thinking across different types of schools. Yet, achieving the cultural shift required to make admissions protocols sustainable and secure the genuine buy-in of many Foundation Schools and

City Academies is likely to take a radical re-think of accountability and admissions procedures in the long-term. (Reed, 2005a & 2005b). It brings to the fore deep-seated questions about the extent to which collaboration and competition can be reconciled.

Given that the shift away from giving schools ring-fenced streams within their budgets makes introducing an incentive to join admissions protocols implausible, in the short-term it is hard to see how an element of prescription can be avoided if admission protocols are to succeed. Mechanisms that could be considered include requiring schools that usually have full rolls to retain a set number of empty spaces in September to create space for irregular admissions that might be expected over the course of the school year, or requiring all schools with full rolls to accept up to one additional child per class in instances where that child comes through the Admissions Protocol. Both options would be uncomfortable as they would require the Government to buck the recent trend of handing over more autonomy to schools and would lead vulnerable pupils to skip the queue over children who may be on the waiting lists of popular schools. However, given the significant impact of pupil turnover on behaviour for many schools, both deserve careful consideration.

Recommendation

There needs to be a concerted drive to reduce instability in some schools, both in terms of staff and pupils.

- The Government and other bodies should take up the recommendations laid out by Bush (2005) on recruitment and retention in challenging schools. In particular, they should focus on channelling teachers with the strongest behaviour handling skills into the most challenging schools through a targeted recruitment drive.

- In the long-term, admissions protocols should aim to move beyond the current stipulation to include all excluded and looked after children by September 2007, to incorporate other vulnerable pupils admitted at irregular times of year.

- The Government should take steps to ensure that by September 2007 no school claims they are unable to participate in Admissions Protocols due to having a full roll. They should not shy away from prescriptive methods if necessary.

Financial support

The successful implementation of the mechanisms of a whole-school approach must be supported by access to adequate financial support. Of the ten secondary schools we visited, the only two which did not have access to specific targeted funding streams, nor special support as a result of going into Special Measures, were also the only two schools where standards of behaviour were felt to be declining.

The progress made in the other schools is a tribute to the Government's targeted Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP). From the tone of the interim findings (Hallam, 2004), similar conclusions may be expected from the Government's own, as yet unpublished, more wide-reaching evaluation. Our primary research indicated that the protected financial support it has brought has genuinely enhanced the power of some schools to initiate preventative measures and out of class support, often unleashing a new level of ambition amongst staff about what can be achieved. In many cases the impact appears to have been pivotal in leading them to take affirmative action to improve behaviour.

However, the move away from ring-fenced funding means that phase 1 BIP schools are not having the grant renewed and the entire stream will be merged into the Standards Grant from 2008 (DfES, 2005c). Simplifying funding for schools is widely supported and the changes overall are likely to be positive for schools in the long-run, with funding reaching those schools with challenging intakes that have previously been situated outside area based initiatives. Yet there remains a need for funding to incentivise and enable progress for schools that may be struggling on behaviour in the future.

Working within the framework of the New Relationship with Schools, it could be possible to achieve this, if in a more limited fashion than under the Behaviour Improvement Grant. The Government document on the New Relationship with Schools (DfES, 2005c) states that Targeted Support for Key Stage 3 will remain outside the new Amalgamated Single Grant. Behaviour funding could remain a protected element within this school targeted grant.

> ## Recommendation
>
> The Government and local authorities need to ensure that the schools that need it most are given adequate financial support to implement successful whole-school behaviour policies.
>
> • Working within the framework set out in the New Relationship with Schools, the Government should retain behaviour funding as a protected element within the Targeted Support for Key Stage 3.

4. Strengthen the alternative offer

The recommendations above could take schools a significant way toward zero exclusion. But there will always be young people whose challenging behaviour cannot be handled, either safely or in a way that meets their own needs, within the confines of a single school structure. Currently, these pupils are too often removed from the mainstream classroom without their emotional wellbeing and learning needs being adequately met elsewhere.

The first ever national count showed 1.3 million pupil days out of the classroom due to fixed-term exclusion in 2003/04, most often for 'persistent disruptive behaviour' (DfES, 2005). Our research found virtual consensus amongst school staff and pupils of the frequently limited, and often negative, long-term effects of fixed-term exclusion on the behaviour of the pupil in question. Although teachers were clear about needing to retain the power to remove a pupil for a short period to give the class respite, some pupils attached a sense of kudos to the punishment. In cases of longer fixed-term exclusions, missed school work made reintegration highly problematic and could lead to further challenging behaviour. Parents were frequently reported to lack either the will or, perhaps most often, the time during the day to supervise their child often rendering any possible punitive effect useless. Reflecting the breadth of evidence linking school exclusion to later criminal careers (such as Flood-Page et al, 2000; Berridge et al, 2001; Mori, 2004), teachers were concerned that unsupervised exclusion opened opportunities for young people to spend their time on the street becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. First-day response centres, set up by schools to take in all children from the beginning of a fixed-term exclusion with Behaviour Improvement Programme funding, were felt to be far more positive than sending a child home. However, though, in the cases of the schools we visited, they did not always have enough spaces and teachers felt they came at too late a stage to have a significant impact on the behaviour of many pupils. Only half of local authorities claim that they are 'always' able to meet the requirement to provide a full-time alternative after 15 days of exclusion (Atkinson et al, 2004). Most fixed-term exclusions fall below the 15-day alternative provision threshold anyhow (the average length is 3.8 days (DfES, 2005)) suggesting that the vast majority of pupils excluded on a short-term basis are not provided with any alternative.

At the sharp end, around 13 pupils in every 10,000 are permanently excluded from schools, again most commonly for persistent disruptive behaviour but a significant proportion of these exclusions also involve verbal abuse, threatening behaviour and assault (DfES, 2005). The main provision for these pupils is within Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). While Ofsted (2005) report that standards in PRUs have improved, it is still the case that attendance is a significant problem and less than half of PRU pupils gain a single GCSE. Despite the expansion of places, the lack of fluidity in the system also leaves many pupils with limited or no access to alternative support. The revolving door between pupil referral units and the mainstream which was envisaged by the Prime Minister's Social Exclusion Unit in 1998, and is now being mooted again in the form of 'Turn-around Schools', this time by the Conservative Party, has failed to materialise. The long waiting-lists that exist in some authorities may go some way in accounting for why 10,000 are estimated to have fallen off school rolls entirely (Ofsted, 2004).

Moving toward a rich menu of alternatives

If a shift Toward Zero Exclusion is to have real meaning, it must be supported by a move to ensure that every challenging pupil has access to whatever support that stands the best chance of improving their particular behaviour, at the appropriate point in time. This means building nuanced provision which is both responsive to the widely varying causes of challenging behaviour and to the varying challenge this places on a school.

For example, a pupil who is displaying difficult behaviour as a manifest reaction to events at home will have very different needs to a pupil who displays difficult behaviour as a response to institutional factors such as an inappropriate curriculum. Similarly, a pupil who represents a persistent, violent threat in the classroom must trigger a very different response from a pupil who is persistently disruptive or involved in a one-off incident. These differences are of course often recognised by those working within schools and PRUs and, where staff have the skills, their interactions are tailored accordingly. Yet ultimately, while some

schools have been able to supply a range of on-site alternatives, our research highlighted that these are expensive and often insufficient to meet needs when supplied on an individual school basis. Structures need to be put in place to allow challenging pupils across all schools systematic access to a wide-ranging menu of provision, without being permanently excluded. Such a menu would include, for example, work related learning, nurture groups, managed moves to a neighbouring school, an outdoor alternative, full or part-time attendance at a specialist unit or a one-off restorative justice conference. It would give scope for some pupils to attend part-time and continue accessing core subjects in the mainstream whilst, in more serious cases where a child is considered to represent an ongoing violent threat, it would offer a range of full-time alternatives focused on addressing the individual causes of that child's problems.

Taken together, the provisions of the White Paper, *Every Child Matters* (2003), and the Secretary of State's call for every secondary school to be part of a group working together to manage behaviour issues from 2007 (Kelly, 2005), set out plans for a framework that could potentially deliver such a breadth of alternative options for challenging pupils. The Government hopes that by 2006 most schools will be working with other children's services via Children's Trusts to identify potentially challenging pupils early on and plan the provision they need. Some of this help will be provided to whole families through extended schools. When it comes to provision for the pupil during the school day, the Secretary of State hopes that by 2007 it will be supplied by a combination of the local authorities and the voluntary sector who will be commissioned by groups of schools using funding devolved from the local authority (Kelly, 2005).

None the less, significant further thought is needed if a coherent strategy is to be put in place that reaches every child at risk of developing challenging behaviour. A major issue will be ensuring that individualised support is triggered as a preventative measure, rather than only once schools reach the point where they deem exclusion necessary. The *Every Child Matters* reforms clearly seek to address this and putting schools, as opposed to local authorities, in the driving seat on commissioning alternative provision and behaviour support also bodes well. It should create a more unified system thereby redressing current tensions which have been identified between funding for cost-intensive full time alternative provision for excluded pupils and funding for preventative and reintegration strategies (Atkinson et al, 2004). A key concern however, remains about the rigidity of parts of the curriculum getting in the way, particularly at Key Stage 3. This is arguably the time when most preventative action is needed, given that school exclusions peak at 13 and 14 (DfES, 2005). Yet it is also the phase when the curriculum becomes most crowded, before any element of flexibility is introduced. Increasing flexibility for all pupils at this stage could create space for challenging pupils to attend a part-time alternative for a limited number of hours and have wider benefits on behaviour through facilitating a more graduated, gentler transition to secondary school. The Key Stage 3 Review being conducted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) may achieve this, though they will be limited given the Government's already stated commitment not to drop any of the foundation subjects.

If the Government are serious about facilitating space for challenging pupils to access the right provision, and keen to allow pupils this access without excluding them as many teachers are, they will need to give schools the power to suspend a far greater part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in these cases. In instances where long-term preventative support is required, schools could be able to suspend all non-core subjects (keeping maths, English and science). In more serious instances where a full-time intervention is required, they could consider giving the school the right fully to suspend the curriculum. A time limit would have to be set in most cases, and a reintegration plan in place, but in those instances where a pupil represents a continuing risk of permanent exclusion there could be far more flexibility.

Another great challenge will be in ensuring that groups of schools have the capacity to decide exactly what kind of provision is needed by each child and have the structures and skills to commission that provision effectively. Given their close work with pupils, schools have the potential to be excellent at diagnosing the precise needs of each challenging child but they need to develop close knowledge of alternatives on offer if they are to match pupils to that provision without delay. Further, as emphasised in the 2001 ippr publication on public private partnerships, in order to take on commissioning roles successfully, public sector organisations need to develop complex skills necessary for commercial negotiation, risk analysis and monitoring performance (CPPP, 2001). While schools have doubtless learnt something from the experience of commissioning soft facilities, such as school dinners and cleaning, commissioning appropriate educational provision will be a far more demanding task. And doing it in collaboration with other schools will create new organisational challenges which, as past experience with Federations suggests, most schools may not have sufficient appetite to overcome unaided (Reed, 2005).

One option would be for each group of schools to set up a 'rapid response' multi-disciplinary team of child and behaviour specialists to conduct case conferences which decide on appropriate support based on available options on a set day of the week. The group could also include members with experience of commissioning and monitoring performance of such provision. A similar mechanism has been an integral part of the approach used in Slough, where permanent exclusions where reduced from 63 to ten between 1998 and 2004. It resulted in a cut in the time that schools spent waiting for services, allowing pupils to be removed for a fixed term more readily, but rarely without an alternative being in place after a week. The director of their LEA judged it to be a cost-neutral measure (Hilliar, 2004).

Whatever solutions schools find, they will need time to set up new mechanisms and with sophisticated commissioning capacity. While they build their strength, local authorities will retain a key role.

Recommendation

The Government should support schools to move away from exclusion toward a more nuanced, preventative provision for challenging pupils which offers each pupil a menu of alternatives.

- Secondary schools should be given the power to suspend all or part of Key Stage 3 for challenging pupils in cases where appropriate alternative provision has been identified and can be accessed.

- Groups of secondary schools should move gradually toward taking full responsibility for commissioning alternative provision and behaviour support. They should make use of pooled funding to develop mechanisms for rapidly deciding what the best provision is for challenging pupils, and for commissioning that provision effectively. They should be given strong guidelines on how to effectively monitor performance.

Conclusion

The exclusion of individuals intentionally enacted by schools in response to challenging behaviour poses one of the greatest problems for the progressive and inclusive minded policy maker. Unlike other forms of exclusion, it is directly motivated by an institutional desire, and obligation, to protect and advance the well being and achievement of other members of the school community.

Our research reveals widespread support amongst school staff for a long-term aspiration to move toward zero exclusion from the mainstream. Indeed, the rhetoric of 'zero exclusion' is already in use as a motivational tool in many schools. Yet at the same time, teachers feel that permanent exclusion is a negative but necessary discipline tool, and that it must remain a last resort option.

These two strands of thinking are clearly at odds and reveal a failure to reconcile ideals with impressions of practical constraints within the current context. The policy proposals above seek to develop a future where challenging behaviour is less of a problem for schools, and where this tension will become easier to resolve. Through nurturing positive behaviour early on, improving relationships in schools and giving adequate support to those schools that face the greatest challenges, it should be possible to move a long way toward zero exclusion.

But even with the best possible strategies in place, there will still be a need to respond to diverse pupil needs with suitably diverse support and educational provision. The importance of moving away from monolithic education toward a system which is shaped "around the needs of the user" has been widely acknowledged in recent years and came across strongly in many of our interviews with school staff in relation to challenging pupils. Yet the current reliance on school exclusion seems to ignore this. The separation between pupil referral units and mainstream provision generally sets up a bi-polarised system which creates a one-way door out of the mainstream. The notion of PRUs as "catch-all" units which should be able to sweep up all local children whose behaviour cannot be responded to adequately in mainstream schools, and meet their diverse needs fully, is probably unrealistic whatever the budget available. Meanwhile in terms of fixed-term exclusion, though a minority of pupils may benefit from a "short, sharp, shock", for many pupils, simply sending them home is a wasted opportunity, often leaving negative behaviours to become deeply entrenched.

Many of the frameworks for a more nuanced system are already being put in place. It is now up to policy makers to give schools the practical help they need to turn this vision into a reality.

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