Out of site, out of mind?

An overview of provision for children and young people with behavioural needs in local authority bases and special schools, with examples of emerging good practice.

One of a series of reports following up issues identified in the report, *Better Behaviour, Better Learning.*

CONTENTS

Foreword

FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce this report which I am sure will be of value to practitioners who are seeking to improve outcomes for some of the most vulnerable learners in our society.

In HMIE's Improving Scottish Education report, published last year, we highlighted that there are real strengths, in achievement for children and young people in Scotland, but that we still need to ensure that education is still sufficiently inclusive. Substantial numbers of children and young people from vulnerable groups and disadvantaged circumstances do not sufficiently develop their skills, attain or achieve qualification.

Prior to that, in 2007, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) report on 'Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland' recognised that our school system is high performing and also highly equitable in many respects. However, it was less positive in one respect, as it also commented on the limited success of Scotland's schools in tackling those differences in outcomes that are associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

So while Scottish Education serves many young people well, there remains more to be done to ensure that all children and young people receive the support and guidance they need to maximise their achievements and be well-prepared for life in the 21st century. In particular, young people with challenging behaviour need better help to overcome their particular barriers to learning arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances.

This report is part of our commitment to continue to identify, promote and share good practice in this important area and to identify areas for improvement. The title, 'Out of site, out of mind' is designed to highlight the need to ensure that all educational provision for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs is of a consistently high quality. Our evidence shows that the quality of young people's learning experiences in off-site facilities is currently too variable. We see considerable scope for off-site bases to work more closely with mainstream schools and other partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people.

I hope this report is helpful in indicating the way forward, and wish success to all engaged in addressing this important agenda.

Dr Bill Maxwell
HM Senior Chief Inspector

Section one: Background

Out of site, out of mind? is one of a series of reports following up issues identified in the government report, *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*[1]. Since the publication of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) has published *A Climate for Learning* (2005) followed by *Case Studies of Good Practice in Improving the Climate for Learning* (2006). *Out of site, out of mind?* focuses on services for children and young people with additional support needs arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances. It evaluates the quality of provision for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs made by education authorities in on-site and off-site bases, and in special schools.

Inspectors drew on a number of sources of evidence for this report, including:

- a survey of education authorities on the range of off-site services provided and managed by them, and arrangements for assuring their quality;
- recently published HMIE reports on inspections of education authorities, schools and off-site provision, including special schools for children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN); and
- visits to a sample of bases across Scotland, most of which were off-site, during which inspectors evaluated aspects of leadership, the curriculum, meeting learning needs, partnership working and working with parents.

This report did not draw from the evidence of the effectiveness of residential special school and secure units.

In Improving Scottish Education 2005-2008, HMIE reported that aspects of the education system have moved to positions of strength and Scottish education in general is showing steady improvement. At the same time, however, a number of significant problems remain. In looking ahead at success for all learners, HMIE concluded:

'Improving the poor outcomes of some learners remains a central challenge for all establishments and services which support children and young people particularly those facing significant disadvantage'.

---

[1] Better Behaviour, Better Learning, Scottish Executive, 2001

Key aspects to be addressed are:

- identifying and tackling barriers before they become entrenched;
- personalising learning and support to take account of individual needs, choices and circumstances; and
- relentlessly reinforcing high expectations.

Individuals, establishments and services cannot on their own deliver what is required in today's demanding context. Priorities are to strengthen partnerships across sectors and services in ways that create unified learning and support systems that ease progression for learners.

The frameworks of *Getting It Right For Every Child*, *Early Years Framework, Curriculum For Excellence* and *Skills for Scotland* provide the foundations for all children to achieve successful life outcomes.

Section two: Provision for children and young people with SEBN

During the period from May 2004 to December 2007, 18 reports of inspections of the educational functions of Councils were published. These reports included evaluations of aspects of provision for children and young people with additional support needs, including provision for children and young people with needs arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances. In 16 of the 18 reports, overall provision for children and young people with additional support needs was evaluated as satisfactory or better. Provision was very good in two, and good in seven. However, within the broad category of provision for all children and young people with additional support needs, specific provision for those with social, emotional and behavioural needs was less effective.

In the survey, HMIE requested information about the range of services provided by education authorities for children and young people with additional support needs arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances.

We asked about:

- the form of services currently provided for this group of children and young people;
- approaches to managing the services it provides; and
- the arrangements for quality assuring such services.

HMIE surveyed education authorities across Scotland which were not undergoing inspection of their education functions or arrangements for child protection in session 2007/2008, a total of 26 authorities.

Just under half of the education authorities surveyed provided a response. From the returns to the survey, a clear message emerged that there was variability across authorities in the types of provision for this group of children

and young people. Education authorities were invited to describe the range of centrally-managed support services which they provided for children and young people with challenging behaviour. Councils reported services as including:

- behavioural support coordinators appointed to schools as part of staged intervention;
- centrally-based support teams for primary and secondary sectors;
- reintegration to mainstream services;
- out-of-school tuition services;
- joint projects with social services, including vocational training for young people exhibiting very challenging behaviour in S3 and S4; and
- joint projects with independent providers.

Section three: Supporting services

Policy

A common feature across education authorities is their strong commitment to supporting and promoting inclusion and maintaining young people in their local mainstream schools whenever possible. All education authorities had given leadership, direction and guidance to schools and services for at least some aspects of provision for children and young people with SEBN. Inspection evidence indicated that authorities were at different stages of developing policy.

A common strength in those authorities which had established coherent policies was the development of effective multi-agency working. Where agencies work effectively together, staff are deployed appropriately within the strategic priorities that have been identified to meet the needs of young people with challenging behaviour. Another important strength has been clear guidance for schools on the range and availability of, and access to, additional and alternative provision for these young people. Such guidance is developed within the accepted principle of supporting them as fully as possible within mainstream classes.

Those authorities with well-developed policies on promoting positive behaviour have provided very good encouragement and guidance for schools to help them deliver a flexible curriculum to engage disaffected children and young people. They have also supported schools in developing learning and teaching approaches which are designed to motivate these young people and involve them in their own learning.

In the best practice, policy guidance for schools and agencies was comprehensive and effective. The approach to inclusion in one authority was reported to be outstanding.

One education authority provided a well-considered strategic framework which was helping to deliver high-quality support to children and young people, successfully promoting their personal and social development and achievements. Pupils with a wide range of additional support needs, including social and emotional needs, benefited from flexible curricula, well-organised in-school support systems and additional provision. Staff from Education and Leisure Services worked in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of individual children and young people. The Educational Psychology Service was delivering a broad and balanced range of services to improve behaviour, learning and attainment. Educational psychologists had assisted in raising attainment, reducing the number of exclusions and promoting inclusive practices.

However, a substantial minority of authorities still had work to do to ensure that young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs are supported effectively. In some authorities which had developed promising advice on strategic approaches to providing for these young people, schools and services were inconsistent in how they implemented that advice. Authorities needed to provide these schools and services with more detailed guidance on implementing policy, and on monitoring its effectiveness.

Quality assurance

Arrangements for evaluating provision for young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs in order to bring about improvements were also variable in quality. Many education authorities had continued to focus on developing their approaches to implementing the *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* joint action plan, rather than on evaluation for improvement.

In some authorities, special schools and off-site bases for children and young people with SEBN were expected to adopt the same protocols for self-evaluation and planning improvements as mainstream schools and were monitored in the same way by education officers. In the best practice, arrangements to support the implementation of these protocols was very well resourced and included key documentation, effective multi-agency working and effective staff development in applying benchmarks. However, some authorities had scope for providing further staff development on quality assurance for senior staff and education officers responsible for monitoring provision in the range of off-site establishments for children and young people with SEBN. Where they had set up specific projects, education authorities had often developed good arrangements to monitor the impact on behaviour and progress.

A service in one authority, run by a Child Care Trust, provided very good, well-coordinated and individualised support for pupils with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs. Its focused assessment and intervention approaches ensured that young people were supported in their local communities. Young people continued wherever possible to be educated within their own school with additional support, sometimes supporting wider achievement through use of flexible activities. The project had undertaken several thorough external evaluations. Good plans were in place to increase the service substantially.

Authorities continued to use the multi-agency steering groups they had set up to develop positive behaviour approaches and arrangements to meet the needs of young people with social and emotional and behavioural needs, to monitor developments and plan further improvements. Some good practice in monitoring schools' approaches to behaviour management had continued since the publication of *A Climate for Learning*. This practice included monitoring the appropriateness of referrals to the authority, the number and nature of referrals to the Children's Reporter, the outcome of HMIE reports on individual establishments and trends in attendance and exclusion figures.

Effective approaches to assuring the quality of provision at this time did not yet include responses to corporate parenting and strategies aligned with the outcomes from *Getting It Right For Every Child*.

Staff development

Since *A Climate for Learning*, authorities had improved staff development on key aspects of learning and teaching linked to promoting positive behaviour. *A Climate for Learning* noted that staff development in some authorities did not focus sufficiently on links between effective learning and teaching and behaviour management. Increasingly, authorities were providing staff development which supported schools in responding confidently to *Curriculum for Excellence*. For example, staff in secondary schools were developing confidence and skill in providing more flexible programmes, including vocational and college-linked courses, specifically designed to meet the needs of disaffected young people and those with additional support needs arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances. However there was still much work to do in this area. Staff development on *Curriculum for Excellence* and other key initiatives, such as *Assessment is for Learning*, ensured that schools were making significant progress in improving learning and teaching. Increasingly, staff development programmes were making links between effective learning and teaching and behaviour management and focused on actively engaging all young people in their learning.
In mainstream and special schools the focus of staff development had increasingly been on ensuring young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience. Authorities provided a range of programmes including The Motivated School, Restorative approaches, Solution Oriented Approaches, Nurture Groups, and Cool in School. A common thread to these approaches

is that they place the child or young person at the centre of the process rather than the behaviour. Staff from specialist provision and on-site and off-site provision had taken up these approaches when offered. The Scottish Government's Positive Behaviour team has provided training on these approaches across Scotland.

In some very good practice, Educational Psychology Services (EPS) had made important contributions to professional development programmes. In the best practice, the EPS had provided training to empower staff to develop their own projects to promote positive behaviour.

In one authority, the Educational Psychology Service trained school staff to design and lead their own projects in schools. Over half the primary schools and several secondary schools had taken part. Themes had covered play, communication and resilience and wellbeing. Each school monitored the impact of their project on its pupils. In primary school projects, children played more playground games, valued their experiences highly and behaved better in the playgrounds. In secondary schools there was a substantial increase in lunchtime clubs designed to increase emotional wellbeing and more physically active pupils. Staff and pupils believed that there had been a positive impact on the overall behaviour of pupils.

Specific approaches across authorities

Almost all authorities now had well-established staged intervention approaches to managing the additional support needs of children and young people. They also used these approaches to put in place and monitor provision where needs arose from social and emotional factors and family circumstances. In the most effective arrangements, young people and their parents were fully involved in discussions and decisions about suitable support. In the best practice, joint assessment teams managing staged intervention were having a beneficial impact on improving behaviour.

Inspection evidence provided many examples of specific approaches which were very successful at meeting the needs of disaffected children and young people and those with very challenging behaviour.

Effective approaches included:

- clear guidance on the use and deployment of appropriately trained staff in school behaviour bases, combined with well-focused behaviour plans;
- appropriate and well-organised use of college placements and vocational courses for disaffected young people as they prepare to leave school;
- the work of the EPS in promoting emotional wellbeing and resilience, through training staff, contributing to multi-agency working and developing programmes for individual young people; and

- the provision of alternative programmes for children with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs, often in partnership with other providers.

Effective approaches have also included effective multi-agency working across a range of services including social work, health and police and establishments and agencies such as community learning, colleges, enterprise agencies and businesses and the voluntary sector.

> *In one authority, a number of initiatives had been piloted aimed at improving pupils' behaviour. Successful approaches were characterised by a team approach and multi-agency working. The appointment of campus police officers in three secondary schools had helped to prevent youth crime and improve school and community links. Further initiatives have included the introduction of school-based social workers in five schools, social justice managers in three schools and behaviour managers in three schools. These posts had contributed to finding alternatives to exclusion and engaging vulnerable pupils. In primary and secondary schools levels of exclusions were well below the national average and that of comparator authorities. In secondary schools there had been a particularly notable reduction.*

A promising approach has been the use of nurture groups. Nurture groups give additional support to vulnerable young children displaying immature and anti-social behaviour which limits their ability to learn. Almost all authorities in Scotland had set up nurture groups as part of a wider early intervention programme. HMIE has recently published *Nurture Groups - a portrait of current practice in Scottish primary school*s which illustrates effective practice in the use of nurture groups and stimulates reflection and debate about them.

Section four: The quality of provision in on-site bases

In the best practice, designated bases in mainstream schools provide a supportive ethos for young people in danger of being excluded. They provide them with appropriate experiences, and clear targets designed to help them progress steadily within the curriculum and improve their behaviour. In the best practice, staff monitor young people's progress closely against these targets and help them return as soon as possible to mainstream classwork.

On-site bases for young people with behavioural needs are a more common feature of practice in secondary schools. Around 25% of secondary schools have on-site bases and, overall, most schools made good use of them. HMIE published inspection reports on 179 secondary schools between January 2005 and December 2008. In most of these reports, inspectors evaluated provision as good or better, with major strengths in some 20% overall.

Leadership and vision

In the best practice in schools, on-site provision for children and young people with behavioural needs was part of a coherent approach to inclusion and to meeting the needs of all young people. Leadership in these schools was committed and resourceful in promoting the education of young people with additional support needs. Leaders had encouraged and promoted inclusion among staff, and had provided relevant guidance and policy support and appropriate staff development in managing challenging behaviour.

In one primary school, the headteacher demonstrated a clear vision for promoting positive behaviour. She had a strong commitment to the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural needs and had strongly advocated their right to feel a full part of the school community and to access the mainstream curriculum. She had a collegiate approach to improving the school. Appropriate policies on assertive discipline, promoting positive behaviour and anti-bullying had been developed with the involvement of staff, children and parents. Her vision was clearly understood by staff in and beyond the behaviour unit, who shared it and acted consistently upon it.

The curriculum and meeting the needs of all learners

The most effective on-site bases in secondary schools provided a curriculum which promoted young people's social and emotional development effectively and helped them to develop strategies to regulate their own behaviour. Those young people with more challenging behaviour had individualised educational programmes (IEPs) to help meet their needs. IEPs were very helpful when they included targets designed to enhance young people's personal and social development, and develop their coping skills and self-esteem. On-site bases provided environments which enabled young people to progress in the key skills of literacy and numeracy and to achieve in a wide range of areas. Staff from these on-site bases worked well with class teachers to help young people to make good progress in their normal classwork. In the best practice, the provision of these bases had a positive impact on reducing levels of exclusion and improving attendance. Staff in the most effective on-site bases aimed to return young people to mainstream classes as soon as possible.

The curriculum

In good practice in secondary schools, bases were working closely with subject departments to provide a wider range of programmes for young people displaying challenging behaviour from S3 onwards. Staff made good use of the design principles from *Curriculum for Excellence*. Such programmes included relevant courses and units with National Qualifications (NQs) at Access 3 and Intermediate 1. Some programmes extended choice towards vocational options, in some cases including college-linked courses, and learning in the community which led to awards from bodies other than Scottish Qualifications Authority. Schools and bases also collaborated well

with other providers to promote wider achievement, through for example contributing to outdoor education and supporting young people's community involvement.

Meeting learning needs

A major strategy for meeting the needs of all young people with additional support needs is through the provision of individualised and well-judged targets for attainment and achievement.

Staff working in the base for pupils with behavioural needs provided very good support. They devised clear behaviour targets and coping strategies for pupils to help them deal with their behaviour throughout the day. Staff met with pupils regularly to support them in understanding and modifying their behaviour. Some pupils were behaving better in mainstream classes as a result.

The Personal Support base had very effective arrangements for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural needs. This provision specified clear outcomes for pupils and monitored and reviewed these regularly. Pupils receiving this additional help were making good progress in improving their behaviour and learning.

In schools with effective practice, teachers and support staff worked effectively in mainstream classes to continue support for young people with challenging behaviour whom they supported in the bases. They briefed subject teachers well on the specific learning challenges facing individual young people and engaged them in planning and monitoring their personal and learning targets.

A highly-successful support base provided additional support and respite where required. Staff had established a positive and supportive learning environment in the base, with pupils engaging well in learning tasks. The school's system of alerts was effective in helping to identify pupils who needed additional support in their learning or to help improve their behaviour. Behaviour support teachers and auxiliaries worked very well with classroom teachers to provide well-judged support in mainstream classes.

Partnership working and success in working with others

Overall, staff involved in on–site provision worked well and often very effectively with a range of partners to develop multi-agency joint working in assessment, planning and provision. In the best practice, school-based

liaison teams had a clear rationale for assessment and intervention. They identified key workers to take forward agreed actions and report back to review meetings.

> *The behaviour support service had built commendable partnerships to meet the needs of the pupils with whom they worked. The school's liaison group made an important contribution to meeting pupils' complex social, behavioural and learning needs. A wide range of partners worked closely to assess and plan effective provision. Some pupils had made good progress in returning to normal classwork. The school had explored innovative approaches to enhance the self-esteem of pupils at risk of exclusion, such as the successful programme of outdoor education.*

In the best practice, staff from a range of agencies, for example, school nurses supported both young people and staff in meeting learning needs. Social care staff provided good support at points of transition and staff from community learning contributed to provision outwith the school day. Psychologists provided effective liaison in developing and providing strategies for young people to confront and improve their own behaviour.

Developing partnership with parents

Relationships between staff in on-site bases and parents were often a major strength. In the best practice, staff ensured that instances of positive behaviour were communicated to parents and carers. Home-school workers in behaviour units working with cluster primary schools developed positive relationships with parents. In one unit, staff sometimes undertook home visits and provided a family fun day for young people, and their families.

> *The children and families worker liaised closely with staff from a school-based community partnership, to provide a wide variety of support to young people and their families including home visits, group work with young people and tutoring. Such support helped them to overcome barriers to learning and had made a positive contribution to raising the aspirations of parents and pupils, and to improving attendance. Referrals to the Children's Reporter had reduced significantly and pupils had a very good relationship with the local community police.*

On-site bases often gave support to young people to modify their behaviour. However, even those schools with very good support bases sometimes struggled to cope with young people with exceptionally challenging behaviour. This situation has not changed since *A Climate for Learning.* Although the number of such young people was small, all authorities need to ensure they had sufficient access to a wider range of experiences and specialist staff.

In mainstream schools, provision for vulnerable young people had a number of weaknesses. In some schools, these weaknesses included the contribution of subject staff to meeting young people needs even where specialist behaviour support was evaluated positively. Senior staff needed to provide class teachers with more guidance.

In some schools, on-site bases were used as 'cooling off' areas. They were usually staffed by the senior management team or subject teachers rather than by behaviour support or support for learning staff. Teachers who staffed these bases rarely interacted positively with young people. A small number of teachers were too ready to exclude young people from class and used these facilities disproportionately. Overall these bases did not help young people to develop positive attitudes to their learning or improve their behaviour. Schools were increasingly restricting their use.

Some behaviour support bases in mainstream schools had insufficient links with other classes and departments. For example, they may not have worked collaboratively with departments to support learning for programmes leading to qualifications. In a substantial minority of these bases, staff did not have clear targets to help young people make good progress in the curriculum including developing their personal and social skills. In some schools, parents of vulnerable young people did not feel that they were always fully involved in their children's education.

Section five: The quality of provision in off-site bases

This report deals with off-site facilities which are provided and managed by education authorities for children and young people with additional support needs arising from social and emotional factors and family circumstances. Off-site bases and special day schools are part of a continuum of support for these young people. Off-site bases are intended as short-term placements and young people remain on the roll of the mainstream school. Day special schools register young people on their own rolls. Residential special schools and secure accommodation are, for the most part, not provided or managed by education authorities and do not feature in this report.

HMIE published ten reports on schools and off-site facilities relevant to this report. In addition, inspectors visited a sample of ten off-site establishments across five authorities, including seven secondary, one primary and two providing for young people in the 10-14 age group. The quality of provision in these establishments varied considerably.

Effective leadership and vision

In the best practice, day special schools and off-site bases were supported very well by their education authorities. Headteachers, senior and other staff in schools and bases worked closely with education officers. Schools and bases were linked to other support services across the authority. These

authorities operated systematic approaches to staged intervention and assessment.

Leadership within the support base was very good. A senior manager had worked closely with staff and the authority to develop a clear vision and direction for the base, set within the context of behaviour support services across the authority.

Those schools and bases which demonstrated important or major weaknesses in provision, had not received sufficient support and challenge from their education authorities. Those which had strong leadership were characterised by clear aims and values, supportive social and learning environments for children and young people, good quality relationships throughout including teamwork among staff, and effective partnerships with parents and other agencies.

The headteacher and staff gave a high priority to creating an effective climate for learning. Relationships between pupils and staff were excellent.

The headteacher provided a strong lead and had promoted successful teamwork in the school. He had placed the behaviour management of pupils at the centre of the school's vision and aims, and demonstrated a very high level of commitment towards pupils' care and welfare. He had established productive partnerships between the school and the community.

In the best practice, senior managers encouraged leadership, creativity and ownership at all levels.

The principal teacher was responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the base. She was a model of good practice in teaching, and made a very positive contribution to the development of less experienced staff. She had established clear guidance for the ongoing management of the base, helped staff and ensured very good support for pupils.

In schools and bases where leadership was very good, young people had high-quality learning experiences and made good progress in modifying their behaviour and in their learning. In such cases, arrangements to monitor the quality of provision and build capacity for improvement were good or very good.

The school used very effective approaches in reviewing the quality of its performance. Staff kept a clear focus on improving learning and teaching. Pupils regularly evaluated courses and learning. Teachers were expected to act on pupils' evaluations. Parents were regularly asked for their views and these were acted on. The headteacher, depute headteacher and principal teachers visited classes to observe learning and teaching and gave clear feedback to staff. Staff were increasingly reflective practitioners. Overall, the highly-effective leadership of the headteacher, the strongly-supportive management team and the effective procedures for self-evaluation gave the school a significant capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum and meeting needs of all learners

The curriculum

A common strength in most day special schools and bases was the quality of the personal and social development (PSD) programme. In the best practice, the design and the delivery of the PSD programme was impressive. Such programmes were comprehensive, imaginative and negotiated with young people. Teaching and learning was of a high quality. Through these programmes, children and young people developed their confidence, self-esteem and a greater appreciation of others. They had many very good opportunities to achieve. In the most successful programmes, young people made good progress in returning to mainstream.

The school had been recognised nationally for its programme of Expanded Learning Opportunities. In particular, the quality of personal and social development within the school was excellent. Pupils were actively involved in their learning in PSD classes. Strong links had been formed with a local hospice, whose staff had helped raise young people's awareness of a healthy lifestyle and cancer prevention. The programme gave pupils very effective experiences in employment, outdoor activities and college-linked courses.

In part-time provision or shared placements between the base and the young person's mainstream school, the responsibility for delivering most of the curriculum lay with the mainstream school. In good practice, the curriculum in shared placements embraced emotional literacy and resilience, core skills, including literacy and numeracy, and information and communications technology (ICT).

> *Programmes contained clear learning outcomes linked to key themes and pupils' personal targets, which enabled them to experience success. Pupils frequently reviewed their own progress. They enjoyed participating in a range of practical and stimulating activities, including using ICT to design presentations. Many of the activities contained elements of fun and competition which motivated pupils. Pupils worked regularly in groups to develop their communication skills.*

The best practice in schools and bases providing full-time education included a curriculum which had a clear rationale and made effective use of the design principles of a *Curriculum for Excellence*. The curriculum was broad and balanced. It ensured young people could make progress through the stages and was relevant to their needs and interests. In secondary provision, young people were able to attain course and unit awards for NQs. In a number of centres some young people were able to gain awards through bodies such as Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN) or through the completion of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. In some instances, centres recognised and valued young people's achievements through awarding their own certificates. Some off-site bases were offering vocational programmes such as courses in car mechanics.

> *To promote achievement for all pupils, the school provided a wide range of subjects at different levels, including vocational options and out-of-school learning opportunities. Particular features of the curriculum included providing good opportunities to gain a wide range of NQ units; very effective use of external agencies such as further education colleges and training providers to enhance learning (pupils were gaining skills in car mechanics, landscape gardening, and performing); and very good opportunities to engage in community-based projects.*

However, such models of good practice do not reflect the quality of provision generally available. The curriculum of schools and bases often lacked breadth and did not sufficiently use the NQ and other certificating frameworks to motivate young people and recognise their achievements. In the majority of establishments, learners' experiences were limited by the short length of the school week or school day. Overall, many bases and schools were not making sufficient use of the design principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*. The overall quality of attainment and improvements in performance was good or better in only a minority of bases and schools.

Meeting needs of all children and young people

In the best practice, staff planned carefully to meet the needs of individual young people. They identified the strengths and development needs of each child or young person and set them relevant and detailed targets to guide their

progress. These targets were particularly strong on identifying and guiding improvements in behaviour.

Teachers and pupils worked together to write clear, specific targets for pupils' personal, social and emotional development which they shared with parents and pupils' mainstream schools. Pupils were clear about their targets and had frequent opportunities to discuss their progress with their teachers. Pupils were making very good progress in the specific programmes they were following, for example, learning to control their anger and learning to be more aware of the needs of others.

In the majority of establishments the planning of targets for children and young people for aspects of their learning beyond improved behaviour were less well developed. Few young people in units had coordinated support plans, though some had complex and multiple needs, requiring significant levels of support from agencies.

In the best practice, schools and bases took imaginative steps to widen the horizons of their young people. Learners took part in a wide range of activities and experiences, including residential trips, links with local professional football clubs, and active outdoor pursuits. Young people benefited from vocational experiences and activities such as training for Sports Leadership awards and successful sports coaching.

In one school, the involvement of speakers and visitors from the community, including a recovering drug addict and a teenage mother stimulated very worthwhile discussions. Pupils were encouraged to review regularly the PSD programme and make suggestions for improvements. They contributed very effectively to the school's decision-making process through, for example, the school council. At breaks, pupils took responsibility for a variety of tasks. The school organised a very extensive range of activities outwith school hours, including residential visits and sporting, musical and cultural activities. Pupils were confident, demonstrated teamwork skills and some showed considerable creative talent.

Partnership working and success in working with others

Partnership working had some notable strengths. Some day special schools for young people with very challenging behaviour had developed high-quality joint working with agencies such as health and care and education. Best practice involved the regular review of young people's progress within out-of-school provision. In some units, key workers coordinated the planning and review procedures for young people. One unit worked effectively as an outreach service which offered further support from a teacher or a behaviour assistant for re-integrating young people into their mainstream school. Some units involved partner agencies well in joint approaches to meet the needs of

young people. Examples of such good practice included good links with psychological services, and review and monitoring provided within local assessment or liaison groups. Other examples included medical teams which promoted health and wellbeing by offering counselling or smoking cessation support.

In the best practice, staff in off-site bases worked closely with staff from the young people's mainstream school. Effective coordination between the base and the mainstream school ensured that both could build effectively on young people's prior achievements. An important measure of an off-site base's success in supporting young people lay in the degree to which they helped them return successfully to full-time mainstream education.

Placements had clear aims and focused on achieving successful outcomes for pupils. Pupils made very good progress in improving their self-awareness and their attitudes to learning. Most succeeded in returning to full-time mainstream placements and others transferred successfully to other appropriate specialist provision.

A common weakness in partnerships with off-site provision was the lack of active engagement by the mainstream school. Few school staff visited off-site provision to monitor young people's progress or to consider the possibility of some form of re-integration. The quality of cooperative working was variable and lacked effective coordination, planning, assessment and review. As a result, young people had too few opportunities to return to their mainstream school, especially at the later stages of compulsory schooling.

Developing partnership with parents

Staff in almost all off-site bases and day special schools established positive links with parents and carers and in some instances worked to repair relationships between education services and parents. Parents welcomed the more positive engagement with staff in the units and valued staff contacting them to pass on positive comments about their children's achievements.

The quality of partnership with parents and the community was very good. The school communicated effectively with parents about their children's progress and when planning transitions in and out of placement. Link books between home, base and school kept everyone well informed. Parents were very positive about the school.

A few units did not actively engage parents in joint work to improve the social, emotional and behavioural outcomes for their children.

Section six: Key features for improving practice in schools, on-site bases and off-site units

This report has important messages for all services for children, including schools and education authorities. They should consider the following key points when taking action to improve services.

- secure high-quality outcomes for children and young people with social, emotional or behavioural needs across council services;

- have a clear strategy to provide all young people, including those with social, emotional or behavioural needs with their entitlement to a broad general education;

- develop more innovative approaches to the curriculum for those with social, emotional and behavioural needs, taking into account the values, capacities and principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*;

- ensure off-site bases and mainstream schools work together to provide a clear rationale and objective for a shared placement, identifying roles and responsibilities;

- ensure mainstream schools and partners meet the needs of children and young people with social, emotional or behavioural needs by high-quality coordinated planning and review in line with GIRFEC principles;

- have high quality learning experiences leading to successful attainment and achievement for all children and young people with social, emotional or behavioural needs;

- develop effective partnerships with parents from an early stage, to help improve their children's social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing; and

- implement rigorous quality assurance arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of curriculum, learning and achievement and partnership working as a basis for further improvement.

Further information

HMIE publications

Developing Successful Learners in Nurturing Schools: The Impact of Nurture Groups in Primary Schools (2009)
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/ingps.html

Improving Scottish Education 2005-2008 (2009)
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/ise09.html

Count Us In: Improving the education of our looked after children (2008)
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/cuiielac.html

Improving the Odds: Improving Life Chances (2008)
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/itoilc.html

How good is our school? HMIE (2007)
http://www.HMIE.gov.uk

Case Studies of Good Practice in improving the Climate for Learning (2006)
http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/hmie_csgp.html

Further relevant information in this area includes:

Curriculum for Excellence
http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/index.asp

These Are Our Bairns, A Guide for Community Planning Partnerships and Being a Good Corporate Parent. (2008)
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/236882/0064989.pdf

Early Years and Early Intervention: A joint Scottish Government and COSLA Policy Statement (2008).
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428

Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better – Scottish Executive (2007).
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/01/15084446

Guide to Getting It Right for every Child (2008)
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/22091734/0

More Choices, More Chances. (2006)
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/06/13100205/0

www.hmie.gov.uk

Further information is available from:

HM Inspectorate of Education
Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
EH54 6GA

Tel: 01506 600 200
Fax: 01506 600 337
Email: enquiries@hmie.gsi.gov.uk

Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
423
Committed to clearer communication

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE