

SEVEN KINGS HIGH SCHOOL

A Specialist Science & Technology College

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'Mentality, Excellence & Opportunity'

26 March 2008

Secretary of State

BEHAVIOUR REVIEW

In December you invited me to undertake a review of issues around school discipline and pupil behaviour, including the progress made in implementing the agenda set by the former Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline, which I chaired. I am delighted to have had this opportunity and now submit my initial report.

My overall assessment is that progress has been very considerable. Action has been taken on nearly all the recommendations of the Practitioners' Group's report and, with the support of the teacher professional associations, there has been a wide take up of our good practice advice to schools. It is a particular pleasure to see the range of developments in the Children's Plan which so well reflect and build on the philosophy of our report, Learning Behaviour. I applaud the focus on early intervention and support for both parents and children.

Of course, with the passage of time since the Practitioners' report was published in October 2005, new issues have emerged and some existing issues become more apparent. As you requested, my report identifies a number of these and suggests how some existing initiatives may need further development. That includes, for example, assisting the implementation of good practice in dealing with pupils' special educational needs (including those with mental ill health); developing the Safer School Partnerships which place police officers in schools; and further action to tackle the relatively recent problem of cyberbullying.

You also particularly asked me to look at the school partnerships for improving behaviour and tackling persistent absence. I have begun work on this, including taking soundings from a number of professional colleagues. My report includes a specific recommendation that the expectation on participation by all secondary schools should now be enshrined in legislation.

These are very much my initial thoughts. In the next stage of my review I propose to look in more depth at the operation of the school partnerships, with a view to identifying examples of transferable good local practice that may help improve further the effectiveness of the partnerships as a whole. I also propose to look further at issues around promoting consistency of practice in learning and teaching, promoting parental responsibility, and helping schools exercise their responsibilities for pupils whose special educational needs may give rise to behavioural difficulties.

In carrying this work forward, I shall be taking advice from the teacher professional association and other colleagues. Their support and involvement was crucial to the success of the 2005 report and I look forward to working further with them and with your Department on these important issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Steer', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Sir Alan Steer

1. Introduction.

1.i Progress in implementing the recommendations of the Practitioners' Group has been very positive and it is pleasing to see Ofsted report that the number of schools having inadequate behaviour standards is at the lowest level ever recorded.

1.ii There has been insufficient time so far to examine all aspects of my new remit and in certain important areas factual information is not yet available due to the short period since Learning Behaviour was published. This is an initial response to the remit.

2. Practitioners' Group recommendations: progress made.

2.i Considerable progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the 2005 report Learning Behaviour and this I welcome warmly. Action has taken place on nearly all of the 72 recommendations, 19 of which were immediately endorsed in the Schools White Paper, including some which can be found within the 2006 Education Act. Areas where there has been particular progress are :

- The introduction of statutory powers for teachers on the 'right to discipline';
- The changes relating to school exclusion and the conduct of independent appeal panels;
- The consolidation of the programme Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL);
- The new guidance relating to bullying, including the higher profile for homophobic bullying.

2.ii The endorsement of the report by the Government and by the teacher professional associations was pleasing and important. As chair of the Practitioners' Group I record my gratitude to both parties. With their support the Learning Behaviour report has had a significant impact and 14,500 copies have been sent on request to schools.

2.iii Now more than at any time in the recent past we have the opportunity to further the ideas of the Practitioners' Group. The Children's Plan in its aspirations and plans directly supports Practitioner recommendations and beliefs. It provides a moral, but practical context, which is likely to have a profoundly positive impact on the development of children and their behaviour in school and society. Further important research and review is also taking place, all of which is likely to promote the achievement of those goals. I welcome these initiatives.

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services review by Jo Davison.
- Review by Lord Bradley on children and young people in contact with the Youth Justice system.
- Review by Dr. Tanya Byron on the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful material on the Internet and in video games.
- Child Health strategy.
- Youth and Alcohol strategy.

2.iv There has also been positive progress in improving the provision for children with special educational needs (SEN) and this should be recognised. Despite the progress made I believe that much remains to be done and I will return to SEN in section 3 and in my final report.

2.v I am particularly pleased to note the growing recognition that the large majority of the young are well behaved and a credit to their families and their teachers. Society needs to focus on acknowledging and promoting the positive as by doing so it reduces alienation and negativity. To demonise children is to create problems rather than provide solutions.

2.vi The Children's Plan confirms the obvious truth that governments do not bring up children; parents do. The same truth applies to establishing good behaviour in schools. Government provides the context and the support, but it is for parents, teachers and schools to teach children the behaviour skills they need. Effective schools are able to have a positive impact on the behaviour of their students regardless of the level of difficulty of their circumstances. For this to occur there need to be clear strategies which are used consistently in behaviour management and in learning and teaching in the classroom.

3. School behaviour partnerships.

3.i The Practitioners' Group in recommendations 3.6.1. and 3.6.2. strongly supported the principle that all schools needed to work in collaboration in order to promote good standards of behaviour in their schools. This remains my opinion.

3.ii While Local Authority returns indicate that over 9/10ths of secondary schools are involved in behaviour partnerships, informal soundings make me sceptical that all of these schools are actually engaged in meaningful partnership working. Outside the early pathfinder partnerships, credible evidence is lacking on the impact partnerships are making where they do exist. I will return to this issue in my final report.

3.iii Good collaboration between schools is often prevented by what are perceived as unfair practices operated by a minority of schools in admissions and exclusions. Where these practices take place they damage partnership and damage the development of good behaviour standards in the area. I warmly welcome the changes since 2005 relating to school admissions and recent announcements of measures to strengthen further the implementation of the Admissions Code. These need to be applied consistently to all schools, including Foundation schools and Academies. A school that permanently excludes a child should expect to receive a permanently excluded child on the principle of 'one out, one in' as recommended by the Practitioners' Group. This should not affect the protection given to schools in special measures.

3.iv It remains my firm view that all secondary schools – including new **and** existing Academies, Foundation schools and Pupil Referral Units – should participate in behaviour partnerships. This expectation should now be enshrined in legislation (or, in the case of existing Academies, in a clear formal commitment by each of them to participate).

4. Emerging new issues.

4.i In 2005 the Practitioners' Group worked within a tight timescale and within a specific remit. As a result some issues could not be considered. Other issues have arisen since 2005 as a result of the ongoing debate and social change.

4.ii **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.** In my opinion the behavioural problems experienced by some children are caused by mental ill health. I share the concern of many of my headteacher colleagues at the apparent variation in the provision and standards of CAMHS. I therefore warmly welcome the review of CAMHS being led by Jo Davison and look forward to the findings of her group.

4.iii **Special Educational Needs.** (Time prevented the Practitioners' Group from examining the links between SEN and behaviour.) The 2002 Audit Commission report on SEN suggested that standards of provision for pupils with SEN varied greatly across the country and between schools. Their report claimed that the management of SEN was too bureaucratic and that there was an insufficient focus on what worked rather than on the process of resource allocation. Since 2002 there have been very significant developments.

- SEN Value for money toolkit for schools developed by the Audit Commission and the National Strategies. This will support schools in evaluating their use of SEN linked resources and the impact they make.
- Children's Plan commitment to develop better data and guidance for schools on how children with SEN are progressing.
- Children's Plan request to HMCI to review progress on SEN in 2009 with regard to the impact of personalised learning.
- Inclusion development programme launched October 2007.

4.iv Future action needs to take place to assist the implementation of good SEN practice throughout the system. Children and parents are entitled to expect the same quality of care and support regardless of the school they attend, or the area in which they live. The plans to provide better initial teacher training provision for SEN and the provision to school improvement partners of new guidance on working with vulnerable children are among a number of positive proposed actions, but may on their own be insufficient to create the system change that is necessary. Early intervention with SEN issues is often the way to prevent children falling behind, which can in turn lead to difficulties with behaviour. I am sympathetic to the view that primary education needs ring fenced resources to create the capacity to intervene. Where it is possible schools need greater control over resources and decision making so that they can exercise proper responsibility for the children in their care. I wish to return to these issues in my final report.

4.v Schools need to be able to rely on high quality **Alternative Provision** as part of their behaviour management strategies. Communities need to know that excluded pupils, and other young people for whom mainstream schools are not suitable, are nonetheless receiving a good quality education. Whilst some alternative provision, such as some Pupil Referral Units, is of good quality, the system is not currently arranged to ensure a high level of accountability and performance across the board. I therefore welcome the announcement in the Children's Plan of measures to increase accountability in this part of the education sector, and would welcome the opportunity to work with the DCSF as they develop their proposals alongside my review.

4.vi **Cyberbullying.** This is a matter of serious concern affecting both children and adults in schools. All forms of bullying are unacceptable in a civilised society and it is important that this aspect of bullying is taken seriously at all levels. I welcome the inclusion of guidance on cyberbullying in the recent anti-bullying document, Safe to Learn. I also welcome the actions of DCSF in working with Childnet and in establishing a Cyberbullying Taskforce. Success in dealing with cyberbullying will require all relevant parties to work closely together with the recognition that this is a problem which is difficult to resolve.

4.vii When schools review their bullying policies and strategies they need to ensure that Cyberbullying is given prominence. Children need to be taught responsible behaviour in using new technologies and this should form part of teaching programmes and be consistently promoted. Parents need to be alerted to the possible dangers arising from the misuse of the new technologies and their support enlisted.

4.viii Cyberbullying is a relatively recent problem. To date concern has been on the impact it makes on children. However, it has been helpful for professional associations to remind us that cyberbullying also affects staff. The Cyberbullying Taskforce should be asked to review the support available to school staff subjected to cyberbullying, including whether specific guidance would be appropriate.

4.ix **Safer School Partnerships.** Where these partnerships exist there is evidence that they are effective in improving behaviour and attendance. The extension of these partnerships should be encouraged and be given greater priority by schools and the police.

4.x **Parental responsibility.** It was the view of the Practitioners that good behaviour in schools and society requires a clear understanding by all parties of their rights and their responsibilities. The Government took up our recommendations in this area, for example by making parents responsible for their children's whereabouts during the first five days of an exclusion, introducing mandatory reintegration interviews following longer fixed period exclusions and giving schools extended powers to agree parenting contracts and apply for parenting orders. However, some school leaders perceive the Children's Plan as emphasising the rights of parents while being less clear as to their responsibilities with regard to schools and the education of their children. It might be helpful to place a new emphasis on parental responsibility. Clarifying parental responsibilities should be seen as being supportive rather than being punitive and is closely linked with the provision of support to families as specified in the Children's Plan. I refer back to my earlier comments regarding the Parent Support Adviser initiative. I would like to return to the issue of parental responsibility as I take my work forward.

5. Practitioner recommendations: areas for further development.

5.i Parent Support Advisers. To enable the most vulnerable, or disengaged children to gain full benefit from strategies in behaviour management, schools need the capacity to provide high quality support to the child and to the parents. Without that capacity schools will be unable to meet the aspirations contained within the Children's Plan. I welcomed the government support in December 2005 in funding a two year pilot in providing Parent Support Advisers in 20 Local Authorities. I warmly welcome the commitment to continue this work. I remain convinced that extending the range of skills present within the school work force and basing support staff in schools are pre requisites of meeting the Every Child Matters agenda and delivering key elements of the Children's Plan.

5.ii However I am concerned that funding provided to Parent Support Advisers over the next three years (£33.5m, £34.5m, £34.5m) will not have the impact that the Government would wish if it is spread too thinly and absorbed into other spending needs. If financial restraints prevent any additional funding, resources should be concentrated in those schools where need is present, but where funding has not previously been provided on the criteria of deprivation.

5. iii I recognise that some schools cover the cost of parental support activities themselves and that there are a range of professionals already working in this field, such as home-school liaison officers, learning mentors, and – in future – personal tutors. My belief is that it is the role of the Parent Support Adviser that is important, rather than having one specific post: indeed some schools will want to co-ordinate the work of more than one person to fulfil this role, as the Practitioners' Group recommended.

5.iv It is important for the success of this initiative that examples of good practice are developed over a sustained period and are disseminated. The pilot has taken place in almost 1200 schools where generally there has been a very significant impact. It would be highly regrettable if this expertise was lost, and to prevent this DCSF requires a clear strategy on how to use the information gained from the pilot to develop future policy and practice.

5.v I am also concerned that sufficient importance is given to Parent Support Advisers in communications with Local Authorities, schools and other educational organisations. Effective change needs to be championed. It would be helpful for the Department to highlight the importance of Parent Support Advisers with the Directors of Children's Services and through the National Strategies.

5.vi Learning, Teaching and Behaviour. It is widely accepted that the application of consistent good practice in Learning, Teaching and Behaviour enables children to make significant improvement. It is a concern that there remains such variation in practice within schools, between schools and between school phases. This is to the detriment of children and to teachers.

5.vii Believing that the issues of Learning, Teaching and Behaviour form part of a whole, the Practitioners' Group expected all schools to monitor the impact of their Learning and Teaching policy on pupils' behaviour (Recommendation 3.2.1.). Ofsted has placed a greater importance on the link between learning and teaching and behaviour

in its guidance on school self evaluation, but the situation remains that many schools do not have a Learning and Teaching policy and that where they do exist, there is not always a requirement that they are followed by all staff.

5.viii The S.E.N. Code of Practice identifies a clear link between consistent good practice in a school and its ability to meet the needs of the children.

“effective management, school ethos and the learning environment, curricular, pastoral and discipline arrangements can help prevent some special educational needs arising, and minimise others”. (paragraph 5.4)

5.ix It is my view that the development of collegiate professionalism with regard to consistent good practice in schools would have the most significant impact on achievement and behaviour standards. This would reduce workload for teachers and enhance their working experience. It is not for government to determine the content of such policies; that is a matter for the professionals working in the school. It is for government to ensure that the process takes place. I therefore propose that, in the next phase of my review, I should consider with professional stakeholders and others how best to promote this consistency of practice in learning and teaching which I regard as the essential underpinning of good behaviour.

5.x **The spread of good practice.** Creating change in schools requires that the issues concerned are supported over a period of time and that they relate to school priorities. Schools need to be able to visualise what the change would look like and the benefits it would bring. Teachers welcome examples of good practice if these are presented regularly and come from credible sources. The Association of School and College Leaders correctly asserts that schools facing change such as that arising from the 6th day exclusion demands, need case studies of good practice and that this needs to be continuing.

5.xi **Social harmony and Building Schools for the Future.** The design of new school buildings must be influenced by the need to promote social harmony and good behaviour, and it is helpful that practical issues such as bullying in school toilets are starting to be addressed through BSF guidance. It is important that BSF fulfils the aspiration contained in the Children’s Plan that schools need facilities that enable them to be at the centre of their community.

5.xii **Access to and the provision of services.** These are equally important elements in a system that meets the needs of children and parents. Services need to be accessible to their users. Provision on its own may not be enough to effect change. For some children and families, accessing those services may be very difficult. Targeted support needs to be available in these circumstances and this should generally be based in schools. I regard Parent Support Advisers and other members of the school work force who have similar functions as having a critical role in facilitating access to available provision.

5.xiii **Power of search.** The right of teachers to search pupils for dangerous weapons was enacted in the 2006 Violent Crime Reduction Act, and it would be helpful to review how well these powers are working.

Conclusion.

Establishing good behaviour among children at home and at school is dependent on a range of actions taking place and taking place consistently. There are rarely simple solutions. Where problems occur they need to be addressed in the interests of the child and in the interests of the family and school. The principles on which all behaviour management strategies should be based were identified by the Practitioners' Group in what they described as Core Beliefs.

- *The quality of learning, teaching and behaviour in schools are inseparable issues, and the responsibility of all staff;*
- *Poor behaviour cannot be tolerated as it is a denial of the right of pupils to learn and teachers to teach. To enable learning to take place preventative action is the most effective, but where this fails schools must have clear, firm and intelligent strategies in place to help pupils manage their behaviour;*
- *There is no single solution to the problem of poor behaviour, but all schools have the potential to raise standards if they are consistent in implementing good practice in learning, teaching and behaviour management;*
- *Respect has to be given in order to be received. Parents, carers, pupils and teachers all need to operate in a culture of mutual regard;*
- *The support of parents is essential for the maintenance of good behaviour. Parents and schools each need to have a clear understanding of their rights and responsibilities;*
- *School leaders have a critical role in establishing high standards of learning, teaching and behaviour.*

Report of the Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline. 2005.

Sir Alan Steer
26 March 2008