Behaviour in Wales

Good practice in managing challenging behaviour

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Introduction

Purpose

1   The purpose of this report is to provide advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on good practice in managing pupils' behaviour that challenges schools. The advice contributes to raising standards and quality in education and training and supports the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to social inclusion and equal opportunities as set out in 'The Learning Country' in August 2001.

2   The report:

- identifies examples of good practice in managing behaviour in schools;

- highlights some of the measures local authorities take to support schools in managing behaviour;

- notes some of the partnership working that is helping to improve pupils' behaviour; and

- helps to inform the Welsh Assembly Government's promotion of emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils.

3   This advice is based on information drawn from the following sources:

- published reports of local authority inspections;

- published reports of Section 10 inspections;

- information gathered by HMI on visits to six local authorities;

- statistical information published by the National Assembly for Wales;

- Estyn's report on multi-agency work (2002);

- Estyn's thematic survey of pupil referral units and similar provision (2004); and

- Estyn's advice on behaviour management training (2003).

Main findings

- The behaviour of a very large majority of children in schools in Wales is good or better. Good behaviour is most prevalent in schools where teachers deliver interesting lessons that offer sufficient challenge.

- Improving pupils' behaviour often requires schools and local authorities to work closely with other partners and agencies, particularly when the behaviour stems from pupils' home circumstances.

- Joint working within some local authorities is beginning to make a difference in assisting joint budget planning between health and education services. Joint planning of this kind can ensure that decisions that have resource implications regarding vulnerable children and young people are made in collaboration. This often makes effective use of tri-partite funding arrangements.

- In general, agencies are not collaborating well enough to ensure that pupils' needs are being met effectively and to address the circumstances that give rise to difficult behaviours.

- Many authorities have not yet developed effective links between school improvement services and special educational needs/behaviour services.

- Schools do not always pay enough attention to the correlation between pupils' behaviour and their educational achievement.

- Schools that adopt and successfully implement a whole-school approach to behaviour have the most positive impact.

- Most teachers are becoming better at managing pupils' behaviour and creating a good atmosphere in their classroom. In some schools, a small number of pupils regularly disrupt lessons. The proportion of primary schools where this happens is very small indeed, but it affects a far larger proportion of secondary schools. In the schools concerned, some pupils are too talkative, avoid work and disrupt the learning of others. This type of low-level disruption can be very difficult for teachers to manage. Incidents of extremely challenging behaviour are very rare.

- There have been improvements in assessing pupils' needs over the past five years. However, around 40% of primary schools still do not use assessment information well enough to set work that matches pupils' different needs and abilities.

- The summary found that schools and local authorities are making use of a plethora of approaches in projects to support and improve the management of challenging behaviour. There is compelling evidence of the usefulness of these in improving the behaviour and well-being of pupils.

Recommendations

The Welsh Assembly Government should:

R1   collect and analyse information about:

  • the needs of pupils who have behaviours that challenge schools;

  • the support that is provided to meet those needs; and

  • the outcomes for these pupils once they leave education;

R2   monitor and evaluate how local authorities and health boards share and combine information about children; and

R3   issue guidance on joint-planning arrangements and the commissioning, delivery and evaluation of services to vulnerable children.

Local education authorities should:

R4   monitor and evaluate schools' responses to pupils with behaviours that are challenging, in order to target support services more effectively;

R5   implement measures to support schools and offer appropriate alternatives when a pupil is in danger of exclusion;

R6   ensure that there is appropriate training and support for staff who work with pupils with behavioural difficulties;

R7   work with schools and other partners to develop a broader curriculum that engages all pupils effectively;

R8   develop better partnerships with social services, health boards and voluntary agencies to make sure that decisions that have resource implications are made in collaboration with other service providers;

R9   work closely with partners to ensure that the circumstances that cause pupils to behave in a challenging way are addressed; and

R10 offer leadership on an LEA-wide, behaviour-management programme such as those that are discussed later in this report.

Schools should:

R11 develop better systems for assessing pupils' needs, which take good account of the correlation between difficulties in learning and challenging behaviour;

R12 continue to make improvements to the quality of teaching and the provision of a broad curriculum that engages all pupils;

R13 improve the systems for tracking and co-ordinating information about learning and behaviour, and make better use of this data to help manage behaviour;

R14 maintain on roll and continue to monitor the progress of pupils who transfer to pupil referral units (PRUs);

R15 ensure that all staff, including teachers, support assistants and lunchtime supervisors, are familiar with the school's behaviour policy and are confident and consistent in implementing it;

R16 ensure that staff receive appropriate behaviour-management support and training;

R17 work in partnership with parents and other agencies to improve pupils' behaviour; and

R18 use all or most of the behaviour-support programmes discussed in this report to help address pupils' challenging behaviour.

Background information

Inspection evidence

4   The findings reported in the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales for 2004-2005 confirm that the great majority of children and young people work hard and behave well.

5   The evidence from inspections of schools in 2004-2005 shows that behaviour is at least good with no important shortcomings in almost all primary and special schools and in just over 83% of secondary schools.

6   In a small number of primary schools and far more secondary schools, a small number of pupils regularly disrupt lessons. The most common form of disruption continues to be that identified by the Elton Report: low-level disturbance, where pupils are too talkative, avoid work themselves and disrupt the work of others. This type of disruption can be very difficult for teachers to manage. Incidents of extremely challenging behaviour are rare.

7   Generally, teachers are becoming better at managing pupils' behaviour. Most teachers create a good atmosphere in class and offer stimulating and challenging work that keeps pupils engaged in learning. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of teaching has improved across all school sectors, with secondary schools showing the greatest improvement over the past five years.

8   Often, the most significant measure taken by local authorities to improve pupil behaviour consists of offering additional training. Estyn reported in 2004 on the training provided to help staff to improve the behaviour of pupils. The report identified only two authorities as having provided training for more than 30% of teachers, with 10 authorities training less than 15% of teachers. In relation to the total number of staff employed in behaviour support roles across Wales, the proportion of non-teaching support staff that have received training is very low. Staff who work directly with pupils with difficult behaviour receive the least training. The report identified that the correlation between pupils' behaviour difficulties and their educational achievement is not always given enough attention. Many local authorities have not yet developed effective links between school improvement services and special educational needs/behaviour services.

9   Improving pupils' behaviour often requires schools and local authorities to work closely with other partners and agencies, particularly when the pupils' behaviour problems stem from circumstances at home. The most effective support for children results from a seamless, comprehensive approach that operates across different agencies. A recent Estyn report on multi-agency work found that where inter-agency partnerships are working well it is because:

- membership of, and funding from, multi-agency partnership gives better access to provision, greater awareness of other services and increased status that enhances the planning of inter-agency initiatives;

- joint planning is more effective and efficient for the partners, including parents;

- staff have better access to a range of services and expertise;

- staff have a clear understanding of their role and how it fits with that of other partners. They can influence, and are well informed about, policy and provision in partner agencies;

- there is more effective use of funding; and

- there is more effective use of other resources, including improved accommodation which agencies can share in order to reduce costs.

10   However, Estyn also found barriers to partnership working that need to be addressed if multi-agency partnerships are to be fully effective. These include:

- poor communication and information-sharing;

- under-developed planning and evaluation, with inappropriate or unclear priorities;

- inadequate levels of funding;

- a lack of clarity about which agency pays for what, and when; and

- lack of trust between agencies.

The link between teaching and behaviour

11   The Elton report, 'Discipline in Schools' (1989), identified 80% of the disruption in schools as being 'directly attributable to poor classroom organisation, planning and teaching'. Inspection evidence confirms that good behaviour is most common in schools where teachers deliver interesting lessons that offer stimulus and challenge. An Ofsted report, 'Access and achievement in urban education:

ten years on' (2003), states that 'deteriorating behaviour goes hand in hand with the decline in teaching'. In schools where pupils' behaviour is good, teachers ensure that the learning and teaching are interesting, challenging and differentiated to meet the needs of all learners.

12   Not all pupils have their special learning needs identified at an early stage or receive appropriate support. There have been improvements in assessing pupils' needs over the past five years. However, around 40% of primary schools still do not use assessment information well enough to set work that matches pupils' different needs and abilities. Even so, in general, behaviour support teams and special educational needs (SEN) staff work well to assist teachers and support staff to provide appropriately differentiated work and to provide advice on how they can best meet pupils' learning and behaviour needs.

13   In many local authorities, strategic planning and monitoring of the work of the school improvement service and the behaviour/social inclusion and SEN services are carried out in a cohesive manner. Such planning and monitoring enable information about schools' performance to be matched with other data, including linking data about pupils' behaviour and learning with teacher support and training. In general, while authorities have improved the collation of information of this kind, they need to use it more effectively to plan and evaluate the impact of support on individual pupils and schools.

Exclusion

14   Headteachers, teachers in charge of a pupil referral unit (PRU), governors, local authorities and independent appeal panel members are required by Section 52(4) of the Education Act 2002 to have regard to the National Assembly for Wales Guidance Circular 1/2004. The guidance provides information about the use of exclusion and offers information about a range of strategies to employ to try to avoid exclusion. It states that a decision to exclude a pupil for a fixed period or permanently should be taken only:

• in response to serious breaches of a school's behaviour policy; and

• if allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

15   Overall, the number of pupils excluded permanently has reduced over the last five years, with headteachers and governors using short-term exclusions more often to try to avoid permanent measures.

Reasons for permanent exclusion			
Assault/violence to pupils	**Defiance of rules**	**Disruptive behaviour**	**Assault/violence to staff**
16%	18%	-	13%

Reasons for fixed-term exclusion of five days or less			
Assault/violence to pupils	**Defiance of rules**	**Disruptive behaviour**	**Assault/ violence to staff**
17%	-	21%	2%

16   The chart below shows the trend in permanent exclusions over the past ten years.
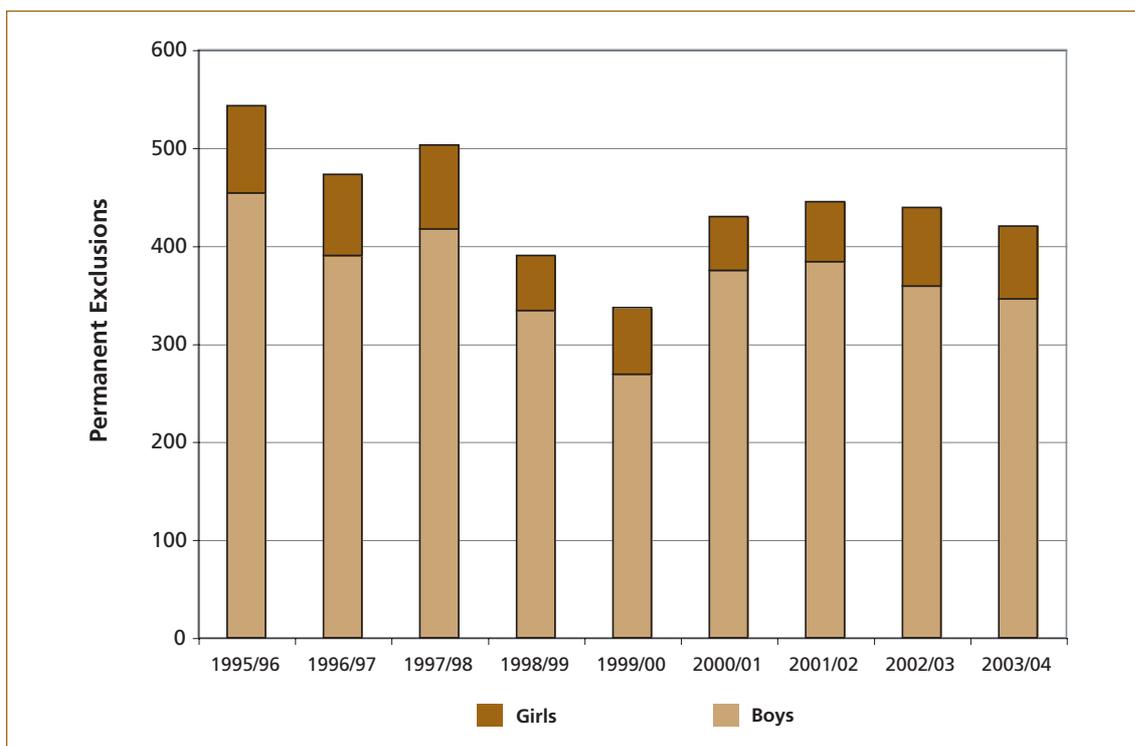
17   Estyn's survey of PRUs and similar provision (2004) reported that at least two-thirds of authorities in Wales are unable to account systematically for the provision they make for most of the pupils who are not on school rolls. Sometimes they could not account for the whereabouts of these pupils. Very few authorities provide the full 25 hours' weekly education for all excluded pupils. Only eight authorities meet the requirement to provide the full entitlement of 25 hours of education for all pupils in key stages 1 to 3. Key stage 4 pupils who are excluded from schoool do not usually receive full-time education.

Responding to the Welsh Assembly Government agenda

18   The Welsh Assembly Government has introduced a number of significant strategies and initiatives that impact upon services provided for pupils with challenging behaviours. Three of the most prominent are highlighted in the next section.

Children and Young People: Rights to Action

19   In January 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government published 'Children and Young People: Rights to Action', reconfirming its commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the seven core aims for which it will work to ensure that children and young people:

- having a flying start in life;

- have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;

- enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;

- have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;

- are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;

- have a safe home and community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing; and

- are not disadvantaged by poverty.

20   The document proposed that local authorities appoint a lead director and lead member for children and young people to take responsibility for driving forward the Children and Young People's Framework and to ensure clear accountability across the children's functions of the local authority. This differs from the situation in England, where the Children's Act (2005) introduces a statutory post of Director of Children's Services, to give clear accountability across the children's functions of the local authority, in addition to the requirement (common to both countries) to establish a lead member.

21   Some local authorities are using the requirement established in the document as an opportunity to re-examine the manner in which they structure their services. A number of authorities have secured changes

to their corporate structures, and have formed a children's services directorate by merging the directorates of education and lifelong learning, and social services for children and young people. However, in a small number of local authorities where children's service directorates were established early on and have not worked well, there has been a subsequent return to separate directorates. Better joint working within some local authorities is beginning to make a difference in assisting important joint budget planning, particularly where there is good support from colleagues in the health services. This ensures that decisions that have resource implications regarding vulnerable children and young people are made in collaboration, often with tri-partite funding arrangements.

Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships

22   Children and Young People's Framework Partnerships, which include representatives of local authority and health services and the voluntary sector, have been established in all 22 local authority areas of Wales. Each Framework has a plan which sets out the priorities for local services for children and young people and guides the work of the Children's Partnerships (0-10 years) and Young People's Partnerships (11-25 years).

23   There are good examples of Framework Partnerships securing funding from Cymorth to support the coordination of aspects of services to improve behaviour, through social inclusion services in local authorities. Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Fund - has provided funding of almost £40 million for the financial year 2003-2004, to projects falling under the following themes:

- family support;

- health improvement;

- play and leisure, including playgroups and holiday schemes;

- empowerment, participation and active citizenship;

- training, personal support and information, including support to young people without a school place; and

- developing childcare provision, including out-of-school clubs.

24   One initiative, funded through Cymorth, has responded to the need to increase the number of specialists trained in child and adolescent mental health, as recognised in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services' (CAMHS) strategy document 'Everybody's Business'

(September 2001). Many local authorities report difficulties in securing adequate services from the local CAMHS team because of capacity and staffing problems. However, in North Wales, one authority has overcome this difficulty through a service level agreement with the Health Trust. The Young People's Partnership used Cymorth funds to appoint a dedicated CAMHS worker. The CAMHS worker is helping to raise awareness about emotional and mental health issues by providing training to mainstream school staff.

National Service Framework for Children (NSF)

25   As part of the strategic vision set out in 'Wales - A Better Country', the Welsh Assembly Government published a draft consultation document, the National Service Framework for Children (NSF) in June 2004. The document sets out standards to improve the quality of services that children and young people receive from the National Health Service and social services across Wales. The standards take account of the need to develop closer links between health, social services, education, the voluntary sector, parents, and children and young people. The standards are divided into seven themes:

- children and young people suffering from acute and chronic illness or injury;

- improving health and well-being for all children and young people;

- disabled children and young people;

- maternity;

- children and young people in special circumstances;

- mental health and psychological well-being of children and young people; and

- medicines.

Impact of Welsh Assembly Government agenda

26   There are good examples of effective joint working between agencies, but there is considerable variation between local authorities in the quality and scope of partnership working within and across directorates in relation to improving children's behaviour.

27   Many local authority services could do more to improve the way they plan and deliver services for children. Hence, services for children with behaviour difficulties lack cohesion. In general, agencies do not work together well enough to make sure pupils' needs are being met effectively and that the circumstances causing pupils to have difficult behaviours are improved.

Local authority work

Behaviour support services

28   When a pupil is known to be behaving in a way that places him or her in danger of being permanently excluded, behaviour support services can often intervene promptly to offer a range of effective support mechanisms. These include a short-term placement away from the school at a pupil referral unit (PRU) or similar provision.

29   Behaviour support services usually comprise specialist teachers and support workers and have an educational psychologist working with them. There is usually close liaison with educational social workers (ESWs) and youth offending teams (YOTs). In many authorities, the staff of the PRU are members of the behaviour support team. Many teams employ behaviour support workers, often as an outreach from the PRU to provide behaviour management support to schools. The teams offer a range of services, including:

- support and guidance to individual pupils;

- support and advice to individual teachers;

- training for whole school staff;

- training for governors and others working with children; and

- acting as a link or facilitating links between parents, schools and support agencies.

Managed moves schemes

30   A number of local authorities are developing co-operative transfer schemes between their schools as part of their range of support and intervention. These schemes enable a specified quota of pupils to be transferred, under circumstances that would usually result in exclusion, and provide the pupils with a fresh start at a new school. Parental permission is required before a pupil is entered into the process of a managed move. The schemes can be successful only when all the schools adhere to the agreement to receive their quota of pupils. However, despite the efforts of local authorities to work in partnership with schools to ensure that pupils are not permanently excluded, some schools still exclude pupils without fully considering the alternatives the local authority may have to offer.

31   More flexible arrangements are being introduced to tackle the challenges of managing transfers equitably across rural and bilingual schools, where long distances between the schools concerned would normally make transfer difficult. One authority in North Wales is planning to overcome some of these challenges by developing more localised agreements between schools serving a similar demography, and by supporting the transport costs of pupils. However, providing equitable bilingual opportunities across an authority is not always possible, and so additional support staff and resources are used to support some schools.

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)

32   An Estyn survey, in May 2004, found that 1601 pupils were attending PRUs or unregistered units. Only just over half of these pupils receive the 25 hours of education to which they are entitled. Evidence from the inspections of PRUs confirms that pupils in key stage 4 generally receive help to transfer to vocational education or work-based training. However, shortcomings in curricular and learning resources for younger pupils and some pupils in key stage 4 places them at a disadvantage in relation to pupils in mainstream schools. In contravention of Section 19(2) of the Education Act 1996, which defines a PRU as providing short-term education, very few pupils actually return to mainstream or special schools. Local education authorities need to ensure that:

- all their provision is registered;

- provision is used appropriately for short-term education; and

- curricular and learning resources are appropriate.

Re-establishing short-term placements at a Pupil Referral Unit

One authority in North Wales, concerned that many pupils were spending long periods in the PRU, redeveloped its provision to offer short-term, flexible placements to pupils at risk of exclusion.

In consultation with schools, the authority developed a programme to offer six weeks' intensive support at the PRU, with supported reintegration at the end of that period. Schools pay for the placement of each pupil on a daily basis. The authority believes the financial aspects of the programme have had a direct influence on the high numbers of pupils who are successful in returning to their mainstream schools.

Predesigning this provision is having a positive impact on pupils. The new programme has enabled the PRU to offer short-term support and flexible placements more readily, with a much higher number of pupils returning to their local school. Schools receive returning pupils with help from the supported re-integration package, using behaviour support assistants monitored by specialist teachers. This aspect of the programme is helping schools to develop the skills and confidence to cope more effectively with managing difficult behaviour.

Successful strategies and initiatives offering support and intervention

Framework for Intervention

33   A number of local authorities across Wales have adopted the Framework for Intervention, developed by the City of Birmingham Education Department, to provide guidance to schools and support services, based on a system for changing pupils' behaviour. The Framework reflects an inclusive approach, and the following principles are central to the system:

- children's behaviour is central to the learning process and is an intrinsic element of education;

- problems in behaviour in educational settings are usually a product of a complex interaction between the individual, school, family, community and wider society; and

- social interaction based on mutual respect is a fundamental basis of an optimal educational environment.

34   The system works in a similar way to the Code of Practice for SEN using a three-level, as opposed to a three-stage, approach. A behaviour co-ordinator is appointed to co-ordinate the approach to individual pupils' behaviour in each school.

35   In contrast to most behaviour management systems, the Framework offers no referral criteria regarding the level of concern; any behaviour that is perceived to be a problem may be included. The Framework guidance suggests that the member of staff who expresses concern about an individual pupil undertake a behavioural audit, known as a 'behavioural environment checklist' with the advice and support of the behaviour co-ordinator. The fact that it is the teacher with the concern, and not an SEN co-ordinator or a behaviour co-ordinator, who completes the audit, is an important aspect of the Framework. This fundamental principle is central to the Framework: the solution to the problem remains with the teacher.

36   Any concerns that are not resolved after implementing the initial stage, progress to level two and require the drafting of an Individual Behaviour Plan or sometimes an Individual Education Plan as an additional planning and co-ordination tool.

37   The third stage is very similar to stage 3 of the SEN Code of Practice and is likely to result in intervention and support from external agencies, eg educational psychologist, behaviour support teacher, behaviour support assistant. The Framework has been designed to work alongside the Code of Practice. Level 3 and stage 3 should complement each other, with level 1 and 2 data providing useful assessment information towards statutory assessment.

Whole authority approach

One authority, in North Wales, has trained teachers from 32 of its primary schools in the Framework methodology. At each of the schools, a behaviour co-ordinator has been appointed to act as a behaviour mentor to all staff in the school, including lunchtime supervisors.

Good teamwork between the teacher or other staff member and the co-ordinator enhances the trust between the two staff and often helps the teacher or other staff member to feel more comfortable in dealing with their own approach to the pupil. The authority organises regular support meetings for the co-ordinator.

In addition, the Welsh-medium schools of the authority formed an effective network for sharing expertise and resources. Other networks have discussed the possibility of applying for General Teaching Council Wales (GTCW) grants to help finance the additional time to meet, produce and sometimes buy resources, such as extra playground games or equipment.

The authority has implemented extensive training for lunchtime supervisors ('Managing the Lunchtime') based on a module from the Framework. The training covers communication, positive behaviour management, and most importantly, co-operative play, including dealing with 'wet playtimes'. As part of the initiative, the supervisors have been learning a collection of playground games. The games have proved to be very popular with pupils and are now being played extensively during break and lunchtimes at school.

38   Evidence suggests that using the Framework for Intervention is having a positive impact where teachers and other school staff use consistent methods to deal with children. The module designed for lunchtime supervisors can be particularly effective and is making a significant difference to the way pupils behave during break and lunchtimes.

Family group conferencing

39 Family group conferencing provides a service to young people at risk of exclusion from school. The service aims to help young people and their families to find solutions to their difficulties through discussion in family group conferences. These are problem-solving forums designed to involve young people and their families fully in the resolution of their difficulties and any grievances they may have.

40 Family group conferencing is usually held at a neutral venue, usually within the local community, to help the young person and their parents/carers feel more comfortable. Every encouragement is given to the young person to understand that the meeting is an opportunity to voice his/her personal opinions. An advocate or friend may attend to provide support.

41 A multi-disciplinary family group conferencing action panel receives comprehensive documentation prior to the meeting. This includes thorough details of involvement by other agencies, and of the young person's interests, abilities, skills, talents and attainment. Issues such as social, peer and family relationships, attendance, exclusion history, difficulties in school and offending behaviour are carefully summarised for the panel to read.

42 At the meeting, the group works together with the young person and their family and advocate to come up with an action plan, with any necessary resources allocated from the multi-agency panel. This action plan is designed to address the difficulties the young person has and the support that needs to be in place to overcome them. The conference will seek to find out and record the young person's views and those of his or her parents/carers. The conference will explore the situation at home and try to arrange any necessary support that may be needed for the young person.

43 Action plans take into account the young person's strengths and needs, and the strategies that the school should use to deal with difficulties more effectively. These strategies include, for example, agreeing lesson-seating plans, setting individual targets for behaviour and achivement in lessons, or offering new curriculum opportunities.

44 The conference provides good opportunities for teachers and support staff from the young person's school to better understand any pressures experienced at home that may be influencing his/her behaviour. The conference may explore how willing school staff are to make flexible arrangements to support new ways for the young person to improve their behaviour and attendance.

Implementing family group conferencing across one authority

One South Wales authority with experience of family group conferencing over a number of years has developed a campaign to advertise their conference service. Attractive and informative 'flyers' written for young people, families and professionals explain what to expect at a family group conference, who will be there, what happens if it does not work and what happens next. The authority have found that conferences help to break down some of the barriers and uncertainties about the service and encourage young people to participate.

Another important factor in helping this authority to meet its aims for young people through family group conferencing is the use of volunteer mentors. Young people are supported to achieve their action plans by community service volunteer mentors, supervised by the Family Group Conferencing Unit leader. Eight community service volunteers, with ages ranging from 18 to 25, are available to support young people. The authority has been careful to offer these young people appropriate training and accreditation, such as National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in youth justice or a youth and community work degree at the local college so that they are fully prepared for the role they play.

Family group conferencing was initially focused on the needs of young people at risk of exclusion in key stage 4. The success of the initial initiative has led the authority to widen this work to include pupils in key stage 3.

Case study

R was referred to the family group conferencing service because of concerns about his poor behaviour and attendance. He had started to offend and was known to the local police. The difficulties he was experiencing at home were clearly impacting on his behaviour in school. He was coping with very stressful home circumstances, looking after his mother who had severe mental health difficulties and school was not a high priority because of his worries and insecurities.

An action plan was agreed in a family group conference to try to address his difficulties and to build on his strengths. He enjoyed cooking. The panel offered his mother counselling support to help her and to relieve the young man. The panel also found him a work placement where he could practise his cookery skills and build up his self-esteem. The school rearranged his timetable to ensure that he would be able to keep up with his studies.

By the time of the follow-up meeting, seven weeks later, R had made real progress. His attendance had improved to almost 100%. He had been helped to get involved in a local sporting activity and had made new friends. The school reported improvements in his efforts in class and his attitude to work in general.

45 Family Group Conferencing can provide good opportunities for professionals working with young people to find out about the wider factors that could be having an impact on their behaviour. The professionals can plan support accordingly. However, it is possible to improve the communication between relevant professionals in local authorities without establishing sophisticated structures. The success of the Family Group Conferencing system is that there is a commitment to work together with young people and their families in developing better solutions to their circumstances.

Student Assistance Programme

46 A small number of authorities use the Student Assistance Programme, devised by Cheryl Watkins, an American educationalist, to improve the emotional wellbeing of pupils with difficult behaviour. The programme offers early intervention through a series of support groups. At the core of this programme's philosophy is the aim to improve pupils' standards by addressing the underlying factors affecting poor behaviour. These factors are generally issues related to family breakdown, drug and alcohol misuse, violence and mental health problems.

A successful pilot project develops into a whole-authority initiative

In a large authority in North Wales, the programme has developed from its initial pilot stage in one school to a whole-authority initiative, with a Student Assistance Programme reference group managing the strategic direction and providing support and advice to a Programme co-ordinator. The Programme forms part of the educational psychology service's provision to schools. The authority delivers the Programme through all but one of the secondary schools and is currently developing the programme in the primary sector.

The integration of the Programme into curricular activities is a developing feature of the Programme, with some schools already using the intervention components of the Programme within the personal and social education (PSE) curriculum to provide consistent messages about keeping healthy.

Three secondary schools held PSE sessions focused on enhancing self-esteem. Pupils learned about relaxation and how to apply relaxation techniques and practised giving and receiving compliments and positive statements.

Children responded well to small group work and gained confidence both within the groups and, later, outside the groups.

A project brought together a group of Year 6 pupils from the primary schools in one consortium, who had been identified as likely to experience difficulties on transition to secondary school. The project aimed to improve the pupils' communication and active-listening skills and to enhance their confidence by developing self-awareness. Pupils' self-esteem improved through practising their skills in a small, supportive group environment, prior to transition to secondary school.

An external evaluation of the Programme found that some pupils had learned to transfer their positive relationships within the group to other teachers. The staff agreed with this evaluation, and also highlighted that support for the mental health needs of pupils was essential.

The success of the initial pilot has encouraged other local consortia of schools to plan similar projects to help ease the transition of other vulnerable pupils.

47   Other authorities have shown interest in the Student Assistance Programme and are now developing similar schemes. One such authority, in South Wales, has promoted the Programme via the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and has plans to develop the Programme into a community health and well-being initiative through coordinating the work of key agencies.

48   The potential of the Student Assistance Programme to assist staff, using the same group methodology, is beginning to be explored and has resulted in several whole-school staff wellness sessions in one authority. Whilst there is not enough evidence as yet about the impact of the staff support, there are some positive indications and one school has developed a staff-assistance support group.

Webster Stratton

49   The Incredible Years Teacher, Parent and Child Programme, established by the University of Wales, Bangor, provides training and consultation based on the work of Carolyn Webster-Stratton and her classroom Dinosaur School Programme. This Programme offers early school-based and community-based intervention. It is used successfully in a number of LEAs and schools.

50   There are three inter-linked strands to the Programme: for parents, teachers and children. These strands are all designed to promote children's academic, social and problem-solving skills in order to reduce anti-social behaviour. There is evidence that when the child's behaviour improves in class, these improvements impact on the child's behaviour in the playground and at home. Teachers find that there are also improvements in the behaviour of other children in the school.

51   Classroom teachers refer groups of six children to attend 18 intensive sessions, for two hours a week. These children lack social skills and do not behave well. Their behaviour often makes it difficult for them to make friends and be accepted by their peers. They are often unable to enjoy their time at school and get on with their work. This highly-structured, early intervention is effective. It teaches these young children the social and problem-solving skills they need in order for them to behave appropriately. On completion of the programme, teachers and parents often report major improvements in their children's behaviour. One parent wrote: 'he has calmed down and he knows the difference between right and wrong'.

52   Classroom teachers describe carefully the inappropriate behaviours that need to be worked on. The teacher running the Webster Stratton Dinosaur School Programme uses this description to set specific targets for improvement. The child and his/her parents are made aware of these targets. Parents are fully involved and are encouraged to keep their own records and also to set their own targets at home. They receive regular feedback on their child's progress towards their targets. Teachers or learning-support assistants teach specific skills to small groups of children. These skills include:

Social skills:

• friendship;

• teamwork;

• co-operation/helping;

- communication;

- understanding feelings and putting them into words; and

- rules.

Problem solving:

- anger-management; and

- steps of problem-solving.

Classroom behaviour:

- 'quiet hand up';

- compliance;

- listening;

- 'stop-look-think-check'; and

- concentrating.

53   There are well-produced resources to support the programme. These include attractive and engaging videos used to prompt discussion about how children should behave at school and at home. Within the sessions, children rehearse and practise the behaviours they are learning. Pupils are helped to do this by attractive child-sized puppets, ('Wally' and 'Molly'), that 'talk about their feelings and problems and discuss solutions'. Wally and Molly can also be used by the teacher to model for the children the behaviours that need changing, for example, pushing the child in the next seat, shouting out in class or swinging on the chair. This means that the children can see exactly what the behaviour is that they are being asked to change. The puppets are also used to model appropriate behaviour. 'Dina', the dinosaur puppet, after whom the programme is named, plays the role of headmistress of the school and is used to tell the children how they are progressing and give encouragement. Homework games, such as 'school rules bingo', which parents and carers play with pupils, help to reinforce appropriate behaviours and help parents and carers to develop positive behaviour management techniques.

54   Good behaviour is encouraged by praise and reward. Teachers and support staff use positive vocabulary to give instructions to the children. For example, teachers ask for 'six on the floor' (the child's legs and four chair legs) and tell children to use their 'quiet indoor voices' (rather than tell children to 'stop shouting'). When children misbehave they sit away from the group in a 'time-out chair'.

When they behave appropriately they are allowed to rejoin the group. Throughout the programme, staff pay very good attention to raising the children's self-esteem. The following case study illustrates this work.

Using puppets in the classroom

Case study

A group of three boys with a classroom assistant sit in a circle with the school's designated behaviour-support teacher. Each child in turn is asked to say how he feels and to assess these feelings by giving a score out of ten.

The classroom assistant uses Wally, the puppet, to take the first turn. He tells the group that he is feeling '10 out of 10 and wonderful'. The children are then asked to tell the group how they are feeling using the language Wally has modelled for them.

The next task is for everyone in the group to say one good thing they have done during their week. Again Wally uses positive descriptions of an event that he has experienced. The children give the following examples and receive praise each time from the adults:

"I played nicely with my friends"
"Someone in the playground needed help and I helped them"
"I helped my baby sister to walk"

Throughout the session, the children are reminded to use their 'quiet hand', to listen to each other and to sit in their chairs properly. When they do, the classroom assistant points this out to the group and they are praised. This reinforces the new behaviours they are learning.

Later in the session, the group watches a video showing children using appropriate classroom behaviour. The classroom assistant 'pauses' the video and checks carefully that the children have noticed the good behaviour. The children then write down the skills that they intend to practise between sessions. These skills include listening and putting their 'quiet hand' up in class.

There are clearly-understood rewards for appropriate behaviour. At the end of the session, the group reviews progress towards their targets in class. They are rewarded with shiny pebbles that they place in a pretty jar. They can each receive five pebbles when the teacher or classroom assistant notices a difference in their behaviour. These pebbles count towards a group reward.

55   This strategy works best when the three components for parents, teachers and children are used together. However, too often the work undertaken in school is not followed through at home because there is inadequate community support to help parents to implement consistent and positive behaviour management with their children. As a consequence, pupils' behaviour improves in school, but continues to be challenging at home.

Assertive discipline

56   Training in whole-school strategies for maintaining and improving standards of behaviour, using the Lee Canter Assertive Discipline approach, has been provided by over half the authorities in Wales. Some authorities have implemented a whole-authority approach and have trained all schools. However, even within these authorities, some schools have employed the strategies of Assertive Discipline with more rigour and have hence had more successful outcomes.

Impact on teacher behaviour

One authority took the decision to implement Assertive Discipline as an authority-wide strategy for behaviour management, as part of a broader initiative on positive behaviour management.

The authority invested heavily in training staff in this approach. An outside facilitator delivered the Assertive Discipline leader training programme. This consisted of a two-day course which informed primary headteachers and senior staff in the secondary sector of the principles of the programme and how they might implement it within their settings.

All school staff then received two days of training in Assertive Discipline. The first day was used for an introduction to the principles; the second day enabled each school to adapt the approach to suit their own circumstances.

An evaluation of the strategy was made using a perception questionnaire completed by school staff one year after training was received. The results indicate a significant difference in teachers' perceptions of the frequency of inappropriate or off-task behaviours. Furthermore, teachers employing the Assertive Discipline strategy were observed to employ a teaching style associated with a positive outlook on the world, with calm reactions to negative events. The evaluation suggests that this approach encourages more positive behaviours in pupils.

57   The schools most successfully implementing the Assertive Discipline strategy have provided clear leadership on behavioural matters, with agreed policies and procedures. Evidence suggests that these schools put in place reliable systems that staff, including support staff, understand, and expectations and routines that pupils are clear about. Factors that motivate pupils and encourage them to behave well include rewards and praise given in a consistent manner to acknowledge success effectively and to reinforce positive behaviours.

58   Where schools adopt a consistent approach using assertive discipline, it encourages staff to use praise and positive behaviour in order to promote and support effective learning. The best outcomes occur where schools work with multi-agency partners, to involve parents. This can have particularly good impacts when these partners provide support workers, when required, to help parents to maintain a consistent approach.

Handling emotion, aggression and restraint (HEART)

59   A number of authorities have established teams of specialists to deliver whole-school training on how best to respond to aggressive incidents and defuse situations of conflict. One approach, used in a small number of authorities, is the 'handling emotion, aggression and restraint' model. The model is based on a training package used to help promote greater confidence by staff dealing with difficulties related to aggressive, challenging behaviour. The training includes six modules:

- legal context, assault and restraint;

- breakaways appropriate for use in educational settings;

- safe holding and moving of children;

- basic single-person restraint;

- team restraint; and

- the 'letting go' process and incident report.

Multi-agency approach

Handling emotion, aggression and restraint was introduced into a South Wales authority following a high-profile case where a headteacher was suspended. The case left many teachers and other professionals outside schools feeling anxious about the legal framework relating to control and restraint. In response, the local authority set up a multi-agency focus group to explore the creation and adoption of a suitable training package for control and restraint to complement the behaviour-management policies and strategies of both the schools and the local authority. The strategy was approved by the education and social services joint scrutiny committee as an appropriate restraint mechanism for use in the authority's schools.

The Child Protection Development Officer, funded through Cymorth, leads the initiative. Staff from the behaviour-support service, along with the Child Protection Officer, work together to deliver the package of whole-school training. Schools that successfully complete the training receive a two-year validation certificate.

The authority has succeeded in implementing a very good corporate training strategy based on the 'handling emotion, aggression and restraint' model. Staff from a variety of agencies providing services to young people can now implement a consistent approach to handling difficult situations. The following staff groups have all been trained in the approach:

- teachers;
- home tutors;
- learning support assistants;
- caretakers;
- lunchtime supervisors;
- police officers in the family support unit;
- social workers; and
- child-care support workers.

60   There is mounting evidence that training based on the approach described above, designed initially to offer greater protection to distressed, vulnerable young people, is also having a positive impact on the confidence of staff who have to deal with volatile situations.

Multi-agency planning in schools

61   Working closely with parents and carers can have a significant impact upon pupils' behaviour at school. Developing a relationship with parents and carers, and working in a collaborative manner to manage their children's behaviour, is more successful than trying to work without their involvement. Some pupils grow up with negative feelings about the way that education can impact on their future, often because family members or friends did not enjoy school, or had little success when they were at school themselves. Some authorities ask parents to sign contracts agreeing their role in promoting improved behaviour.

62   Motivating pupils who have limited support from home demands a great deal of special effort by staff at school. When schools work well with other services to offer good support and advice to parents on how to improve their children's behaviour, at the same time as delivering a consistent approach in school, there is usually a positive change in behaviour.

Multi-agency meetings

A secondary school in south-west Wales holds multi-agency inclusion meetings twice-termly to discuss the welfare of vulnerable pupils and to decide how best to support individual cases.

Membership of the group includes staff from the school, including the school nurse. It also includes representatives from the youth offending team, the hospital school, the psychology service, the pupil support service and the police. They discuss pupil behaviour such as self-harm, bullying and truancy.

The school has benefited in many ways from having the expertise of staff from the various agencies focused on its pupils. For example, all youth offending team workers are trained in family group conferencing and this strategy was offered to the school to support a particularly difficult pupil. The long wait for individual pupils to receive help from the Community and Mental Health Service has prompted the pupil support officer to provide workshops designed to promote pupils' emotional health.

63   The strategy of holding regular multi-agency group meetings involving a number of professionals, external to the school, enables school staff to benefit from the expertise of others and plan how best to support pupils. Evidence suggests that this type of regular information exchange is particularly important when pupils self-harm or have behaviours related to mental health problems.

Anger management

Group work in a pupil referral unit

An educational psychology team in a South Wales authority has successfully used group work to help learners in the pupil referral unit manage their anger in order to avoid confrontation. This work was designed initially to meet the needs of one boy, but was later extended to group-work as a number of children had found it difficult to control their anger. This had contributed to their placement in the pupil referral unit.

The team used materials produced by Southampton University. These materials included games, puppets and a powerful video about bullying. Learners enjoyed the games and particularly liked working with the puppets, which they used well to express their feelings.

A teacher and an educational psychologist worked together to plan and lead six one-hour sessions on a weekly basis. They planned an introductory talk for parents/carers. They gave the group status by calling it the 'One o'Clock Club' and provided tea and biscuits. On completion of the programme, the group received certificates from the head of education otherwise than at school and the puppets presented the pupils with Easter eggs.

The group worked on making appropriate responses to difficult situations and strategies they could make use of to control their responses when they felt stressed and angry. These included: counting to 10; talking to the teacher; walking away; and breathing deeply.

64   There is not enough evidence, as yet, as to the longer term impact of the anger-management training on the individuals. However, pupils in the group were generally positive about their ability to control their anger after the intervention. They were able to list strategies they would use to help them do this. They had all enjoyed the experience and felt that they had learned a lot. The pupils were

generally confident that they would be able to remember what they had learned, but their teacher, who also completed a post-intervention questionnaire, was less confident that they would do so.

Solution-oriented brief therapy

65 This approach has been adopted by a number of authorities. It usually forms part of the management and support provided by educational psychology teams. The approach provides a framework that psychologists and/or teachers can use in work with young people that is focussed on the possibilities for change. Solution-oriented brief therapy is based on the belief that the solution to the problems bothering an individual is to be found internally. The therapy provides a focus for this realisation.

Training for teachers to implement the therapy

An educational psychology team in South Wales has completed training and developed an action plan to promote solution-oriented brief therapy across all of the schools in their local authority through a series of training sessions and project work.

Introductory training is provided for teachers followed by a four-week project in each participating school. Teachers learn the techniques of the therapy and are supported to implement the framework with individual pupils.

66 Solution-oriented brief therapy appears to be having a positive impact in the schools involved across Wales.

Nurture groups

67 Nurture groups aim to offer the missed nurturing experiences of the early years to pupils in order to help them to develop more appropriate behaviours. The groups were first established in London in the 1970s by Margaret Boxall, an educational psychologist. In Wales, nurture groups are developing, particularly in areas of high social deprivation, as part of the continuum of support offered mainly to pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2. One authority is developing a key stage 3 group based on the nurture group principles, but with an environment appropriate to the ages of secondary school pupils.

68   The groups aim to improve behaviour, attainment and school attendance, and to build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. They are helping pupils to make better relationships with adults and other children. The groups work closely with school staff and parents to try and enhance the nurturing, emotionally supportive environment of the whole school for the benefit of all pupils.

Utilising the skills and expertise of non-teaching staff

A large authority in North-East Wales has supported the establishment of a nurture group at a primary school in a socially-deprived area. The group offers places for six children in key stage 1 and is staffed by two experienced, NNEB-trained nursery nurses who have been given additional training in nurture group work.

The nurture group is based in a small, spare classroom which has one home-like area and a formal learning area. It is an attractive room, decorated in bright colours, with good resources on display. The ideal nurture group would also have an area furnished with a sofa, cushions, armchairs and a kitchen with simple cooking equipment. However, the staff work hard to make the best use of the small classroom.

Children are placed in the group after referral to the behaviour support service. Their behaviour has been a cause for concern in their mainstream class, where they have shown poor communication skills, low levels of concentration, anxiety, aggression and difficulties in developing relationships.

Activities are offered that enable pupils to develop better skills in listening and co-operating with each other. All the pupils have difficulties in expressing themselves, so the staff offer opportunities for extended conversations and encourage imaginative play. The focus is on valuing each other and enjoying the company of others.

The children remain on the register of their mainstream class, which they rejoin for appropriate activities. They attend the group for a maximum of four terms. The planning for reintegration and further assessment is essential. The children spend lunchtime and playtimes with other children in the school.

Since the nurture group was established, pupils have made very good progress. They have developed positive relationships and manage their own behaviour more effectively.

69   The evidence from the nurture groups visited and from
      discussions during the preparation of this report, suggests the groups
      can have significant impact upon the behaviour of the pupils involved.
      Further attendance at a nurture group can have positive effects
      upon pupils' achievement. This would appear to be as a result
      of pupils learning to listen, co-operate and enjoy learning.
      The deployment of non-teaching staff to run a group in one
      school provides a cost-effective way of using the skills and
      expertise of staff.

Passport to opportunity

Personal support and guidance for key stage 4 pupils

One authority in South Wales has developed a project to support pupils
in key stage 4 who are disengaged, or may be facing disengagement,
from mainstream education. The project aims to give pupils a more
positive experience in their last two years of school by encouraging
them into employment, training or further education.

The project, developed by the team responsible for the education
of pupils not at school, offers opportunities for pupils to participate
in enrichment activities and follow a vocational learning course with
extended work experience. In addition to new learning opportunities,
pupils are offered personal support and guidance. This has led to
increased attendance and greater inclusion, and has helped to reduce
the number of pupils leaving school without a recognised qualification
from 5% to 1%. The team is fulfilling its wider duty of care by
developing a data system to track pupils who are not attending school
at key stage 4, to ensure they are offered their full entitlement to
education.

The project aims to build the capacity of schools to help pupils: to
achieve greater success in key skill acquisition; to work co-operatively
as a team; and to develop independence in learning.

The team works in partnership with the careers service, colleges of
further education and training providers, to support schools to
develop innovative curriculum activities and work-related learning.
Pupils are motivated to re-engage in learning and are successfully
working towards gaining recognised qualifications.

70   This project has successfully motivated a small, but significant number of pupils to re-engage in learning. The limitations of the project are related to the capacity of staff to work with greater numbers of pupils.

Behaviour mentors

71   The consistent application of positive behaviour policies that are agreed by all staff, and effective monitoring of behaviour by senior management in schools, helps to ensure an atmosphere where expectations of good behaviour are high. Schools that adopt and implement whole-school approaches to managing behaviour, with rules and sanctions that pupils regard as being fair, have the most positive impact on pupil behaviour. Many schools now designate behaviour co-ordinators to provide support and guidance to staff on implementing the school behaviour policy. In some cases, this role has developed further into that of a behaviour mentor who can visit classes to offer practical advice on managing classroom behaviour. Most authorities enable teachers from their behaviour-support service to undertake this role in the style of a consultancy.

Changing the role of behaviour-support teachers

One authority in South Wales, where there are consistently low rates of permanent exclusions, found this model to be successful. It has now shifted the focus of the central behaviour-support service to work in closer collaboration with schools, using behaviour-support teachers as behaviour mentors.

The teachers are based in the secondary schools and have a brief to support the school and all the feeder primary schools in the area. The mentors are able to advise on a range of behavioural issues, including aspects of classroom organisation and strategies to engage pupils using a positive behaviour-management approach.

The authority believes that this way of providing support is having good results because classroom teachers retain the responsibility for managing the behaviour of the pupils, and gain confidence as their level of expertise grows. The emphasis is on mutual support to improve pupils' behaviour in the school, rather than focusing on an individual teacher's failure to manage pupils' behaviour.

The regular presence around the school of the behaviour mentor is seen by teachers as important in developing a sense of calm and order. It also helps staff to implement the behaviour policy with greater consistency.

72   Behaviour mentors are having a particularly positive impact when pupils transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3. The background information and personal knowledge about pupils that mentors can bring to the secondary school are enabling transition to be planned more effectively.

Emotional health and literacy (key stage 3) project

73   A significant proportion of pupils who have challenging behaviours have additional learning needs and are disadvantaged by their family circumstances. Many have difficulties developing a trusting relationship with staff at school.

Structural changes to support transition

One secondary school in South-west Wales is particularly aware of the benefits of identifying a specific member of staff to whom pupils can turn in times of difficulties. This school has reorganised its structure to enable one class of Year 7 pupils to remain, for most of their lessons, in their class base. The school was aware that a number of pupils with a range of learning and behavioural difficulties was transferring from Year 6. Staff decided to re-model its provision in response to their needs.

The project is now in its third year and further classes have been established along similar lines. The school is planning to implement this across the whole of Year 7 in the autumn term 2006 as a means of developing pupils' emotional health and literacy.

The school has developed a thematic approach to teaching the key stage 3 classes involved in the project. Teachers and pupils have been able to get to know each other better in a shorter space of time, and pupils who require it receive additional support. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. A constructive ethos and strong sense of community have developed.

74   Evidence gathered during visits to the school suggests that this project is having a positive impact on the self-confidence of pupils and their consequent behaviour in school. In addition, pupils are demonstrating great improvements in their acquisition of basic skills. Internal evaluation of the project by the school has led staff to conclude that the pupils involved now have the skills to learn a modern foreign language GCSE course in Year 9 and a second modern foreign language in the following year.

Appendix

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