

# Building Blocks:

Inclusion in the Foundation Phase



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## Introduction from the

# Children's Commissioner

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**In 2018 a parent called my office about their six-year-old child, who had been excluded from school for physically aggressive behaviour. Since the exclusion the school had stated that they would not accept the child back at the school as they did not feel able to meet their needs. This was disputed by the local authority, who stated there was nowhere else available and the child should remain at the school, with behavioural support from the local authority. The child had no statement of additional needs and an assessment process for this had not been initiated. At the point of the call the child was not accessing any education.**

This call to my Investigation and Advice service was not an isolated case. My team was noticing an increase in similar calls over 2018-19 from worried, sometimes desperate, families about children aged 8 or under whose rights to education were not being upheld. These young children were at risk of exclusion or being taught in isolation from a very young age. Some were receiving no education at all.

I considered it essential to find out how widespread this situation is in Wales. Whilst my team were able to intervene on behalf of the children whose families had called us, I was deeply concerned that there could be many other young children in Wales facing similar barriers to accessing their human right to an education that enables them to develop their talents and skills to the full.

And not only did I want to get a fuller sense of the national picture, I also wanted to understand the challenges these children experience, and what the solutions might be. In 2019 I launched an investigation of the position in Foundation Phase education (ages 3-7) across Wales.

The investigations of my team revealed 768 reported incidences of exclusion relating to Foundation Phase children in 2018-9 but data was not made available by all local

authorities in Wales so the true figure is likely to be higher. Investigations also revealed that on average nine Foundation Phase children per authority had been excluded more than once, with one child having been excluded 18 times in a one year period. This is a side to Foundation Phase (age 3-7s) education in Wales that is rarely a focus of published literature.

We know that when children are excluded with no alternative education offer in place then their needs are not being met and they are not engaged in learning. Not only can this severely impact their life as a young child but it may also affect their development and lead to difficulties as they grow older. This has the effect of denying their human rights to thrive and reach their potential.

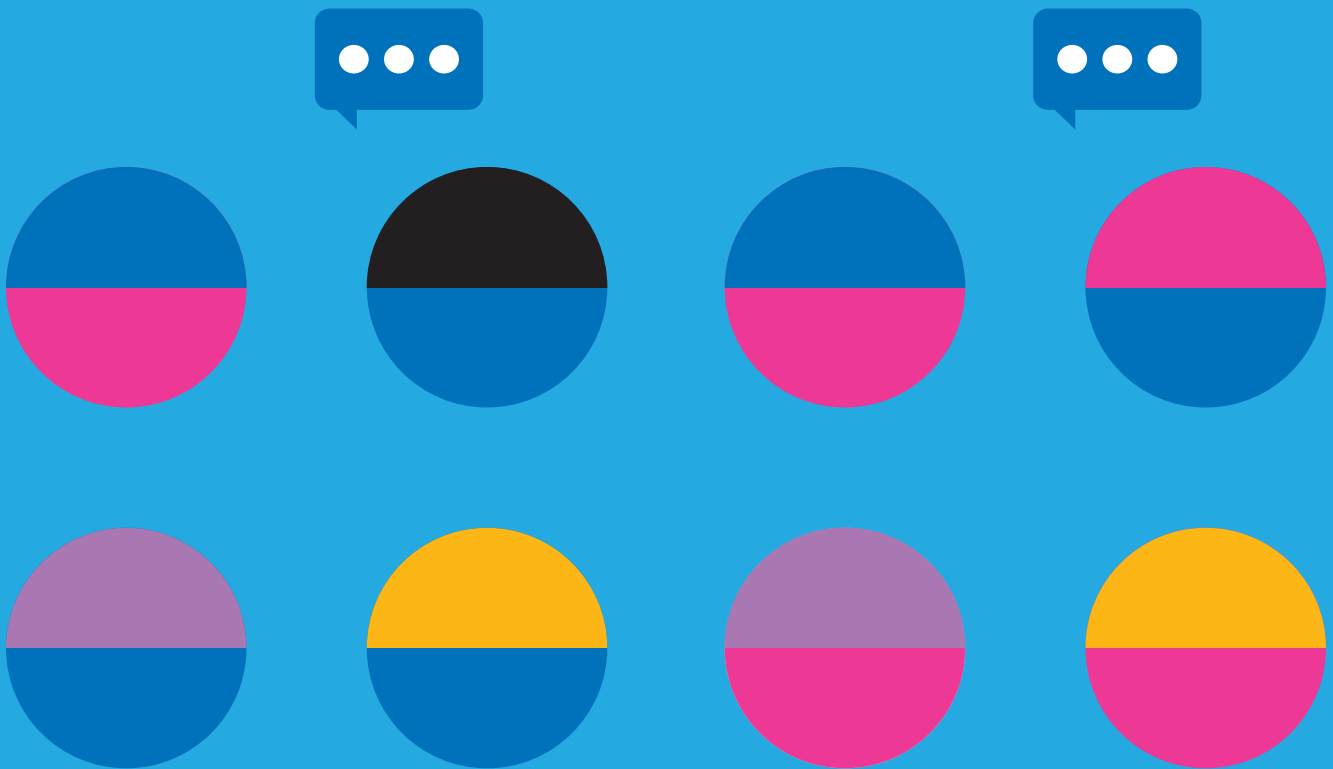
My case work and consultation with professionals shows clearly that the issues these children face are not simply about the classroom or even the school. A child's family and community may be facing a wide range of challenges. To support children in education wider support systems are essential. There needs to be action to prevent and tackle poverty and to ensure suitable housing. Families need to be able to access advice and networks to support parenting and they need ready access to health expertise, in particular around neurodevelopmental services.

The child individually also may need specialist support. Speech and language services, occupational therapy, paediatric services, play therapy and other therapeutic support need to be available as soon as a need is identified. Schools and other professionals need to know what is available in their area and how to access these services.

Whilst this report does reveal a concerning picture, I am also encouraged by the many examples of schools where the head teacher and staff team work tirelessly to develop the provision needed for children. Education professionals are repurposing spaces in the school for nurture and additional support. There is a national impetus for a whole school approach to well-being and regional and local work to ensure this is trauma-informed, autism friendly and supports children's rights.

But more needs to be done. The recommendations in this report illustrate the integral role that national, regional and local bodies have in responding to ensure that young children are not excluded from their education. This report is also the backdrop to my practitioner toolkit: [Building blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#). This is a practical toolkit drawing on practice from settings across Wales, which has been developed with supporting comments from Gwent Psychology Community Team. Practitioners will also benefit from the evolving collection of case studies on my website.

This report and supporting resource have been published following a time that has been disruptive for all Foundation Phase children in Wales. We hope that while schools, local authorities and education consortia work to best re-engage children into education, they act on my recommendations, detailed on p28. This will help ensure that children receive the support they need during this period and beyond.



### **Acknowledgements**

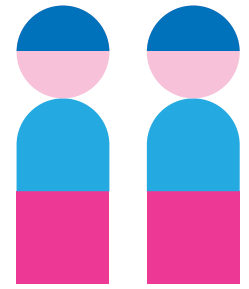
**I am grateful to all of the professionals and practitioners for their advice and assistance as part of this project. In particular I would like to thank the Gwent Psychology Community Team for their support throughout this work**

# Executive Summary

- An analysis of 21 cases relating to Foundation Phase children received by the Commissioner's office over an 18 month period showed common themes in cases involving children being excluded and isolated. These include gaps in educational provision, confusing processes of referral, and delays to meeting the child's needs.
- Case work received by the Commissioner's office show incidences where unlawful (or 'unofficial') exclusions were experienced by Foundation Phase-aged children, and existence of this practice is also shown in other research.
- Local authorities reported to us that in total 768 fixed-term exclusions were issued to Foundation Phase children in Wales in 2018-19 (19 of 22 local authorities submitted information, so this figure does not include data from 3 local authorities).
- A significant number of children in the Foundation Phase in Wales receive more than one fixed-term exclusion in a year. One local authority reported 18 fixed term exclusions for one Foundation Phase pupil and in another area a Foundation Phase pupil had been issued 9 fixed term exclusions. Across the 18 Local Authorities reporting use of fixed term exclusions, the mean average number of Foundation Phase children per authority who were excluded more than once during the academic year 2018/19 was 9 pupils (range 3-23 pupils).
- Case work and local authority data also show that some children in Foundation Phase are being taught in isolation or on significantly reduced timetables.
- Consultations held with education professionals in the EAS and GwE consortia (south-east and north regions of Wales) showed common areas of challenge reflected in the experiences and development of children with Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Difficulties. These include: unmet needs; communication; working with peers; home life and relationships with families; routine and structure; the impact of poverty and the use of technology.
- Professionals also highlighted challenges of classroom environments for children with SEBD and the professionals supporting them. These include: physical space and design; class sizes and funding; Foundation Phase pedagogy; academic expectations.
- Educational professionals highlighted areas of whole school provision that enable better provision for children with Social, Emotional, and Behavioural Difficulties, these include: embedding a children's rights approach; ensuring a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing; and supporting the wellbeing of staff.
- Education professionals expressed frustration at the current approach to joined up working, telling us they felt like they were chasing agencies and that children were being "missed" due to a lack of collaboration. They felt that fundamental elements of support are not in place for Foundation Phase children with SEBD, citing a lack of early intervention, long waiting times, a lack of specialist support and insufficient specialist placements.
- In response to these findings the Commissioner sets out steps that should be taken as part of a national drive for early support and intervention that leaves no young child excluded from education in the Foundation Phase.
- These include longer term recommendations for the next Government and also immediate actions that can be taken by Welsh government, local authorities and consortia.
- One of these actions is to distribute and promote the Commissioner's toolkit "[Building blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#)". This has been developed in collaboration with schools in Wales that have experienced some success in inclusive practices in the Foundation Phase.

# Section I:

## Case work from the Children's Commissioner's Investigation and Advice Service 2018-19.



**Note on terminology:** Some schools and local authorities are using the term Social Emotional Mental Health needs (SEMH). This is a recognised term from England's Special Educational Needs (SEND) code of practice. Other professionals in Wales use the term Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), as referred to in the [Special Education Needs Code of Practice for Wales 2004](#), which remains the guide for practice until the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

Terms can be contentious and can serve to label children. However, professionals consulted in this project have noted that using the term SEBD can be helpful to ensure children and young people access the support they need. We have therefore chosen to use the term SEBD in this report to be consistent with historic and current practice in Wales.

**Over an 18-month period the Children's Commissioner for Wales's Investigation and Advice service was contacted by parents and carers from 21 different families from across Wales regarding children aged 3-8 with Social Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), all reporting a lack of support. The children came from ten different local authority areas in Wales and there were cases in all four regional consortia.**

Of the 21 contacts, 14 were from parents whose children were aged 3-7. Seven of the contacts were from parents whose children were aged 8 (so just beyond the Foundation Phase), but whose difficulties and lack of appropriate support had been continuing for a significant period of their school life.

In over half of the contacts we received, parents told us that their children displayed aggressive and violent behaviour at home and in school, with some children being excluded due to physical outbursts which had ended in injury to staff and peers. In some cases, the school had involved police and social services. Parents shared that their children self-harmed and in some cases expressed that they wanted to "kill themselves".

Parents told us they felt there was a lack of support for their children in school, with some parents saying their child no longer attended school as they felt the school could not keep them safe. One parent had made this decision as they were worried about their child causing harm to others during violent outbursts.

Parents raised concerns about confusing pathways for referrals and assessments and unclear processes to getting statements of SEN (Special Educational Needs) for their children. They also felt that there was lack of communication between schools, other agencies and themselves when it came to supporting their child.

Parents also informed us about unofficial exclusions being given to their children; this included parents being called in the middle of the day when schools felt that they could no longer manage their child's behaviour. Parents reported that this was to allow 'breathing space' for the school staff and other pupils and to keep the child on roll in the hope that some sort of provision became available. Parents also told us that their children were being taught on restricted timetables with one child being taught only for one hour a day.

Some children were being taught in isolation. In one case a child was being taught in complete isolation from peers with two adults in the room with them. When our Investigation and Advice officers contacted schools about these practices they told us they had completed risk assessments and that this solution was in the best interests of the child unless specialist provision space could be found.

#### **In trying to resolve individual cases our team found that:**

- Some settings were able to adapt practice within the setting to meet the child's needs;
- Practice in other settings was inappropriate to meet the child's identified additional needs and the setting reported insurmountable constraints to achieving this;
- In these instances, some local authorities did make specialist placements available for a child under 7 with SEBD but other local authorities did not have any specialist placements for under 7s with SEBD;
- Where specialist placements were unavailable under age 7, some local authorities informed families that their child could be placed on a waiting list for a specialist placement once they reached the age of 7;
- Cases indicated that this delay lead to a prolonged time for children to be appropriately assessed and supported, compounding the challenges faced by the child.

The families involved in the 21 cases received between one day and 6 months of support from our team for the children to be receiving the correct support. In a few cases, families did not stay in contact with our team and the outcome is unknown.



## Section 2: Investigating the National Picture



### Data sources for this report:

- Analysis of 21 cases from our Investigation and Advice service over an 18-month period relating to Foundation Phase children who had experienced exclusion from school in some form. Themes arising from this analysis informed the central questions for our wider research.
- A survey sent to each Local Authority in Wales.
- A literature review conducted by Community Action Research Policy Collaborations (CARP).
- A focus group with 18 education professionals from two separate education consortia including teachers, head teachers and a regional ALN transformation lead.
- A follow-up focus group with 12 education professionals to help formulate the recommendations made at the end of this report.
- An in-depth interview with a Head teacher.

**NB:** Planned work to listen to young children experiencing social, emotional and behavioural difficulties was unfortunately unable to take place due to the pandemic restrictions from March 2020.

## 2.1 Methodology

### Local Authority Survey

#### The survey asked questions about:

- the different provision and models of practice supported or offered by local authorities;
- specialist support and placements;
- isolation and reduced timetables;
- exclusion and policies and practice.

Data was analysed by comparing the answers at an all-Wales and Education Consortia level. Responses were received from 19 out of 22 Local Authorities. Three authorities did not return responses despite follow-ups. It is important to note that these all fall within the boundary of GwE (north Wales consortium), which impacts upon the reliability of comparison of data at a consortia level. Representatives from GwE did take part in our professionals' consultation however.

### Literature review

A Rapid Review of SEBD provision and support for Foundation Phase Pupils (3-7 Years) was commissioned from CARP Collaborations to draw together evidence regarding inclusive practice and the available learning support within education in Wales for 3 to 7 year olds who have social emotional behavioural difficulties (SEBD).

### Consultation with Professionals

31 professionals from two of Wales's four education consortia took part (EAS and GwE). This included teachers in a range of roles including head teachers, Foundation Phase teachers, Additional Learning Needs Coordinators (ALNCOs) and an Additional Learning Needs (ALN) transformation lead. Consultation methodology involved:

- facilitated focus groups with specific questions and discussion points around challenges and possible solutions
- an in-depth interview with a head teacher.



## 2.2 Our Findings

Results revealing the national picture are presented under the following themes:

- Exclusions
- Isolation and reduced timetables
- Specialist provision and support
- Specialist placements

Where relevant, links are drawn between national findings, the casework received by the Commissioner's office and the views of professionals shared in consultation.

By year	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018
Permanent Exclusions			
Primary School*	10	20	13
Fixed Term Exclusions – less than 5 days			
Primary School*	2,590	2,930	3,047
Fixed Term Exclusions – more than 5 days			
Primary School*	119	148	111

**TABLE 1:** school exclusions in Wales in primary schools, not including PRUs and special schools (source: StatsWales <https://gov.wales/permanent-and-fixed-term-exclusions-schools>)

The commissioned literature review showed that comparison of Wales's record with other UK nations is very difficult, as each nation collects and presents data in different ways, but it appears that Scotland and Northern Ireland's record on exclusions, including that of young children, is lower than Wales, while the rate in England is higher. In Scotland, permanent exclusions are negligible and all exclusions are decreasing. It is perhaps notable that national guidance in Scotland is more prescriptive than in Wales and it has a strong

focus on implementing children's rights, a nurturing approach and an emphasis upon inclusion and positive relationships<sup>1</sup>. It could be argued that the clarity of direction across legislation and policy is reflected in the decreasing temporary exclusion rate and negligible number of pupils removed from the register.

The rates of all types of exclusion (fixed term and permanent) of young children in Wales over the last few years are:

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Nursery 2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.9
Reception	2.7	3.1	3.5	5.1	4.5
Year 1	6.7	5.7	5.6	7.3	7.6
Year 2	7.2	8.7	10.5	10.1	9.1

**TABLE 2:** Rate of exclusions in Wales by school years in the Foundation Phase. The rate refers to the incidence of exclusion per 1,000 pupils in each year group<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> McCluskey, Gilleen, Ted Cole, Harry Daniels, Ian Thompson, and Alice Tawell. 2019. "Exclusion from School in Scotland and across the UK: Contrasts and Questions." *British Educational Research Journal* 45 (6): 1140–59. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3555>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/ad-hoc-statistical-requests-17-28-february-2020>

This shows that there is a slight overall increase in the rate of exclusion across all years of the Foundation Phase in the period between the academic years 2013/14 - 2017/18.

Out of the 21 cases brought to our office, five children had been excluded from school, one of whom had received several exclusions. Parents told us these exclusions were due to physical/violent outbursts. We were also informed by two separate parents that their children were receiving 'unofficial' exclusions by the school: parents were being called to pick the child up before the end of the school day and these exclusions were not being recorded.

### Unofficial exclusion

A parent rang the Commissioner's office to ask for advice because their child's school kept asking them to collect their child from school. The child had been on a reduced timetable of 15 hours per week which had just been reduced to 1 hour per day as the school could not manage the child's behaviour. When in school the child was in a room with no other pupils and was supervised by a support assistant. Most days it seemed as if the child went in for breakfast and was then sent home.

This practice is unlawful. It is in breach of the Education (Pupil Exclusions and Appeals) (Maintained Schools) (Wales) Regulations 2003<sup>3</sup>, as detailed in the following 2019 Welsh Government guidance:

**1.6.2** Unlawful exclusions, more commonly referred to as informal or unofficial exclusions, are unlawful regardless of whether they are done with the agreement of parents or carers. Unlawful, unofficial or informal exclusion refers to:

- sending learners home for disciplinary reasons, but not following the procedures required for formal exclusion
- learners being sent home for either short periods of time, or for longer indefinite periods which can sometimes result in the learner not returning to school at all.

For example, where a learner is sent home for disciplinary reasons for part of a school day, the school may view this as a 'cooling off' period and not take action to exclude the learner formally. There is no basis in law for this and the relevant regulations do not state a minimum length of exclusion, so if a learner is sent home, even for a short period of time, this must be formally recorded as an exclusion<sup>4</sup>.

Unlawful exclusions will not appear in any formalised recording but research in 2018 reinforces our casework in suggesting that this is still part of the experience of some children in Wales<sup>5</sup>. However, all education professionals consulted for this report described exclusion of any form as the very last method they used to manage challenging behaviour and a number of education professionals were concerned about children being excluded.

**"I do understand why schools are pushed into exclusions, I do understand why schools in crisis, at breaking point with lots and lots of children... it's really hard work"**

— Head teacher

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2003/3227/contents/made>

<sup>4</sup> Exclusion from schools and pupil referral units Guidance document no: 255/2019 Date of issue: November 2019 <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/exclusion-from-schools-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Power, Sally, and Chris Taylor. 2018. "Not in the Classroom, but Still on the Register: Hidden Forms of School Exclusion." *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 0 (0): 1–15.

Our survey for local authorities asked the following questions about exclusions:

1. How many occasions were Foundation Phase children given **fixed term exclusions** in the academic year 2018/19?
  - 1.a. How many of these children were excluded on a fixed term basis **more than once** during the academic year 2018/19?
2. How many occasions were Foundation Phase children **permanently excluded** in the academic year 2018/19?

Local authorities reported to us that in total 768 fixed-term exclusions were issued to Foundation Phase children in Wales in 2018-19 (but data is missing from 3 local authorities). This figure will not include any exclusions that have been issued unlawfully as this practice avoids the recording of this information.

The number of exclusions of Foundation Phase children per local authority ranged from 0 – 98. One of the 19 local authorities who responded recorded no fixed term exclusions of Foundation Phase children in the academic year 2018/19.

Across the 18 Local Authorities reporting use of fixed term exclusions, the mean average number of Foundation Phase children per authority who were excluded more than once during the academic year 2018/19 was 9 pupils (range 3-23 pupils). This represents a significant number of children in the Foundation Phase in Wales receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion in a year. One local authority reported 18 fixed term exclusions for one Foundation Phase pupil and in another area a Foundation Phase pupil had been issued 9 fixed term exclusions.

Responses from all 19 local authorities highlighted that there were no permanent exclusions during the 2018/19 academic year in the Foundation Phase. This is in line with Welsh Government guidance:

**1.1.3** A decision to exclude a learner permanently is a serious one. It will usually be the final step in a process for dealing with disciplinary offences following a wide range of other strategies, which have been tried without success (see paragraph 1.5.1 on page 11). It is an acknowledgement by the school that it has exhausted all available strategies for dealing with the learner and should normally be used as a last resort<sup>6</sup>.

**“The idea with reduced timetable is always to get them back full time.”**

—Teacher

Four of the 21 cases brought to our office revealed that some schools are teaching children in isolation; one child aged 5 was being taught in isolation for the whole school day with two adults to support them, while a 6-year-old child was given one hour of education in isolation a day and was at home, receiving no education, for the rest of the time. All four children being taught in isolation were given separate play times to their peers.

A further four cases highlighted examples of children being taught on extremely reduced timetables. One child, aged 8, was being taught part time in school and spending the rest of their school day with a childminder as their parents needed to work. The other three children accessed school for between 6 and 20 hours a week.

Education professionals consulted described using alternative spaces as well as reduced timetables for children with SEBD, sometimes these alternative spaces were specifically repurposed space designed for nurture but sometimes professionals described using spaces which they felt were ill-suited to the purpose, such as corridors. All education professionals agreed that the end goal with these strategies was to have children back in their classroom setting full-time with a phased return.

**Our survey asked local authorities:**

- Does your local authority collect data on the **number of Foundation Phase children who are being taught in isolation** or who are on **substantially reduced timetables**?

In total, 11 of 19 local authorities stated that they collected data on Foundation Phase children who are being taught in isolation or who are on substantially reduced timetables. Two of these local authorities reported that although they collected this data, this data was only available for pupils who received input from specialist teams such as School Action Plus. One local authority reported that although such information was collected, it was not done on a regular basis.

Five local authorities stated that they did not collect any data on Foundation Phase children who are being taught in isolation or who are on substantially reduced timetables. One of these authorities, however, did mention that they had identified this as an issue, and that they were in the process of gathering this information. There was no correlation between those authorities that did not collect data and the number of fixed-term exclusions.

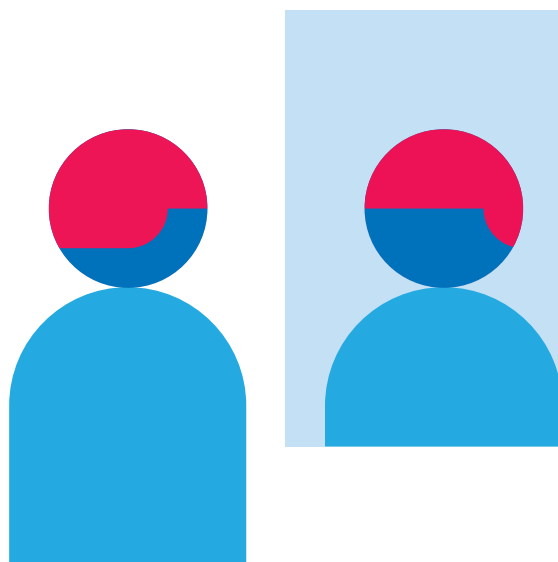
<sup>6</sup> [ibid](#)

In total, 14 pupils were being taught in isolation across three authorities. Two of these were amongst authorities that had recorded greater numbers of fixed-term exclusions, one of which had issued the second highest numbers of fixed-term exclusions in the academic year 2018/19.

These three local authorities all noted that the time these pupils spent in isolation was limited. For example, one local authority reported that pupils were “not in isolation all the time” but spent at least “50% of time individually or with one other pupil and a member of staff.” Similarly, another authority reported that the pupils were taught in “part isolation” and were reviewed on a regular basis, whilst the other authority reported that pupils were in isolation for “short periods of time (3 days)”. This was not the experience of the parents and carers who have sought our office’s advice on behalf of their children, with all four families telling our office that their children were being taught in complete isolation. This discrepancy could indicate that recording practices around isolation need tightening, so that any incidence or pattern of isolation is recorded fully. This step is important for local authorities to be able to identify need and plan appropriate authority-wide and targeted support.

On isolations, one local authority commented that “this is not the inclusive practice we promote.” Those local authorities that did record Foundation Phase children being taught in isolation, noted that this was a temporary measure. While local authority figures about children taught in isolation indicates this is relatively rare in the Foundation Phase and is reported to be a temporary measure, there is potential for under-reporting. For example, a child may be spending the majority of time in a one-to-one situation away from their peers, but if this is not a formal arrangement it may not be reported to the local authority.

Local authorities also provided data on children with reduced timetables with 12 Local Authorities submitting information to us about the number of Foundation Phase children on substantially reduced timetables. In total, 103 Foundation Phase pupils across 12 local authorities were being taught on substantially reduced timetables. Three local authorities reported zero pupils on substantially reduced timetables. There was no correlation between the numbers of pupils on substantially reduced timetables and the number of fixed-term exclusions issued.



## 2.5 Specialist support

We use the term 'specialist support' in reference to specific SEBD support for children in mainstream school settings.

### Specialist support for children in Foundation Phase (ages 3-7).

Regional Education Consortia	Number of Fixed-Term FP Exclusions issued in 2018/2019	Number of FP children who receive specialist support for SEBD
GwE	73	186
ERW	179	395
CSC	380	232
EAS	136	288*

\*Approximate numbers/based on known figures

#### We asked Local Authorities:

- How many Foundation Phase children in your local authority require specialist support for SEBD? (excluding specialist placement)
- How many Foundation Phase children in your local authority receive specialist support for SEBD? (excluding specialist placement)
- How many Foundation Phase children are currently waiting for specialist support in your local authority?

When answering the question "How many Foundation Phase children in your local authority require specialist support for SEBD" all 19 local authorities provided an answer but three listed their figures as "unknown". Two of these noted this was due to the fact that their Local Authorities had delegated funding directly to schools, and as such, they did not keep a record of how many Foundation Phase children were receiving specialist support for SEBD.

The total number of Foundation Phase children requiring specialist support for SEBD across the 16 Local Authorities who provided a definitive answer amounted to 1,089. It should be noted that this number is approximate since one local authority did not provide an exact number in their response. The Authority recording the lowest number of Foundation Phase pupils who required specialist support for SEBD was 12, whilst the Authority recording the highest number was at 405 Foundation Phase pupils. This figure was disproportionately higher than other recorded figures.

Across all 19 Authorities, approximately 1,101 Foundation Phase children were in receipt of specialist support for SEBD. On average, this would amount to roughly 58 Foundation Phase children per authority. The greatest number of specialist support to Foundation Phase children in one local authority was 197, whilst the lowest reported figure was 0.

A significant number of Local Authorities (11 that responded to the previous question) recorded the same number of Foundation Phase pupils receiving specialist support for SEBD as the number of pupils who required specialist support.

Few local authorities reported a waiting list for specialist SEBD support for Foundation Phase pupils, with the majority stating that there were no children waiting. The highest number waiting in one authority was 12.

Two Local Authorities also shared useful information in relation to their referral process for specialist support which could be deemed as examples of good practice.

One noted that referrals are processed on a weekly basis to ensure a rapid response. This appears to be a good practice example in contrast to those who process their referrals on a termly or bi-annual basis. The second Local Authority noted that children referred to them for additional resources or a Statement of SEN are allocated a Resource Provision or Teaching Assistant hours of support, and thus no Foundation Phase child should be waiting for specialist support. These examples of good practice echo the calls of teachers in our focus group, who asked for quicker access to specialist support.

## 2.6 Specialist placements

We use 'specialist placement' to refer to a child receiving a place in a specialist setting (not mainstream) to meet their SEBD needs.

**“There is no specialist [placement] until Year 3, by then the gap is huge and they are left behind.”**

—Teacher

Across the 19 authorities, 90 Foundation Phase children were accessing a specialist placement for SEBD. Numbers per local authority ranged from 0-18 children. In 7 authorities, not a single Foundation Phase child was recorded to have been accessing a specialist placement for SEBD.

Across 18 local authorities, a total number of 17 Foundation Phase pupils were waiting for a specialist placement for SEBD.

Education professionals consulted were concerned about the lack of specialist support for children in the Foundation Phase. Most professionals felt that they had to “make do” in school, creating nurture and satellite classes which they felt weren't the same as a specialist provision and not always appropriate for the child. They described frustrations at the lack of specialist placements, explaining that for some children with SEBD, a mainstream classroom was a sub-optimum environment and having specific provision where children's needs could be met would be most beneficial for the child.

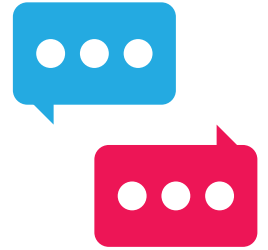
When discussing specialist support in the classroom, teachers told us that they often felt that the right support wasn't given to children with SEBD in their classroom. Education professionals told us that they would like to see more qualified specialist staff in school that could offer pastoral support, engage with families and offer bespoke emotional support to children with SEBD. Another alternative suggested was that current support staff should be given additional time to access the necessary training so they could develop the expertise to fulfil this role.

Notably, in some cases local authorities responding to our survey stated that they have specialist placements available to children with SEBD in the Foundation Phase, but teachers in our focus groups weren't aware of provision within that local authority.

Our case studies would also suggest that the provision isn't readily available to children under the age of 7, with one local authority having to create a bespoke provision for a 5-year-old.

# Section III:

## Discussion and Analysis



### 3.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

The UNCRC is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18. The Welsh Government has adopted the UNCRC as the basis of all policy making for children and young people and the Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 places a duty on Welsh Ministers, in exercising their functions, to have 'due regard' to the UNCRC.

#### The UNCRC states that:

- Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.
- Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

These human rights of children relating to education should be understood alongside the human rights to education laid out in the UNCRPD, which state the rights of persons with disabilities to education. Article 24 of this Convention details a number of considerations around the right to an inclusive education which include that:

- Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided.

Central to the principles of human rights to education set out in these two Conventions is the development of an inclusive education system focussed on the optimal development of each and every child. In Wales, this needs to be realised through laws, policies and practice for all children, and this includes young children with SEBD.

### Curriculum

The **Foundation Phase** has been implemented in Wales from 2008, with a revised Framework published in 2015<sup>7</sup>. This provides an experiential, play-based approach to learning for children aged from 3-7 years old, and has had regular monitoring, evaluation and revision based upon the evidence generated. The **National Literacy and Numeracy Framework** was introduced in 2013 and assessment against the framework became a requirement in September 2014. Principles of delivery should be integrated into Foundation Phase pedagogy, with best practice guidance available on how this has been achieved in settings<sup>8</sup>. In response to the acceptance of recommendations in **Successful Futures, an Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales**<sup>9</sup>, in 2016 Welsh Government created the Foundation Phase Strategic Action Plan<sup>10</sup>. This outlines a national approach to 'continuously improve the way in which the Foundation Phase is delivered in schools and funded settings in Wales' in line with the **new curriculum for Wales**<sup>11</sup>. This new curriculum (due for implementation from 2022 and already available for teaching) will apply as a continuum for children between 3-16 and its twelve pedagogical principles<sup>12</sup> align with those of the current Foundation Phase, with an emphasis that includes: holistic development; learning through extended periods of play and open-ended exploration; learner-initiated play and self-directed learning supported by sensitive interactions from adults; the planning of an environment that can support experiential and schematic learning; and physical movement.

### Additional Learning Needs

The **Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018**<sup>13</sup>, will be implemented from September 2021 and will bring in a single system to support children and young people with additional learning needs with their education from the age of 0-25. This law includes a duty for children's human rights under the UNCRC and UNCPD to be taken into consideration, and sets out that children must participate in decisions about their education, and that agencies must work together to meet children's needs. A principle of the draft ALN Code<sup>14</sup> is to favour inclusive education where children and young people are supported to participate fully in mainstream education, wherever feasible. Until the implementation of the 2018 Act, practice guidance to provide support for additional needs is set out in the Special Education Needs Code of Practice for Wales 2002<sup>15</sup>.

### Inclusion

Further guidance is set out in Welsh Government's 2016 non-statutory guidance, **Inclusion and Pupil Support**<sup>16</sup>. In line with the principles of inclusivity in the draft ALN Code, the principles of an inclusive education explained in this document states that effective inclusion, 'places the onus on schools to adapt their organisation and their ways of responding to both meet the needs and value the development of all children and young people in all areas of school life.' Specialist provision is not precluded by this guidance, which notes that, 'mainstream education is not always right for every child or young person all of the time but if mainstream education is not right at a particular stage this should not prevent the child or young person from being included successfully at a later stage'.

### Whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing

A Joint Ministerial Task and Finish Group is currently developing a national framework for a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, and Welsh Government are working with Public Health Wales to develop a toolkit for practitioners to access evidence based interventions. The Children's Commissioner has called for this framework to be statutory and for the role of a lead co-ordinator of this work in settings to be made mandatory<sup>17</sup>. This would mandate and build on some of the work around trauma informed practice and support for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) developed across Wales often with support from the ACE Support Hub<sup>18</sup>.

### Exclusions

The legal framework for exclusions in Wales is listed in 2019 Welsh Government guidance<sup>19</sup>. Overall this guidance lays out a linear process for managing exclusions through a balance of supportive and sanctions-based methods, as an end to end process from behavioural issues through to potential exclusion and beyond into reintegration back into the school environment. There is an emphasis on head teachers taking the lead on how exclusions and behaviour are managed within the individual school setting, with regard to the guidance and set against a broader legislative framework that should take due account of the Equality Act 2010, and the guidance notes that there may be local differences in approaches. The guidance does not include any specific reference to young children, and whether or how the age of a child should inform or affect decision making.

<sup>7</sup> Welsh Government Foundation Phase Framework (Revised 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Estyn December 2017 Active and Experiential Learning: [Effective Foundation Phase Delivery of Literacy and Numeracy in Year 1 and 2.](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://gov.wales/successful-futures-review-curriculum-and-assessment-arrangements>

<sup>10</sup> [Foundation Phase Strategic Action Plan Welsh Government 2016](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

<sup>12</sup> <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/implementation-and-practical-considerations/#pedagogy>



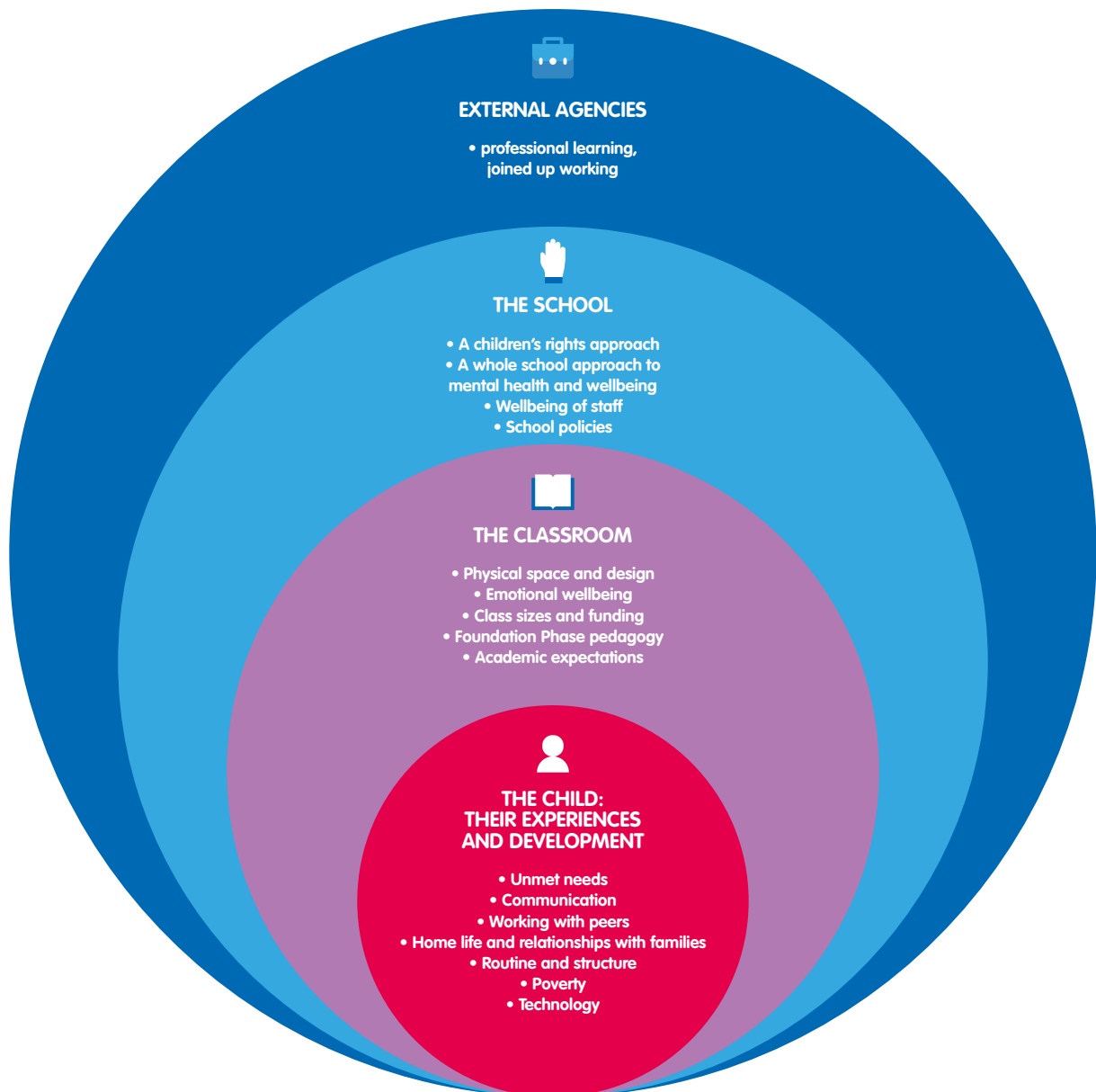
### 3.3 Developing understanding of challenges

Qualitative data from our consultation has been thematically analysed using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems<sup>20</sup> Theory as an organising framework. This, in combination with our case studies and research evidence suggests that there are a complex mix of challenges relating to the individual child, their family and community, the classroom environment, whole school ethos and wider policy. These all influence how the child can be supported in school.

**We have grouped our analysis in relation to four main areas. These are:**

- 'the child - their experiences and development';
- 'the classroom';
- 'the school' and;
- 'wider implications/ external agencies'

This discursive section of the report examines each theme in turn to develop a detailed understanding. The below diagram shows how these different contexts interact,



<sup>13</sup> <https://gov.wales/additional-learning-needs-and-education-tribunal-wales-act>

<sup>14</sup> <https://gov.wales/draft-additional-learning-needs-code>

<sup>15</sup> <https://gov.wales/special-educational-needs-code-practice>

<sup>16</sup> [https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/guidance-inclusion-and-pupil-support_0.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Quarterly-updates-July-2020\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Quarterly-updates-July-2020_FINAL_EN.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Knowing Your Children: Supporting pupils with adverse childhood experiences. Estyn January 2020.

<sup>19</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/exclusion-from-schools-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) The Ecology of Human Development, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

### “Foundation Phase children are a product of their home life; some children arrive at school and haven’t had attachment before. So we need to look at their home life and how they are coming into school” (ALN Transformation Lead)

Teachers in our consultation described a number of challenges that exist when the child arrives in the Foundation Phase setting. Case examples are used to illustrate how this challenge can present in the school environment, and our partner toolkit [Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#) can be used to find approaches that settings have found beneficial in response. Challenges described relate to developmental issues, and to the home and community environments. These are:

- Unmet needs
- Communication
- Working with peers
- Home life and relationships with families
- Routine and structure
- Poverty
- Technology

#### Unmet needs

Parents who called our office for support told us that they didn’t feel that their children’s needs were being met in school. They were searching for clear information about the support schools and local authorities should be providing to their children, as well as support in accessing referrals and assessments for their children.

Out of the 21 cases our office received regarding children aged 3-8 with SEBD, 16 of the children had more than one presenting need including foetal alcohol syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This is reinforced by statistics in Wales which show that children and young people with SEN disproportionately experience exclusion<sup>21</sup>.

Teachers also described multiple presenting needs for children with SEBD including Additional Learning Needs, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), attachment issues, and delays in speech and language development. They were concerned about labelling children in the Foundation Phase with SEBD but identified **using terms as the only way of accessing the support and additional help needed** to support behaviour and to put in place provision that enabled children to feel safe and to be able to learn.

A number of teachers were concerned that children’s needs in the Foundation Phase were not given enough attention by external agencies. They described a situation in which they felt that external agencies often chose not to put support in place for very young children, instead putting them into school to “test out” how they would get on. Experienced teachers felt that their knowledge and understanding of children’s needs, development and abilities weren’t taken seriously by health professionals and that children were not served well by a “wait and see” approach.

The issue of unsupported needs in the early years is one that could persist under the definition of Additional Learning Needs in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018<sup>22</sup>. This defines Additional Learning Needs in children before compulsory school age as a likelihood that they will have significantly greater difficulty in learning than others when they reach the age of 5. The risk of this definition is that it potentially directs practitioners to anticipate what the needs of a pre-school child will be in the future, which could delay a decision until the child reaches compulsory school age. This may mean that young children that would have significantly benefited from additional support during the crucially formative stages of early years and the first part of the Foundation Phase miss out on this support.

<sup>21</sup> <https://gov.wales/permanent-and-fixed-term-exclusions-schools>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/section/2>

### **“Some of these children are incredibly angry and are not able to express themselves very well”**

—Teacher

A UK- wide systematic review<sup>23</sup> of 19 studies focused upon primary-school-aged children found that speech, language and communication needs often overlap with SEBD. It was found that although the quality of interventions varied, supporting communication skills alongside speech and language support had a positive effect upon 3- 11 year olds’ behaviour. Difficulties in accessing timely speech and language support have also been a feature of casework that has come in to our office. These needs have also been recognised by professionals in our focus groups, who raised communication and language skills as the most significant challenge for children.

Highlighting communication as being key to succeeding in class, teachers described children with low communication skills as frequently struggling to understand instructions given by classroom teachers and unable to express themselves in a busy classroom. Teachers said that children would struggle to communicate their needs and feelings, and this resulted in them becoming frustrated and exhibiting challenging behaviour such as physical outbursts. Teachers also said that children with SEBD struggle to understand and recognise social communication, like responding to feelings or non-verbal gestures from peers.

### **“Behaviour is a response to a need – sometimes we don’t investigate the issue enough. If I have speech and language difficulties and I get frustrated it’s not a behavioural challenge, it’s a speech and language need.”**

—(ALN Transformation Lead)

Concerns were raised about the availability of speech and language support prior to a child starting school and the impact delays in support are having on children with SEBD. Teachers described a significant number of children that would benefit from speech and language support before arrival.

We were also told about the lack of specialist Welsh-medium services available to children with SEBD, with practitioners describing incidences when both Education Psychologist support and CAMHS support were unavailable to children in Welsh. This reinforces the national data about a lack of bilingual specialist workforce across Wales<sup>24</sup>. Some teachers told us that they often felt like Welsh language services were an afterthought and that in their experience it was rare for a child with SEBD to have assessment or support in their first language when this was Welsh. Children unable to access appropriate support services to improve their language skills are therefore doubly disadvantaged.

## Communication frustrations

In a case received by the Commissioner’s office a five year old child was having issues in accessing their education. The child’s behaviour at school could be difficult to manage, and they could have aggressive outbursts and at times caused damage to their classroom. The child was described as bright and able but with poor communication skills. At times it takes teachers approximately 40 minutes to encourage the child to settle in the morning although once that has been done they rarely present with any issues.

## Working with peers

### **“Making friends is a challenge” —Teacher**

### **“rheoli emosiynau, deallt emosiynau (managing emotions, understanding emotions)” —Teacher**

Linked to poor communication skills, professionals raised peer relations as a challenge for children with SEBD, describing children with SEBD as often becoming frustrated when socialising with peers or interacting with adults. Teachers explained that children with SEBD found it difficult to share resources and staff time with their peers and would often struggle to build relationships with peers and adults, and sometimes behave aggressively.

Teachers described a number of strategies (detailed in the practice toolkit) that help children better understand and recognise their own emotions and the emotions of their peers. Teachers explained that it could often take as long as the first term for children with SEBD to be able to work with their peers. In some cases, this could be longer, or only possible when supported by an adult. Teachers felt that they didn’t have enough staff members to be able to support children as they developed these skills and instead witnessed children with SEBD becoming frustrated and “lashing out” at peers.

Teachers noted that managing this challenging behaviour impacted on their ability to continue to teach the rest of the class and expressed their concerns about lack of time in the school day to effectively support the child.

### **“[I’m often] taken out of the classroom to resolve issues – what about the other children?” —Teacher**

When discussing peer relations and aggression, teachers also expressed concerns about the difficulties balancing supporting a child with SEBD and the safety of the rest of the class and the emotions of parents. Teachers told us that this can be difficult and hard to feel like they are “getting it right”.

<sup>23</sup> Law, James, Charlene C Plunkett, and Helen Stringer. 2012. “Communication Interventions and Their Impact on Behaviour in the Young Child: A Systematic Review.” *Child Language Teaching and Therapy* 28 (1): 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265659011414214>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/local-authority-special-educational-needs-specialist-services-workforce-data.pdf>

**“We also have to explain to other parents why their child has been hurt, we are supporting that child but also understand that parents will have concerns”**

—Teacher

Concerns expressed by professionals suggest the need for more support within the classroom to enable professionals to develop their understanding and practice by drawing on evidence based approaches. Estyn has reported on how collaborative approaches can have benefits to enabling this, profiling the collaborative work between Ysgol y Gogarth and Bangor University to develop evidence based practice in positive behaviour support<sup>25</sup>.

### Challenging Physical Behaviour

A parent called the Children’s Commissioner’s Investigation and Advice Service about their seven year old child, who had been excluded from the school on a number of occasions. The parent described the child as having ‘meltdowns’. The school had put in place a classroom evacuation plan for when this happens. The child was very anxious, and self-harmed at school by punching and hitting themselves and banging their head. The child also kicked doors, pulled books off shelves or caused other damage to the physical environment. This behaviour happened at home as well as school and during these incidents the child often said they wanted to kill themselves.

### Young children without support

A parent contacted us regarding difficulties they were having in getting appropriate support for their three-year-old child. Nursery and medical professionals say that the child requires full time 1 to 1 support but the child does not have a statement and therefore this support is not in place. The child has hurt staff and other pupils.

### Toileting

**“Children are coming into nursery really socially poor – still in nappies. This is costing time and money and using up members of staff on this. Children’s child development is also quite low.”**

—Teacher

Education professionals were concerned about the number of children with SEBD arriving at school with toileting issues. Experienced teachers thought that the number of children with toileting issues was increasing and the impact on the child’s education – and others in the class - was high. Education professionals explained that the ratios of staff to pupils when supporting toileting issues meant that teachers were often left supporting a whole class of children while other members of staff supported one child.

### Home life and relationships with families

Teachers that we spoke to put great emphasis on home life and the challenges they face while supporting children with SEBD needs. Teachers acknowledged that not all home environments could be understood in the same way, with some teachers emphasising that they often felt that families were searching for the same answers in regards to the best support for their children with SEBD, while others commented about parents being “disengaged” when it comes to discussing their children’s education. Teachers noted that some parents had a negative experience of school when they were children, and noted that the lack of engagement from families can be challenging when it comes to supporting a child with SEBD.

**“Nobody gives you a manual when you have a baby. Nowadays extended family isn’t such a thing. At school we are dealing with the children and their behaviour.”**

—Teacher

**“Taro eraill, siarad yn hyll, rhegi a mae hyn yn rhan o’u bywyd normal adref” (hitting others, talking rudely, swearing and this is all part of their normal life at home)**

—Teacher

Education professionals recognised the importance of building positive relationships with families and described different approaches to family engagement. This includes working with families in the school setting, supporting their needs and arranging training sessions. One school told us that they often do home visits and collect children for school. There was keen interest in family participation with teachers expressing that they felt they were taking a trial and error approach and would appreciate more priority given to this work, with more time and advice available.

Based on the evidence we have gathered, the impetus to prioritise this work at a national level seems to have lessened since the 2016 publication of Welsh Government FaCE the Challenge Together: Family and Engagement Toolkit<sup>26</sup>. However, Estyn’s 2020 thematic review<sup>27</sup> gives a welcome emphasis to family and community engagement and highlights the importance of this element of school work, in particular in relation to the Whole School Approach to Mental Health and Wellbeing.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/collaborative-approach-supporting-positive-behaviour>

<sup>26</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/face-the-challenge-together-family-and-community-engagement-toolkit-for-schools-in-wales-main-guidance.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2020-07/Community%2520Schools%2520en.pdf>

## Routine and Structure

### “Teaching parents how to parent”

—Teacher

Teachers spoke about a lack of routine within some families’ homes having an impact on the child’s ability to learn. A number of teachers said children arrived at their class tired and not ready for the school day, with many children often falling asleep. Teachers attributed this to a lack of structure at home. During one focus group teachers shared that their consortia had hosted a sleep training session and they planned to share their learning with their parents to encourage healthier sleeping patterns.

Teachers also recognised the difficulty children with SEBD faced to, follow and understand a routine at school and then returning home to an unstructured home life. Many said this was challenging for the children and had a particular impact at the start of school terms.

## Feeling safe at home

### “If you know your adult at home isn’t going to listen – you’ll display behaviour to get attention”

—Head Teacher

Teachers said that some of their pupils with SEBD have difficult home lives. Teachers recognised the significant impact this can have on a child’s behaviour within the classroom and the importance of supporting a child to feel safe and secure in their environment.

Teachers talked about nurturing these children in the shape of safe spaces to sit, small group work and an adult to support them.

## Poverty

All education professionals that we engaged with said poverty impacted children in their school and had a detrimental impact on children with SEBD in the Foundation Phase. On p.23 you will find a discussion of how well the Foundation Phase pedagogy meets the learning needs of children in poverty.

The Children’s Commissioner’s 2019 report [“A Charter for Change”](#) highlights poverty’s impact on children in Wales, including on their school life, and has clear recommendations for Welsh Government and Local Authorities.

Consultation work for this project highlighted the ongoing need to progress these recommendations. One teacher spoke of some children in her class starting the day hungry and explained that she felt breakfast club was mainly used as a childcare option for parents and that children who were living in poverty often didn’t attend. Teachers in the Foundation Phase often funded their own breakfast for pupils at the start of the day, a practice frequently described to us in our consultation work for [“A Charter for Change”](#)

Education professionals told us they often worried about children after work, especially during the holidays when they know that the impact of poverty is particularly prevalent. The Commissioner has recommended that Welsh Government<sup>28 29</sup> should continue to provide for holiday hunger and extend it as far as possible across Wales, this is something that education professionals also felt strongly about.

The impact of poverty for many children with SEBD is far reaching; not only does it impact on their learning but also on their health and support needs. We were told about one Educational Psychologist who said they couldn’t work with a child in the Foundation Phase until they had been fed, because the child’s hunger was affecting their mood.

## Technology

Digital technology was mentioned during the focus groups as having an impact on children with SEBD. Teachers recognised its impact on family routines with some explaining that many of their children had “been up late playing on the iPad”. This had an impact on their ability to concentrate in class. Teachers also noted the impact technology appears to have had on children’s development, including on their sleep routine, social skills, communication and their fine and gross motor skills.

One teacher linked technology with poverty, stating a number of children would display aggressive behaviour in order to play with technology in class because of a lack of access to technology at home.

## Sharing information about the child’s needs

Teachers felt that children often arrive in the Foundation Phase as a “blank page” to staff; they told us that they felt that often there isn’t enough known about a child’s early life, and described a lack of joined-up working between early years’ settings and their feeder school, saying that they would be better prepared to support a child with SEBD if information was shared prior to them starting the Foundation Phase.

In schools where liaison with early years’ settings is integrated into practice it was still challenging getting the correct support in place and teachers felt they weren’t always made aware of all of the needs a child has. They said careful consideration should be given to the child’s social, economic and physical needs, as schools are often having to do this on a “trial and error” basis in the Foundation Phase. They would like to see clearer ways for settings to share children’s experiences and developmental progression so that they can build in support and strategies for that child.

Implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018 has the potential to improve this situation through improved information sharing mechanisms and with a specific role for Early Years Additional Learning Needs Lead Officers at local authorities.

<sup>28</sup> [A Charter for Change](#) Children’s Commissioner for Wales 2019

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/our-work/policy-positions/happy-healthy-and-safe-a-manifesto-for-wales-children-and-young-people-2021/>

Classroom environments can be key to supporting a child with SEBD, but focus groups also indicated that this space proves one of the biggest challenges for children and the professionals supporting them. Children spend the most amount of time during the school day in the classroom and this is particularly the case with current public health guidance impacting children's movement around school buildings, and with many children remaining in classrooms to eat lunch. Even without these restrictions this space is where children learn, socialise and develop their talents. It can be a challenging space for some children - the physical space, class size and pedagogy all having an equal part to play in this challenge.

**“[you] Can end up concentrating all your efforts on one child, what happens to the rest of your class?”**

—Teacher

**“I think children being educated in the corridor are not being included. I think inclusion is brilliant if it's inclusion – if it's having children in a corridor it's not inclusion. And that's a worry.”**

—Head Teacher

Teachers shared common themes related to the classroom, described below under the following headings:

- Physical space and design
- Emotional wellbeing
- Class sizes and funding
- Foundation Phase pedagogy
- Academic expectations

### Physical space and design

**“The thing I hate about our school is not having enough quiet space. In an ideal world all children would have a nurture room where the level of stimulation is kept lower, where it's calm.”**

—Head Teacher

Teachers expressed concerns about the lack of space in their school, with many feeling they were “making do” with the space available to them and sharing several material changes they have made to existing space to better support children with SEBD, in particular the creation of low-stimulation spaces. Similar approaches and nurture groups have also been highlighted by Estyn as effective practice<sup>30</sup>. Teachers felt these spaces helped to calm children and were an important tool in supporting wellbeing and learning. Approaches are described in detail in our practitioner [toolkit](#).

However, there were challenges in creating these spaces. The play-based approach of the Foundation Phase, in which children move freely in their environment and engage in experiential learning, can make it difficult for teachers to create quiet spaces, particularly in small classrooms with large numbers of pupils. Teachers told us that they were using corridors and other available spaces to create these quiet spaces for children with SEBD, one school changed the staff room into a “Cosy Corner” for children to be able to access a quiet space during their day.

### Emotional well-being

Teachers told us that emotional support for their children was key to ensuring that children felt secure and safe within the classroom, and described a range of ways to offer emotional support to children with SEBD. These include supporting children to learn how to regulate their own emotions as well as recognising the emotions of peers. Approaches were informed by professional learning sessions and also reflected the teacher's own ideas, particularly in the adaption of ideas to suit their pupils and classrooms. Teachers' discussions reflected several of the approaches and suggestions detailed in thematic reports by Estyn published in 2019<sup>31</sup> and 2020<sup>32</sup>.

However, teachers also discussed challenges to this work. These included a lack of time, staffing issues and large class sizes. It was also noted that the start of the school day is particularly busy and challenging for children with SEBD, with lots of children needing settling at the same time. For this reason, some schools held “family breakfasts” or small nurture groups ensuring that those children had an opportunity to settle into the school day in a way that better suited them.

Emotional check-ins are widely used in the Foundation Phase to support children to recognise feelings and to enable staff to monitor well-being. All teachers agreed that the most effective way of using a well-being check in is to do it daily and with consistency in each class, so that as a child transitions they recognise the check in wall and can use it straight away. Teachers said that when used correctly they are an invaluable tool for monitoring the well-being of a class and taking swift action to support them, but noted that if they were not used consistently and regularly they were less effective.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/effective-practice/establishing-behaviour-groups>

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2020-07/Healthy%2520and%2520Happy%2520report%2520En\\_0.pdf](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2020-07/Healthy%2520and%2520Happy%2520report%2520En_0.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/system/files/2020-08/Learner%20resilience%20en.pdf>

## Class sizes and Funding

**“Twins in our school are being treated as one person. They had shared funding for half days’ support, so that’s one adult for two children for half a day. It means the children don’t get the support and also that they just feel like one person.”**

—Teacher

Education professionals raised concerns about large, busy classrooms with 3 members of staff – a number they described as insufficient to simultaneously meet the needs of children with SEBD and the other children in the class. Required ratios are 1:8 staff to learners when delivering Foundation Phase Nursery and Reception. This changes to 1:15 staff to learners for Year 1 and Year 2. Helping children with SEBD manage in classroom situations or dealing with incidents that happened outside of the classroom was described as requiring a lot of time in the classroom.

Experienced teachers told us about their experiences as Foundation Phase teachers and the difference they had noticed over the past decade.

**“4/5 years ago we had the staff – then there were budget cuts and we lost 6 members of staff – and you usually lose your best staff members.”**

—Teacher

**“After dealing with behaviour it is difficult to fit everything in the school day with other children too”**

—Teacher

Experienced teachers told us that they felt the pressure more now than in the past, and related this to fewer staff in each class, describing how that negatively affects the children in their class and their own mental health and wellbeing. Media reports have outlined that settings are struggling to meet required ratios in Foundation Phase provision in recent years and a 2019<sup>33</sup> Inquiry into School

Funding showed ‘overwhelming’ evidence that schools are experiencing problems trying to operate within current budgets<sup>34</sup>.

Teachers also described new pressures in supporting children with SEBD due to an apparent increase in children needing to share one-to-one support as their stated provision only funded this for some of the school day rather than funding this continuously. Teachers described Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) being allocated to several children in one class, or working across several classes on different days as each of the children they support are entitled to only some hours of individual support. Teachers described it as challenging to meet the needs of all children when LSAs were required elsewhere.

Head teachers recognised that all of the strategies detailed throughout this report and supporting resources required staff time and space which in turn required funding. Teachers said they were ‘making do’ with the space and resources they have, rather than making effective change and that this was having a negative impact on their ability to ensure that all the children in their class received a positive educational experience.

One head teacher told us about the benefit of accessing the Reducing Infant Class Sizes Grant, using this to create a small, mixed Year 1 and 2 class which runs alongside the Year 1 and Year 2 classes and has enabled the pupils to have greater teacher interaction. Welsh Government’s report on this £36 million grant shows that 115 settings have accessed funds in the 2017-19 period<sup>35</sup>. The grant is anticipated to continue until summer of 2021.

## Foundation Phase Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the method and practice of teaching. The Foundation Phase in Wales<sup>36</sup> is underpinned by an experiential, play-based pedagogy. The new Curriculum for Wales broadly maintains Foundation Phase principles in the initial years of primary education, and also emphasises a continuation of experiential pedagogy throughout children’s education. Whilst the ethos and principles of the foundation phase is widely held as a strength of the Welsh education system<sup>37</sup>, there is disagreement about its successes for children that are disadvantaged or have additional learning needs<sup>38</sup>.

**“...There is something about the choice and free flow in Foundation Phase that children who have experienced trauma find quite difficult – but formal learning can be equally traumatic.”**

—Head Teacher

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2018-07-19/schools-struggling-to-meet-recommended-staffing-levels-for-the-youngest-pupil>

<sup>34</sup> National Assembly for Wales, Children, Young People and Education Committee, School Funding in Wales July 2019 <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld12643/cr-ld12643-e.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-01/reducing-infant-class-sizes-progress-report-2017-to-2019.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/news/estyn-supports-schools-foundation-phase-through-new-good-practice-guide>

<sup>38</sup> Power, Sally, Mirain Rhys, Chris Taylor, and Sam Waldron. 2019. “How Child-Centred Education Favours Some Learners More than Others.” *Review of Education* 7 (3): 570–92. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3137>

A national evaluation of the implementation of the Foundation Phase<sup>39</sup> highlights that there is the same attainment gap and absenteeism between children who have free school meals, boys and those who experience multiple deprivation after the implementation of the Foundation Phase as there was before the implementation of the Foundation Phase.

There is evidence that the more child centred a class is, the greater the attainment, progress and well-being of the pupils within that class<sup>40</sup>, but evidence also suggests there is an inconsistency in how the Foundation Phase is implemented across schools which have a high proportion of pupils receive free school meals. These schools tend to deliver a narrower curriculum with more of a focus upon basic skills and less upon social, personal and creative development. Methods of teaching also tended to have less peer interaction or collaborative learning and 'neutral', as opposed to 'warm', interactions between adults and pupils<sup>41</sup>.

It should be recognised that practitioners working in schools with higher levels of socio-economic deprivation may be facing a wider range of challenges in supporting their pupils to engage in the Foundation Phase and this is likely to affect classroom practices.

During our focus groups, teachers had conflicting opinions about the Foundation Phase pedagogy and the impact it has on children with SEBD. Some teachers were quick to share the view that the free-flowing nature of the Foundation Phase didn't work well for children with SEBD and also felt children struggled with the noise levels, the lack of structure and remembering the activities they had been explained. Other teachers felt the Foundation Phase curriculum itself worked well for children with SEBD, but that a lack of support caused children to have issues in the classroom. Several teachers said that with the correct level of staffing children with SEBD often thrived with Foundation Phase pedagogy.

#### Academic expectations

**“In every class there is an expected academic achievement. They [children] come into Nursery way below the baseline, there's an expectation for us to get them to a point where they are reading. In reality we are caring for them, making sure they are safe and calm and come to school.”**

—Nursery Teacher

During the focus groups teachers spoke about the academic pressures placed on children in the Foundation Phase. They shared their concerns about pushing children with SEBD to achieve unrealistic targets when what they need is “nurture and to know they are safe”. Teachers were also concerned about the impact of striving to reach these targets while trying to support behaviour and teach children basic skills such as toileting.

Several professionals expressed opinions that the baseline assessment tool used in the Foundation Phase Profile was not being used to set appropriate targets that reflected realistic outcomes and achievement for the child. Instead teachers felt they were often told to push for outcomes that were beyond the child's realistic development within the specified time.

Experienced teachers told us they felt able to challenge queries about children not meeting targets while newly qualified teachers said they felt the pressure to push children to reach targets. In our 2019 nationwide survey, Beth Nawr, children aged 7-11 told us that tests and schoolwork was one of their biggest worries. While this data will only reflect some 7 year olds in Foundation Phase, it does reveal these pressures are felt by children when they transition into Key Stage 2 and it is important to note that Foundation Phase children in Year 2 do experience external standardised assessment.

**“Your teaching is challenged because the outcomes aren't met. There's no way of measuring the journey travelled for these children and it's frustrating!**

—Teacher

Despite the inclusion of outcomes related to Personal and Social Development, and to Wellbeing in the Foundation Phase Profile, teachers shared frustrations that profiling didn't adequately reflect the emotional and social progress of children in their classes, especially in the early years of Foundation Phase. Teachers felt this was particularly true for children with SEBD, recognising that often children with SEBD come into the Foundation Phase below the baseline assessment and without the correct support in place, meaning that it takes them longer to achieve outcomes in line with the profile tool.

They also felt the needs of children within their class were getting further apart and meeting the needs of all children in the class is becoming more difficult.

**“staff want to do the best job they can and they feel like they are failing.”**

—Head Teacher

<sup>39</sup>Taylor, C. et al. 2015. “Evaluating the Foundation Phase: Final Report.” Welsh Government: Cardiff. <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/88753/1/150514-foundation-phase-final-en.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup>Power, Sally, Mirain Rhys, Chris Taylor, and Sam Waldron. 2019. “How Child-Centred Education Favours Some Learners More than Others.” *Review of Education* 7 (3): 570–92. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3137>.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid



**“When we’ve had our most tricky children in school I’ve almost done nothing else in the school day other than deal with those children, and that’s fine and it’s a really important thing to do but I still have all the other stuff to do and the knock on is that it will be done in the evening and weekends. The children and their needs come absolutely first.”**

—Head Teacher

A child’s experience of school doesn’t stop at the classroom and the wider school community has a significant impact on all children in a setting, including those with SEBD. Discussion in this section is organised under the following headings:

- A children’s rights approach
- A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing;
- Wellbeing of staff;
- School policies.

### A children’s rights approach to education

Consideration must be given to children’s rights throughout the whole school. Recognising the UNCRC in school planning and policies helps to underpin inclusivity and equality for all children.

“The Right Way: a children’s rights approach to education in Wales<sup>42</sup> is a principled and practical framework for working with children, it is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It is about placing the UNCRC at the core of a child’s experience of education and at the core of school planning, teaching, decision-making, policies and practice.

Education settings in Wales work hard to enable children to realise their rights but in some settings the link between their work and the rights of children is not clear to staff, learners or the wider community. When schools do make the link between their work and the rights of the child explicit they are establishing a clear framework and rationale to their work. The UNCRC provides a strong foundation of values for a school community, which are recognised in international law.

Using the principles from “The Right Way to Education” throughout our **toolkit**, we have made links between what schools are already doing to support children with SEBD and the rights of children under the UNCRC. The toolkit aims to support schools to implement a whole school approach to well-being through a rights based approach.

### Whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing

While there are several definitions of a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, we understand it to include:

- Both what children learn in school about mental health and wellbeing (for example mental health awareness, child development, relationships and sexuality education, expressive arts and physical literacy), and the supportive environment around them at school (which should include anti-bullying measures, school counsellors, opportunities for physical activity and reflection; support groups, evidence-based preventative programmes and nurture areas);
- Both universal provision for all children in the school, and targeted provision for those children and young people who require extra support;
- A trauma-informed workforce who provide a supportive environment to children who have experienced or are experiencing trauma in their lives;
- Every member of staff as part of the approach, including pastoral staff, school nurses and youth workers;
- Inclusivity - all students should feel included in the approach; knowing their school has an ethos of supporting its students. An inclusive approach recognises the different circumstances facing children and young people, and takes these into account in a supportive way;
- Relationships beyond the school – it should be a ‘whole system’ approach which involves the school having relationships with the community around the school; which includes parents, community-based services and facilities, local CAMHS services, social services, third sector partners and others;
- An evidence-based ‘menu of options’ available to schools so that they can use mental health and wellbeing interventions which are psychologically informed and provided by approved organisations.

A truly whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing has the potential to create a nurturing environment in which behaviour that challenges is met with productive, supportive responses, rather than with exclusion. Many schools are practicing several aspects of the whole school approach outlined above. We want to encourage schools to think about all the elements of such an approach, and to consider which elements they provide currently, and which they could provide better. Most schools will need the support of their local authority, health board and the voluntary sector to develop this approach.

<sup>42</sup><https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/The-Right-Way-Education.pdf>

## Staff well-being

**“You notice staff members looking more stressed”**

—Head Teacher

**“it can be really draining experiencing another child’s trauma, it can challenge your patience to the extreme”**

—Teacher

Education professionals in both focus groups recognised the impact supporting children can have on their own emotional well-being and how they can’t support children effectively if their own wellbeing is neglected.

All professionals we spoke to told us they often worried about children after the school day was finished and that this worry was heightened over the holidays. Education professionals told us that they often felt that their “hands were tied” and wished they could do more to support children with SEBD in their classrooms and schools.

During the project, education professionals spoke at length about experiencing “secondary trauma” and feeling “emotionally drained” after dealing with challenging behaviour. Teachers also recognised this in their colleagues too. However, whilst several generalised staff wellbeing approaches were described (for example mindfulness, yoga and Pilates) teachers described limited systems in place to support one another in response to incidents or difficult situations, with many colleagues relying on informal support such as colleagues offering each other a short break if they notice that they’re visibly stressed. Some professionals expressed that they often felt like they walked from dealing with one child’s behaviour straight to another without time to process what had happened or to reflect on it.

**Formal supervision** was raised by all education professionals as a key support system that was missing for them.

**“no supervision – we used to have informal chat with staff at the start of the day, now as soon as you arrive in school you hit the ground running”**

—Teacher

Education professionals said formal supervision is important to give them space and time to discuss targets, including academic expectations for children and also to raise any issues they currently face in their class. They recognised that other professionals also dealing with children’s trauma have supervision to share their concerns and education professionals felt it would be beneficial for them too. Group supervision or externally facilitated supervision, an approach which is sometimes used for staff in therapeutic settings, might be useful to consider.

## School Policies

**“It’s about connections and reviewing the policies – if it’s not working take it out!”**

—Head Teacher

We were told of the importance of introducing new policies to support children with SEBD. Education staff spoke about changes to behaviour and attachment policies and the benefits they could see from new, up-to-date policies reflecting current knowledge and understanding about what works best for children with SEBD. This is reinforced by work such as that of the Collaborative Institute for Education Research, Evidence and Impact (CIEREI), a collaboration between GwE and Bangor University, whose work illustrates a strong desire from practitioners to inform school practice with an up-to-date evidence base<sup>43</sup>.

A number of head teachers told us they had replaced their behaviour policy with a relationship policy; an approach which has also been used widely in Scotland<sup>44</sup>. This shift of focus to relationships between staff and children had great benefits when it came to managing behaviour.

We were told that relationship policies weren’t there to “control” or “manage” behaviour, they were there to help staff to understand and reflect on their pupils’ emotions and help pupils to develop as caring and responsible individuals. Relationship policies involve thinking about building, maintaining and repairing relationships in schools and what this means for children, staff, families and external agencies. Teachers told us relationship policies also included developing emotional literacy (the ability to recognise, understand and appropriately express emotions), clear communication and praise).

Education staff spoke positively of restorative approaches and attachment training and how they have helped shaped their relationship policies and approaches to managing challenging behaviour.

Teachers told us they often involved children in the reviewing of policies, although there was no mention of whether Foundation Phase children joined in with this.

<sup>43</sup><http://cierei.bangor.ac.uk/about.php.en> <http://cierei.bangor.ac.uk/documents/BA-CIEREI-CASE-STUDY-DRAFT.pdf>

<sup>44</sup>2018. “Developing a Whole School Ethos and Culture: Relationships Learning and Behaviour.” Scottish Government: Edinburgh

### Professional Learning

**“Training is absolutely key, consistency is absolutely key and I think where it comes from in terms of leadership is key”**

—Head Teacher

During the focus groups, a number of participants raised the issue of professional education, both initial teacher education (ITE) and continued professional development of teachers and support staff. Participants felt that support staff needed more training to enable them to better support children with SEBD.

Head teachers raised concerns about Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and their ability to differentiate teaching, and participants questioned whether ITE has a sufficient focus on Additional Learning Needs (ALN). We were told that currently programmes tend to have only a one-day focus on ALN and there is a perception this is an add-on rather than integral to teachers being able to teach all children, whatever their needs, in the class.

In our local authority survey one authority shared that they thought ITE courses would benefit from more focus on effective classroom management, child development and supporting children with challenging behaviour. This was reiterated by head teachers taking part in our study.

### Joined-up working

Teachers expressed frustration at the current system, telling us they felt like they were chasing agencies and that children were being “missed” due to a lack of collaboration. Overall teachers told us they felt fundamental elements of support are not in place for Foundation Phase children with SEBD, citing a lack of early intervention, long waiting times, a lack of specialist support and insufficient specialist placements.

A number of teachers queried whether specialist services (Education Psychologist, CAHMS) were equipped to work with children in the Foundation Phase. They asked questions about other professionals’ experience of working with under 7s and whether the delays in support are due to a lack of qualified specialist staff.

Teachers also felt that the funding of specialist provision and placements should be centralised in order to avoid protracted disputes about who should pay the cost of specialist placements and support. At present it was felt that financial decisions were not always made with the child’s needs and best interest at the heart of the decision making.

# Section IV:

## Recommendation and Action Plan



### Recommendation

Welsh Government statutory guidance on exclusion<sup>45</sup> does not include any guidance or advice as to the approach that should be followed for young children. There are no specific considerations in this guidance about how to best support children under 8 who are in the Foundation Phase. Instead, the expectation is that the process of exclusions is the same for children of this age as it is for young people up to the age of 16.

This is clearly an omission given the numbers of fixed term exclusions being issued to young children in Wales, and given the fact that some children experience this repeatedly. Exclusion from education is not a solution that is addressing the needs of young children, and it is these needs that require support. As a measure in itself exclusion can harm the immediate, medium and long term interests of children. In place of this there should be a national drive for early support and intervention that leaves no young child excluded from education in the Foundation Phase.

In response to this I am setting out immediate actions that can be taken within the duration of the current term of Welsh Government. I am also making recommendations for the incoming Government in May 2021. I commit to working with the next Government so that these are taken forward.

### Immediate actions recommended during the current term of Welsh Government:

- Government should distribute and promote our toolkit, [Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#) to practitioners in settings. This has been developed in collaboration with schools in Wales that have experienced some success in inclusive practices in the Foundation Phase. School leaders should use this to inform whole staff learning.
- Government should ensure the issue of support for Foundation Phase children with SEBD is included in national planning for professional learning. A national approach should ensure that consortia are enabling professional learning for all Foundation Phase staff (teaching and learning assistants) so they are better equipped to support children with SEBD. Our toolkit can be used to support this.
- Government should work with Local Authorities to ensure each local authority has reliable mechanisms in place for schools to regularly inform them of:
  - children at risk of exclusion;
  - exclusions issued, including repeat exclusions;
  - children being taught on a reduced timetable;
  - children regularly taught in isolation;
  - the age and other protected characteristics of children affected.
- Local authorities should collect this data to establish an immediate picture for exclusion issues relating to children in their area, Government should publish this at a national level to inform actions by the next Government and to enable the success of new approaches to be evaluated.

### Recommendations for the next Welsh Government:

- set a clear policy aim to prevent exclusions being issued to children under 8 years old;
- review primary legislation relating to exclusion of children and young people at all ages and change these laws if they are inconsistent with the rights of children and young people under the UNCRC;
- amend statutory guidance on exclusion so that it includes specific considerations relating to the age of the child and other protected characteristics. Ensure that new statutory guidance sets out clear alternatives and support mechanisms that schools should follow instead of exclusion;
- support this change to the statutory guidance by using the findings of this report to create an action plan for early support that ensures the education system meets the needs of young children.
- Assess the extent to which the whole school approach to wellbeing and mental health is preventing exclusions of children aged 8 and above, and adapt the approach as it develops to ensure this.

<sup>45</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/exclusion-from-schools-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

## Action Plan for Early Support

An action plan would aim to ensure a national drive to support children's needs in the Foundation Phase. It should ensure early intervention and support, so that professionals have clear approaches to support children that do not involve exclusion from education.

We propose an action plan specifically related to Foundation Phase as this report has highlighted particular gaps in relation to provision for children of this age with SEBD. However, Welsh Government should also ensure that there are appropriate systems of support for older children and young people, so that exclusion can also be prevented for older children.

On the basis of the research in this report relating to Foundation Phase, an Action Plan for Early Support should include the following actions for primary school leaders, authorities and consortia. It should also ensure sufficient national levels of recruitment to key specialist roles. These actions develop the actions that I recommend are taken prior to the next Senedd term.

### Actions for school leaders

1. Head teachers should consult with their staff teams about new approaches to supervision, observation or strategies that professionals would find effective to support their well-being and their ability to reflect on practice and challenges.
2. Practitioners in settings should read and discuss our toolkit, [Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#). This has been developed in collaboration with schools in Wales that have experienced some success in inclusive practices in the Foundation Phase. The toolkit could form a professional learning focus for a whole staff INSET reviewing a whole school approach to supporting children with SEBD.
3. Head teachers should ensure they have established communication mechanisms with local early years settings, which enable the transfer of key information that will support a successful transition.

### Actions for Local Authorities

1. Local Authorities need to ensure they have reliable mechanisms in place for schools to regularly inform them of:
  - children at risk of exclusion;
  - exclusions issued, including repeat exclusions;
  - children being taught on a reduced timetable;
  - children regularly taught in isolation.
  - the age and other protected characteristics of children affected.

2. Local authorities need to ensure a process of consideration for each case that is brought to their attention. The consideration of each case should include:

- participation of the child, the family and professionals;
  - consideration about whether there are additional learning needs, or whether identified additional learning needs are being met;
  - developing an approach to meet behaviour and support needs, an approach should involve professionals in the setting with support from the local authority or other specialist support as appropriate;
  - regular reviews of the approach.
3. Local authorities also need to use this authority-wide data to review how far their provision is meeting identified needs of children under 8, and how long it takes for needs to be met. The views of children, families and of professionals should be included in these reviews. These reviews should identify whether additional resources or types of provision are required, and whether actions need to be taken more quickly.

### Actions for Education Consortia

1. Professional Learning should be made available for Foundation Phase support staff (teaching and learning assistants) so they are better equipped to support children with SEBD. The toolkit [Building Blocks: Inclusion in the Foundation Phase](#) can be used to support this learning.
2. Education consortia should ensure all their Foundation Phase settings receive and explore [our toolkit](#) to ensure that all schools in Wales are considering how to better support children with SEBD.
3. Working with schools and wider agencies where possible (e.g. universities/therapeutic services) consortia should explore new structures of supportive supervision for school leaders, teachers and support staff which enable more evidence-based reflection on practice and challenges. Effective approaches should be cascaded.

### Actions in professional recruitment

1. A national recruitment and training initiative is needed to ensure wider access to specialist support services, especially Welsh-medium services. Welsh Government should develop this in response to the gaps shown in their 2018 specialist workforce analysis<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>46</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-07/local-authority-special-educational-needs-specialist-services-workforce-data.pdf>

# Glossary

- **Fixed-term exclusion** refers to a pupil who is excluded from a school but remains on the register of that school because they are expected to return when the exclusion period is completed<sup>47</sup>.
- **Internal exclusion:** This is when a pupil is removed from their class but not excluded from the school premises. The exclusion could be to a designated area within the school, with appropriate support, or to another class on a temporary basis, and may continue during break periods<sup>48</sup>.
- **Informal exclusion:** Unlawful exclusions, also known as 'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions include situations when pupils are sent home for disciplinary reasons but the school is not following the procedures for formal exclusion. This type of exclusion is not permitted<sup>49</sup>.
- **Isolation:** This includes situations where pupils are separated and taught away from their peers within the school setting.
- **Managed move** is an arrangement whereby parents of pupils in danger of exclusion agree with schools and local authorities that it is in the best interests of their child that they be removed from the roll of the current school and placed in another educational establishment.
- **Permanent exclusion** refers to a pupil who is excluded and their name is removed from the school register. This pupil would then be educated at another school or via some other form of provision.
- **Reduced timetable:** This is a short term measure where pupils access a limited education as a way of supporting them to adapt or re-adapt to the school setting<sup>50</sup>.
- **SEBD:** [Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.](#)
- **Specialist Support:** We use specialist support in reference to specific SEBD support for children in mainstream school settings. This could cover, for example, some individual support or input from therapists.
- **Specialist Placement:** In this report we use 'specialist placement' to refer to a child receiving a place in a specialist setting (not mainstream) to meet their SEBD needs.
- **Statement:** a statement sets out a child's Special Educational Need and any additional help that the child should receive. It is a statutory document.

<sup>47</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2018-12/181002-permanent-fixed-term-exclusions-from-schools-2016-17-en.pdf>

<sup>48</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/exclusion-from-schools-and-pupil-referral-units.pdf>

<sup>49</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/are-you-being-excluded-from-school.pdf>

<sup>50</sup><https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/guidance-on-school-attendance-codes.pdf>