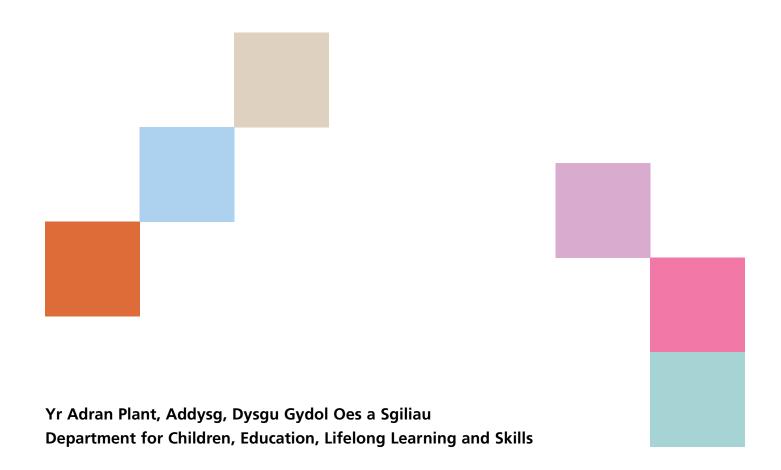# National Behaviour and Attendance Review

Interim Report

5. Alternative provision and the wider curriculum

5.1 On-site provision

Some reference was made to the role of on-site centres in managing behaviour in schools. However, there are difficulties in hosting such facilities. Some secondary schools have developed their own on-site facilities but are resistant to providing a facility for a group of comprehensive schools, as they are anxious that public perception may lead them to being labelled as a school with behavioural difficulties or even a 'sink school'.

Where schools develop their own on-site time-limited provision, there are clear lessons in how to ensure its success:

> ➢ High expectations set for pupils in the centre both in terms of behaviour and learning.
> ➢ Carefully planned admissions.
> ➢ The centre is equipped for and skilled in working for change with pupils, teachers, and parents and carers.
> ➢ The admission plan includes an agreement to a prompt return.
> ➢ The centre secures a prompt return to the mainstream for pupils.
> ➢ A mainstream colleague becomes the champion for securing and supporting a pupil's return.
> ➢ The on-site centre does not become overwhelmed with pupils whose behaviour seems highly resistant to change, the effect of which is to undermine the likelihood of success with those pupils with whom change is achievable.

5.2 Off-site provision

Where a pupil is placed outside her/his local school, there is concern about the negative labelling of such placements as 'units', 'centres', 'pupil referral units', 'behavioural units' etc. These labels seem to stigmatise the children and young people who attend such settings. Children and young people are often placed there because they lack the insight, skills and resilience to manage themselves effectively in the mainstream school. There is work to be done to help remove public rejection implied in the current exclusion process and a need to end the stigmatisation of young people with significant additional needs who may already be living in adverse circumstances.

One approach might be to develop the concept of the 'small school' as an alternative setting for those children and young people who cannot cope with the behavioural requirements of schools at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. By construing such settings as small schools, we would be promoting expectations that:

➢ Such settings would meet the curricula requirements of a school.

➢ There would be an appropriate focus on providing effective teaching and learning.

➢ Placement into classes of six to eight pupils would relieve the pressure upon behaviourally challenged pupils.

➢ The small class sizes would enable staff to work with the whole group on behavioural issues.

➢ A group work approach could be complemented with individual programmes for change.

This small school approach could ensure that the possibility of return to mainstream school is always available. However, this may require a significant shift in some teachers' attitudes towards pupils returning from such settings.

By reconfiguring provision as small schools, we could markedly reduce the negative labelling of pupils who attend other than mainstream school provision. We will take up this point again in the next phase of our work.

Should there be support for this concept, the Group recognised that an unintended consequence might be to substantially increase demand for such small school placements as more parents and pupils might prefer such a setting to a large (and at times impersonal), comprehensive school.

5.3   Post Key Stage 3

The potential flexibility of options emerging through 14–19 Learning Pathways was welcomed by the Group. The idea that an individual learning pathway is devised for a pupil who is experiencing behavioural difficulties presented a fresh approach to meeting need. If this continues to grow from a potential form of provision to a meaningful, responsive system then there may be a case to be made for a proportion of 'learning coaches' to have their remit and skills extended to become 'behavioural coaches'.

The chance to follow an individual learning pathway, with linked vocational learning opportunities for personal development, and the provision of access to support, guidance and counselling might be a valuable resource for some young people in difficulty.

However, some young people are likely to continue to need the support of an organised, coherent, structured setting that:

- is pupil focused;

- provides a small supportive setting;

- offers personalised learning;

- responds to young people's different learning styles;

- develops vocational options for young people;

- offers life skills training;

- provides a wide range of experiences;

- understands pupils' difficulties and manages their behaviour;

- challenges where appropriate;

- provides coaching and support in developing more effective ways of learning;

- involves parents and carers to support pupils and enhance their self-esteem.

A major concern in the Group's discussions about alternative provision was that it should always be high quality provision:

- providing 25 hours of appropriate learning;

- using good curriculum materials;

- developing teaching and learning using experienced, qualified staff;

- drawing in support from subject curriculum advisers;

- securing accreditation for pupils' learning;

- set in a high quality environment;

- involving specialist behavioural professionals, e.g. an educational psychologist;

- with the resourcing to commission specialist work experience placements.

In planning to respond to the needs of individuals exhibiting behavioural difficulties post Key Stage 3 we found it useful to think in terms of:

1. Those young people who have outgrown school. They know what they want to do. Their aim is reality grounded. They continue to challenge adult authority in school and may push this to the point of confrontation.

   Clearly the opportunities provided by the 14–19 Learning Pathways approach are likely to meet the needs of these young people and reduce pressure on schools.

2. Those young people who come from chaotic, unstructured homes where children and adults quarrel with each other almost as equals. These young people bring this behaviour into schools and lack the insight, understanding and skills to self-regulate and self-manage their behaviour.

   For these young people, there is a need to provide them with the necessary skills, insight and understanding. This might be undertaken in on-site or in time-limited off-site provision, the focus of which is upon providing young people with classroom survival skills and helping them to develop their personal autonomy. This work might be complemented by a parallel parenting course for the pupils' parents.

3. Those young people whose lives are in turmoil, for whom nothing is stable or secure and for whom things continue to deteriorate. This may include those:

- whose parents are engaged in a hostile, even aggressive divorce;
- who have high dependency or terminally ill relatives;
- whose parents fail to fulfil their role and who misuse and abuse alcohol and or drugs;
- who continue to live in abusive settings.

These young people may engage in high levels of risk taking behaviour and there is a need to ensure that effective multi-agency intervention is brought to bear in order to provide as much support as possible in such adverse circumstances.

In many instances, these young people require a more supportive setting that can be readily provided in a mainstream school.