Including students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream secondary schools

How effective and inclusive is the school’s behaviour policy? Claire Turner

Towards inclusive schools: Sustaining normal in-school careers: an alternative to pupil exclusions Eileen Turner & Steve Waterhouse

Behaviour support in secondary schools: what works for schools? George Head, Jean Kane & Nicola Cogan

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What is the reality of ‘inclusion for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary classroom?’ Sarah Shearman

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The AWCEBD exists to represent the interests of children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and to promote inter-professional communication on this topic. Details of the organization and membership are available from:

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Towards inclusive schools.
Sustaining normal in-school careers
An alternative to pupil exclusions

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ABSTRACT This article, based on a small research project in two secondary schools in one Scottish education authority, looks at moves to reduce exclusions. The schools' strategies, which chimed with national and local policies on inclusion, were individual and different. Both had developed effective strategies to keep pupils 'on track', involving a change in ethos. Deviant pupils were no longer regarded as 'problems' but were helped to modify their behaviour so that they could remain in school and continue learning. Boundaries had become more flexible to facilitate their inclusion. Details of the strategies employed are explained and explored in relation to the literature on exclusion.

Introduction

While the legal framework underpinning school exclusion in Scotland is different from that operating in England (Munn et al., 2000, pp. 37–9), the strategies reported here were developed inside individual secondary schools and could be applicable in other schools wishing to adopt more positive approaches to exclusion reduction. By emphasizing the retention of pupils in school, including them rather than excluding them, ethos and attitude also change (Cooper and Lovey, 1997). However, unlike England, market forces (Castle and Parsons, 1997) exert little influence on Scottish schools.

When the Labour government assumed power in 1997 it promised to give education first priority. Subsequently, a £320m Excellence Fund was established to finance initiatives to improve Scottish education. However, education authorities had to 'demonstrate clearly' how the money would be used (Scottish Office, 1998a). Within this Excellence Fund £23m was
 earmarked for ‘Alternatives to Exclusion’ initiatives, and councils (responsible for educational provision) were invited to bid for support for their individual schemes. Over half the councils in Scotland (18 of 32) received funding over a 3 year period to help reduce exclusions. Improving the educational opportunities of all pupils was seen as part of the wider social inclusion agenda (Scottish Office, 1998b; 1999).

In July 1999 government responsibility for education was devolved to the Scottish Parliament but ‘reducing exclusions’ remained central to the ‘raising standards’ agenda. The Minister for Children, when announcing additional funding, said:

we must ensure we give every child the support they need to get the best start in life . . . Being excluded from school means missing out on learning and then it can be difficult to catch up. (Scottish Executive, 1999, p. 1)

The government has set a target reduction of one-third by 2002.

The council responsible for our case study schools made a successful bid to the Alternatives to Exclusion Programme (one of only six in Scotland to receive full funding) and was able to support schemes in two schools. Education officials had included ‘independent research’ on these schemes as part of their bid to the Scottish Office, so the authors were invited to conduct two case studies and report to the council’s education services.

Research methodology

This small-scale qualitative research project was centred on the two secondary schools (A and B) which had received additional support to attempt to reduce exclusions and promote positive behaviour management (see Lovey and Cooper, 1997). The council officials were interested in whether the strategies adopted were effective. The schools had adopted different strategies in relation to reducing exclusions and promoting positive behaviour. At focusing discussions with senior management1 personnel and student support coordinators, relevant documents were collected and five pupils were identified in each school. These individual cases, which served as foci for staff interviews, were used to gauge the effectiveness of the schools’ behaviour support strategies. Had they made a difference to these children? Rather than attempting an ‘objective’ outsider analysis of school processes, the research focused on the personal perceptions of ‘insiders’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1992, pp. 124ff). Thirty-six interviews took place with programme ‘insiders’ (see Table 1).

Interviews revealed how ‘behaviour support’ was conceptualized and how strategies were being implemented in the schools through teachers'...
perceptions (insider accounts) of specific pupils and views on the effectiveness of the means employed to support pupils. Additional data were collected by observation; behaviour support staff were ‘shadowed’ for 15 hours and two management group meetings were observed (2 hours).

The context
Prior to the reorganization of local government in 1996, the then education authority had operated special units for secondary pupils ‘who reached the end of the line and were excluded and sent there. To all intents and purposes they stayed there’ (education officer, in interview). The new council inherited a ‘day unit’ with 20 male pupils which was ‘entirely clogged up by those who were permanently excluded’, while many children in schools were unsupported. The new council

wished to move to a service that supported schools which could provide a more secure environment for children who were not coping with school, who had behavioural problems. (education officer, our emphasis)

Building on developments before reorganization, the council, since its inception, had

established an infrastructure consisting of two major policies and policy guidelines which support learning for all children and young people, restructured the behaviour support service and funded an additional post of Student Support Co-ordinator within School A to evaluate the effectiveness of whole-school and collaborative approaches to improving behaviour and reducing exclusions. (council document, 1997, p. 4, our emphasis)

Table 1 Interviews in case study schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School-based</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior management team (SMT)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual SMT members (some taught target pupils)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance staff (also acted as subject teachers)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour support specialist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject teachers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target pupils</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of target pupils</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community support worker (employed by council and attached to both schools)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council’s education services officer (responsible for secondary schools)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of council’s secondary support service</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21
The rhetoric of inclusion has permeated official documents in Scotland since 1997. Specifically the National Guidance on Exclusions from School clarified procedures and regulations in Scotland and emphasized an ‘inclusive and preventive approach’ to the issue while recognizing that exclusion would remain a last resort (Scottish Office, 1998c).

A year later exclusions had been reduced (see Table 2) and the ethos of School A had changed significantly as class teachers felt supported and senior staff had more time to support learning and teaching (council report, 1998). This downward trend has continued.2

How two schools supported pupil behaviour

Same aims: different approaches

Each school had appointed a behaviour support specialist, known as the student support coordinator (SSC), additional to normal teaching staff. The duties of the SSC included supporting individual pupils, working collaboratively with classroom teachers, providing in-service support for colleagues, and liaising with parents and with the community support worker. The schools shared similar aims:

- better pupil behaviour
- greater academic success
- fewer exclusions.

However, they had tried to achieve them differently. This suggests that there are several equally valid ways of tackling issues of poor behaviour and class disruption.

School A

In School A the system had evolved over 3 years. All staff completed ‘concern forms’ about pupils with problems. Support and monitoring mechanisms included the following:

- Teaching partnerships were instituted (50% of the SSC’s time).
- The SSC kept a ‘watching brief’ by patrolling corridors and checking possible flashpoints.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All local schools</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Individual exclusion incidents
• First year pupils were taught about ‘appropriate behaviour’ in PSE classes.
• Pupils with problems were registered in the behaviour support ‘base’ with the SSC.
• INSET was provided for staff.

Teaching partnerships were based on individual contracts between the SSC and subject teachers. Clear aims and a specified length were agreed. Terminating partnerships were evaluated by the use of agreed performance indicators including:

- a reduction in punishment exercises issued
- an increase in work accomplished by pupils
- a reduction in unacceptable behaviour.

An experienced teacher said:

I experienced a 5 week teaching partnership in a second year class. It was wonderful to have an extra person in the room. I learned the importance of keeping pupils on task and of the first 5–7 minutes of a class when they are settling down.

The process of pupils registering with the SSC in the behaviour support base was introduced to remove them from potentially troublesome situations with peers at an unstructured time of day. It also allowed the SSC to maintain daily contact in a pastoral role.

School B

In School B greater stress was placed on individualized support packages for pupils. Ways pupils were supported included:

- reduced timetables
- ‘in-class’ support for pupils from behaviour support staff
- ‘time-out’ – planned time away from lessons for specific purposes
- ‘respite’ – immediate withdrawal from a class when a problem occurred, dependent on judgement and the availability of a support teacher (see Cooper, 1993, p. 163 for a somewhat different interpretation of ‘respite’)
- preventive tuition in ‘behaviour management’ for an ‘at-risk’ group of first year boys (six).

There had been a successful ‘cooperative teaching’ intervention combined with ‘in-class support’ for a French class containing several pupils already on the behaviour support list. The teacher reported:

It’s been a positive experience for staff and pupils. Some members of the class have made real strides and advanced their performance and actually like speaking French.
Successful strategies
The overarching strategies, which appeared successful across both schools, were:

- identifying ‘at-risk’ pupils early
- recognizing individual pupil needs
- tailoring support for each case
- providing support at the right time
- monitoring and reviewing support.

By ensuring that a named person had responsibility for collating information about pupils' behaviour and responding quickly to events, and by having a ‘key worker’ available for classroom support and staff development, these schools were gradually changing their cultures. The concept of positive pupil support was based on:

- enhancing the experiences of all pupils
- promoting inclusiveness
- providing opportunities for all pupils to develop more positive school identities and belief in themselves
- enhancing positive interpersonal relations.

Interviews with the majority of staff revealed a commitment to:

- keeping people out of trouble and ‘on track’
- vigilant monitoring – the ‘watching brief’.

Key strategies in achieving these aims were:

- using non-confrontational ways of working
- adopting a more ‘therapeutic’ approach rather than punitive measures
- relating to pupils as individuals rather than as general categories
- viewing problems collectively with a shared sense of ownership.

Staff were striving to keep pupils with problems (not problem pupils) ‘on track’ and were prepared to shift boundaries to accommodate those in danger of falling out of mainstream to prevent pupils becoming ‘outsiders’ (e.g. ‘Francis’ attempted five examination subjects rather than the usual eight).

Though details varied, each school had developed a common and seemingly effective approach involving a shift in ethos away from punishment to a more diagnostic and supportive stance. Pupils were viewed differently. As one deputy headteacher put it:

We focused everyone on supporting pupils rather than punishing them. If you exclude . . . the theory is that they will come back changed, reformed, but we
know that that doesn’t work... It’s about how can you support them before they get to that stage, before exclusion.

This approach had led to attempts to work constructively to uncover the causes of individual pupil problems, rather than handing out fixed penalties. A significant feature in both schools was the early identification of at-risk pupils, rather than reaction when trouble occurred. Exclusions had been considerably reduced (see Table 2). Staff predicted that when the effects of positive behaviour strategies had had time to ‘kick in’, allowing more preventive work and less ‘firefighting’, the impact would increase.

**Strategies to reduce exclusion: monitoring and sustaining normal careers**

Both schools were committed to keeping pupils ‘on track’ and engaged in learning by constantly monitoring them and through an apparent higher order strategy of ‘keeping people out of trouble’. Monitoring might suggest ‘surveillance’, a negative process; but here it seemed to be done positively as part of a caring ethos and did ‘make a difference’ to at-risk pupils by ensuring that they were noticed and helped. Monitoring pupils helped to keep them on the right side of the critical boundary between exclusion and inclusion, but more than minimally participating in schooling:

> There is always someone monitoring what is going on, trying to create circumstances, conditions in which children will be comfortable about coming to school. (headteacher)

> I feel strongly that it is not about maintaining a child in a building. It’s about furthering their educational progress. (behaviour support teacher)

This overall strategy might be characterized as ‘a watching brief’ aimed at keeping potential excludees ‘on track’.

School managers wanted to be more accommodating of pupils. They were flexible, making school more pleasant and responsive and more accepting of pupil differences. Their goal, linked to raising academic standards, was to keep as many pupils as possible in school with opportunities to continue learning. A related, implicit goal was that all pupils should experience classrooms where teachers could better facilitate learning because they had fewer disciplinary incidents to deal with.

Some interviewed teachers recognized tensions between the twin goals of inclusion and raising achievement. This tension has been identified elsewhere, with a tendency for schools to resolve tension in predictable ways (Munn et al., 2000). High excluding schools emphasized academic achievement and had high expectations about pupil behaviour, but perhaps
were less tolerant of pupils who failed to meet expectations, which resulted in a tendency for such pupils to be 'written off'. Low excluding schools, however, seemed more inclusive in their expectations, believing that all pupils should be educated, not merely the 'well motivated' and 'well behaved'. Schools apparently resolved the tension by raising academic achievement or reducing exclusions. In the case study schools the tension was managed somewhat differently, by aspiring to raise achievement and reduce exclusion. Strikingly, these schools, in aiming for low exclusion, were not merely aspiring to educate all pupils (as in Munn's low exclusion schools) but sought to raise the achievement of all pupils. Schools A and B apparently managed to create an ethos of greater inclusiveness based on expectations of achievement and positive behaviour from all pupils.

Some staff, however, retained a pragmatic and realistic view of the value of exclusion. Several, despite endorsing the overall pupil support and behaviour modification policies, wanted to retain exclusion, believing that there are some pupils who cannot cope with mainstream. Similar views were reported by Kinder et al. (1999); in their study, even in schools with a de facto nil exclusion practice, few staff wanted a 'nil exclusion policy'.

One indication of cultural change was the tendency to see children with behavioural difficulties as individuals who needed varied support.

We have reduced exclusions not just through the introduction of behaviour support but by a real coordination between guidance, learning support and behaviour support, and it might be better to call the whole thing 'support for pupils'. (headteacher)

Not all teachers in the schools shared this intention to support rather than control. Some spoke about 'control' and 'punishment' and the former deterrent effect of corporal punishment administered by 'the belt'.

The more inclusive culture was indicated by the way school personnel viewed problems collectively. A team approach was deemed appropriate for solving pupil difficulties.

The help for children can be very different. Sometimes it can be behavioural, sometimes it's a guidance teacher who is the key person, it could be an AHT who is the key person, it could be a classroom teacher as the key person in helping the youngster get back on track - it's all become an integrated business. (headteacher)

This message of inclusiveness seemed to have become a powerful meta-strategy in both schools. The approach was exemplified in School A by senior managers regularly teaching timetabled classes and undertaking interval duties: a powerful and symbolic strategy demonstrating the involvement of staff at all levels and contributing to the atmosphere of high expectations for everyone. It demonstrated 'evidence of people working in
concert towards common ends’ (Cooper, 1993, p. 160) – a classic view of the school effectiveness movement. The case study schools, in contrast to Reid et al.’s (1987) concern about the dangers of the ‘cult of the individual’ and suggestions of individual failings of teachers, had high expectations of all teachers but accompanied this with considerable teacher support. The schools’ goals were not an abstract set of aspirations but part of the lived experience of teachers and pupils, evidenced in the daily transactions of school life. For example, senior managers were ready to move from the safety of their offices and take a highly visible hands-on approach (corridor duty) to reinforce their high expectations at potentially vulnerable times of the school day (e.g. between lessons, lunchtime). At the level of the classroom it was demonstrated in the formal agreements reached between class teachers and a behaviour support teacher as they negotiated and sustained a ‘contract’ to work collaboratively with ‘difficult’ pupils and ‘difficult’ classes.

The inclusiveness of school cultures was noted in the teachers’ discourse. They frequently used inclusive phrases, always in the present tense, such as ‘keeping him in class’ or ‘helping him to keep out of trouble’ – suggesting an ongoing interest in maintaining pupils within the ‘normal’ culture of school, i.e. ‘on track’. Above all, there seemed to be sensitivity to the risk of letting pupils cross the critical boundary of ‘becoming an outsider’ to the school (as an excludable pupil). This inclusive discourse was reminiscent of what has been identified as the ‘incorporative’ school philosophy (Cooper, 1993; Reynolds and Sullivan, 1979; 1987).

It seemed that these two schools had already made boundaries more flexible to include more pupils. Support systems worked positively within a ‘framework of entitlement’ to enhance the experience of all pupils, not merely potential excludees. The schools appeared to be creating and developing opportunities for young people to believe in themselves. They attempted to develop pupils’ self-esteem, creating a cultural expectation ‘that each person can achieve’ personally as well as academically. The schools were in effect avoiding the potential processes of negative labelling with its tendency of ‘emphasising what individuals cannot do’ (Cooper, 1996, p. 146). Cooper has also recognized some implicit sociological processes of deviance, which underlie exclusion. The tendency for difficult children to be compared with ‘normal’ pupils always implies a notion of deviance and normality (Cooper, 1996). While Cooper recognized the labelling processes which may lead to the creation of deviant identities, our case studies suggest that this may be pursued by teachers as a continuing or ongoing strategy. The strategy involves more than avoiding negative labelling. It positively employs a ‘watching brief’ to prevent pupils getting into situations in which their behaviour might be viewed negatively.
The interactions between schools and pupils were being redefined. There was an ongoing process of change from 'control' to acceptance. Both schools were ready to be flexible and tried to accommodate pupils, although there were certain standards which could not be compromised. Beyond these, each school appeared to be aiming towards being a civilized, caring, accessible institution where all pupils were respected and valued.

Making summative generalizations about what is happening in schools is difficult, especially when relying on 'insiders' accounts' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1992) for both current and historical information. Nevertheless, it was apparent that each school was a distinct system with its own structures and culture. Our research indicated that success had been achieved incrementally without a massive culture shift. Each school had developed a system that fitted its own circumstances, while remaining consistent with the local council framework. This was evolution not revolution. We take the same view as Lovey and Cooper (1997) that schools must seek and own their solutions and not look for 'off the shelf' strategies. In these schools, the staff had needed reassurance that the proposed measures were genuinely designed to benefit pupils and, in the longer term, the whole school. The 'behaviour support teacher' was seen as pivotal in this evolutionary process, essential as a role model for other teachers but also as someone who could respond immediately to inevitable emergencies.

The significant evolution which the schools had undergone was manifested in interviews with teachers, which showed a recurring tendency to use a more inclusive discourse when talking about pupils. Additionally, they revealed an awareness of, and a sociological sensitivity to, the processes of negative labelling of pupils and showed a determination to limit deviant careers. The discourse was predominantly of 'normalization' in relation to in-school careers. Pupils were more likely to be spoken about in positive terms and with former deviant pupil identities displaced by a more 'normalized' framework of interpersonal categorization. Teachers recognized this had introduced a new perspective:

It's changed the way we look at things. Even a year ago I would have said that there were pupils who should not be in this school. There are still some but the numbers are much less than a year ago.

One teacher recognized she had begun to view relationships with difficult pupils differently:

I learned the importance of keeping pupils on task and also the importance of the first 5–7 minutes of a class when they are settling down. Jack [the behaviour support teacher] rarely raises the voice. There is an overall ethos in which you try to avoid aggressively defensive behaviour. (English teacher)
Another teacher recognized a total change with an entire class:

This was a bottom set of 27 in S2. They had been identified as having problems. It has been a positive experience for staff and pupils. (French teacher)

Interpersonal perception and typification were now more likely to suggest a process of normalization in which positive motives were imputed in pupils:

Amy

Her attitude has improved.
Quieter than formerly.
She has settled down and made the effort.
Her attitude to other pupils was better.
Responded well to praise.
The behaviour support teacher did 'anger management' with her and stopped her outbursts. I’m quite sure that without that she would not have attended school. She would have been lost.

Craig

He is motivated now and has improved his grade. There are no confrontations now and he argues less.
He has not had a punishment exercise for months. It's been a success story. We now have a much better relationship. (English teacher)

There are no confrontations now and he argues less. (History teacher)

A French teacher recognized a distinct positive motivational change in another pupil:

There was one boy who was very disruptive, he did not want to take part, he kept trying to attract attention by being disruptive, but now he completes his worksheets ahead of the others.

The dominant perspective in the two schools was focused on maintaining normal school careers ('keeping them on track'). Teachers recognized that the new more positive identities for pupils need to be continually nurtured:

A quiet word in the ear is enough for some kids. (behaviour support teacher)
In history he is motivated now and he’s improved his grade. I don’t have a head to head clash with him – rather a quiet word in the corridor. (History teacher)

These kids like to know the behaviour support is there. Take Harry, for
example, he still has his moments and is doing well but he needs protection
and he needs to know you are there. (behaviour support teacher)

‘Normalization’ was apparently adopted by teachers both as a frame of
reference for everyday interaction with pupils and also as an interpersonal
‘scanning’ mechanism for continual monitoring. In recognizing more
pupils as ‘normal’ – genuinely belonging within the school community and
not construed as beyond the boundaries of normality or as deviant out-
siders – teachers had adopted a more inclusive way of operating.

The appearance of these discourses in the schools’ culture, and par-
ticularly in the teachers’ thinking, suggests a tentative model to account for
the organizational changes evolving in these schools.

In order to interpret the data in this research, we recognize the sig-
nificance of the current socio-political phenomenon of inclusivism, but we
also need to revisit an earlier discourse centred on processes. Although
certain structural interventions and innovations had been beneficial in the
schools and contributed significantly to increased inclusivity, it is appar-
et that how they had been introduced, and their impact on the every-
day school processes, had effected a significant shift in everyday
interactions between pupils and teachers, and even between parents and
teachers. Many writers have identified the importance of schools develop-
ing not just a ‘professed ethos’ (Galloway, 1990; Munn et al., 2000) but
a ‘lived ethos’ (Cooper, 1993) in which ‘the reality of translating an
espoused policy into the everyday practice of the school’ is constructed
and sustained.

In both cases these schools had invoked a culture of increasing in-
clusivism in relation to the whole school population, particularly in relation
to positive achievement goals for all pupils and a discourse of inclusivism
in relation to academic achievement. Each school had also displayed a socio-
logical sensitivity to the processes which create, sustain or otherwise diffuse
potential deviant in-school careers, replacing them instead with elements
of a more positive process discourse which recognizes the importance and
impact of interpersonal relations on the everyday development of pupil
careers.

Acknowledgements

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who willingly cooperated in the study. For obvious reasons none of these people may
be identified but their contributions are highly valued. Thanks are also due to the
anonymous referees who made suggestions for revisions to an earlier draft.
Notes
1. Management teams in Scottish secondary schools comprise: a headteacher, a deputy headteacher and at least one assistant headteacher (AHT).
2. The baseline figure for 1998–9 was 46 exclusions per 1000 pupils (Scottish Executive, 2000), so a national average of around 30 exclusions per 1000 is anticipated by 2002. Already many authorities, especially in rural areas, record exclusion rates well below the target.
3. The ‘belt’ was the common name for the leather tawse used in Scottish schools until the outlawing of corporal punishment in 1986.

References

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How effective and inclusive is the school’s behaviour policy?

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ABSTRACT This article gives an overview of an existing behaviour policy of a mixed comprehensive school in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. It discusses the procedures undertaken in writing the original policy, and highlights the necessity of involving the whole school community in its development. The article examines the risks of failing to involve all staff and pupils in the development of a behaviour policy, and the inconsistencies in practice that arise when those using the policy have no ownership of the document. The article discusses the need for regular reviews of the policy and the importance of inducting new staff thoroughly so as to maintain consistency in the policy’s application. Finally, the article examines the impact of insufficient differentiation and the need for inclusion for pupils with special educational needs, across the spectrum.

Introduction

I work in a secondary school of approximately 660 pupils in a socially and economically deprived area of Stevenage, Hertfordshire. Of these pupils, 53% are currently on the learning support register at various stages of the Code of Practice (DfEE, 1994); in turn, approximately 20% of these have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). A total of 20.1% of pupils receive free school meals.

I have chosen this area of investigation because behaviour management and social inclusion are the main aspects of my job, and are a particular area of interest. It is my concern that a lack of understanding of pupils with EBD and related problems means that the needs of these and other ‘special’ pupils will not be catered for within the behaviour policy.

For the purposes of this article, the behaviour policy is taken to mean that which supports the educational and other aims of the school in ensuring that the conduct of all members of the school community is consistent with the values of the school (Clarke, 1996). Inclusion refers to:
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the placement of students with disabilities in chronological age-appropriate, general education schools and classes, while providing the necessary supports to students to allow successful participation in events and activities offered to and expected of classmates without disabilities. (Falvey, 1995, p. 34)

The current policy incorporates classroom expectations, a code of conduct, and guidance on the sanctions available to staff, including the hierarchical order in which pupils should be sanctioned according to the level of misbehaviour. It gives general information about behaviour management around the school and in the classroom. The final part of the policy gives guidance on the use of the ‘disruption room’ which is where pupils are sent if their behaviour is disrupting the learning of others. The current policy does not have a reward system, as this is a separate policy in the school handbook.

At present, the lack of consistent enforcement of the behaviour policy by staff has led to a significant difference in pupils' behaviour, with a general deterioration of positive attitude and respect from the main body of pupils. It is a concern that the decline in good behaviour has led to a deterioration in learning and motivation to learn for an increasing number of pupils.

Some pupils are excluded from learning by the inconsistent way in which the policy is implemented by staff. For example, pupils in some classes are sent out for minor offences such as chewing gum or because they have not taken their coat off.

Some staff feel that the increased disruption in classes is due to the high proportion of pupils with EBD. They feel unable to move beyond their ‘safe’ teaching methods, through fear of losing control of their classes. They are not using the current behaviour policy and are unsure of effective behaviour management strategies. I feel the problem is also largely due to the lack of differentiation by teachers across the ability spectrum.

Aims

The aims are to examine the following questions:

• Why and how was the behaviour policy created?
• What is the understanding of the policy within the school?
• How is the policy enabling the inclusion of pupils in teaching and learning?
• To what extent is the policy inclusive of its pupils (i.e. does it apply to all pupils?)
• To what extent does the policy achieve what it aims to do?
Methods

My main sources of information were the school’s existing behaviour policy, the local education authority and DfEE publications (e.g. results tables), and the headteacher, staff and pupils of the school. I used reading and analysis of documentation to show evidence of the effectiveness of the policy in relation to the type of school it operates in.

I carried out informal observations in lessons and around school to determine the extent to which the policy was being used by staff and adhered to by pupils. I anticipated problems related to subjectivity owing to individual teachers’ interpretation of the policy according to their own values and beliefs.

I used interview as my main method of research. I felt that this method was most effective in gaining an understanding of staff’s and pupils’ opinions. I was aware, from past experience, that pupils do not provide reliable responses on written questionnaires, as they generally express themselves better verbally.

I was conscious of gaining objective views from staff and pupils. I find that verbal responses are less open to misinterpretation than written, as you can take account of body language, tone of voice and facial expression in the context of what is said.

Findings

The original behaviour policy was a directive from the head, written quickly, with limited consultation from staff. The head’s philosophies and principles were circulated and discussed at senior management team (SMT) level, and later at middle management level by heads of year and heads of faculty. The head felt that these were the key members of staff that should be involved in consultation, and wrote the draft document after receiving their feedback.

The policy has evolved from its original format and, as a result of whole-staff and pupil involvement, now includes classroom expectations that have been rewritten by the pupils. This was achieved through the involvement of the school council, which is made up of pupils from all tutor and year groups. McNamara and Moreton (1995) and Burndred (1998) noted in their research that the use of pupils to create rules was particularly useful in overcoming problem behaviours of some pupils who were previously difficult to deal with. Similarly, involving pupils in the process of establishing a reward system means that they are able to identify with the policy in action. Kathryn et al. (1995) suggest that overlooking pupil opinion in the setting up of rules or changes in the school can be extremely detrimental to the
The most recent amendments took place in 1998, with the introduction of a 'disruption room'. Pupils are sent there after three warnings about their disruptive behaviour. This room was set up as a direct response to the concerns of middle managers about poor behaviour affecting teaching and learning. Middle management made the suggestion, which was discussed and agreed at SMT level. The majority of staff were not involved in the discussions about the disruption room as a means of tackling the poor behaviour in the school. Pupils were not asked for their contributions either.

After interviewing staff, it became clear that the majority knew little or nothing about the procedures laid out in the school's behaviour policy. This is the case for a large proportion of the staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and for a range of reasons. On closer examination, I found that a significant number of staff had joined the school since the last amendments to the policy were made in 1998. Only a small percentage of teachers were part of the staff when the original policy was drafted in 1994. Most teachers said they had received little or no guidance on the school's beliefs or values in relation to behaviour and discipline during their 'new staff induction'. Those who joined as new staff last year did receive some guidance, but were still not confident in knowing procedures related to dealing with poor behaviour, or more serious behaviours presented by pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The turnover of staff is such that thorough staff induction is a frequent, repetitive process. Problems arise from the arrival of a number of new staff more regularly than reviewing the behaviour policy. The school is in a position where many new staff are unaware of the ethos behind the setting up of certain procedures. They are unable to have any sense of ownership of the policy, and for the most part do not share its values. The Elton Report (DES, 1989) recognized that, in schools in which decisions are made without consultation with staff, there is a lack of collective responsibility for behaviour and discipline, and problems are referred quickly to senior management level, reducing the authority of the class teacher. Similar findings were made by Galvin and Costa (1994) in relation to policy effectiveness being reduced owing to a lack of ownership and shared values by staff.

McManus (1989) also found a link between lower exclusion rates and schools where problems are dealt with at the lowest level in the school's hierarchy for discipline. The school's own behaviour policy recognizes the need for problems to be dealt with at the lowest level, and actually states that a problem should only be referred on if the person dealing with it in the first instance is unable to resolve it. Perhaps the fact that this is not
happening across the school is an indication that the values we assume to
be shared and owned by staff are not necessarily so.

When interviewing more experienced teachers, I became aware that
some are not supportive of innovations, and are reluctant to change their
practice to adapt to the changing school. This unwillingness to adapt is pro-
ducing a lack of consistency across the school, and is having a detrimental
effect on progress in dealing with pupils presenting a range of behaviours.
The Elton Report made recommendations about the need for consistency
in influencing positive behaviour, and recognized the need for both pupils
and staff to have a clear understanding of their roles in school. Marris
(1986, pp. 156–60) suggests that staff must be given the time and the
opportunity to react to and adapt to changes in practice imposed upon
them or (as my own findings indicate) they will resist the changes com-
pletely.

However, Ayers et al. (1996) believe that absolute staff consistency is
unnecessary, as long as there is an agreed range of actions for staff to draw
from in dealing with behaviour problems. The policy does not give an
agreed range of actions to draw from.

Pupils interviewed seemed to be aware of their teachers' expectations.
For example, they were generally aware that a teacher should give three
warnings before sending a child out (though they stated that this doesn't
happen in the same way in every lesson).

Pupils said that the amount of trouble they get into in a lesson is depen-
dent on what the teacher is like. They were also aware that some teachers
used different strategies to try to keep pupils in the room, notably: moving
a disruptive pupil to sit alone; asking them to calm down outside the room
before rejoining the lesson; or talking to them outside the room (or calmly
in the classroom).

They noted that some other teachers issued only one warning before
the pupil was asked to leave the room completely, and shouted at the class
or individual to gain a response to instructions.

Some pupils felt very aggrieved on behalf of those in their classes who
are constantly in trouble because of their behaviour. They felt that when
things went wrong in the classroom, the first to be blamed were those well
known for their disruptive behaviour (often those pupils with EBD). Pupils
were asked if they felt anyone was treated unfairly or differently by the
teacher. A number of pupils felt that the ‘naughty’ pupils were those that
were blamed for almost all misdemeanours in and out of lessons, whether
they were to blame or not.

This raises the issue of labelling pupils. Norwich’s (1999) research on
special education labels and Cullingford and Morrison’s (1996) research
into exclusions noted that interviewees reported feeling bullied, unfairly
picked on’ or victimized by certain teachers, resulting in problems of changing others’ perceptions of them as a deviant influence. Martin and Hayes (1998) noted similar findings in addition to teachers’ labelling pupils inconsistently. This they base on the premise that what is deemed as unacceptable depends on individual perceptions of what is considered to be ‘normal’ behaviour.

Falvey writes similarly:

The expectations of others can influence the behaviour of students. On the one hand, if a student has been labelled as being difficult, adults typically expect that student to have challenging behaviours. If that is the expectation, the student is likely to live up to it. (1995, p. 168)

I asked staff to give me examples of what they viewed as acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in their classrooms. The main behaviours deemed as unacceptable were bullying, or acts of embarrassing others through making derogatory remarks, persistent low-level poor behaviour such as talking or silliness after a number of warnings, and rudeness to or swearing at the teacher. Staff were generally more accepting of ‘conversational’ swearing, not directed at anybody.

I asked whether all pupils should be treated in the same way (with regards to rewards and sanctions and general classroom/behaviour management). The majority of staff (ranging from newly qualified to experienced staff) recognized the need for pupils to be treated as individuals, whether for learning, behaviour or emotional needs. Some staff commented that they would never be able to proceed with the lesson if they responded every time a pupil with EBD was off task and distracted, so they ignored minor disruptions.

Some staff believed that all pupils should be treated in the same way, regardless of their difficulties. Galvin recognizes this view as one that makes behaviour management virtually impossible and believes that pupils cannot all be treated the same:

Fairness is not about everybody getting the same but rather it is about trying to get everybody to the same place, or at least narrowing the gap. Pupils are different, teachers do not treat them all the same, nor should they, nor will they. (1999, p. 6)

Many pupils felt that too many teachers use ‘blanket’ punishments to punish the whole group for the behaviour of the minority. They also felt that the school’s referral system is ineffective. They recognized that some pupils have had a large number of referrals written about them by one teacher, but that their behaviour continues to be poor in that lesson. To me this raised an important issue about a lack of pupil awareness regarding the
difficulties of others. As teachers, we are used to integrating pupils with special educational needs into mainstream lessons. We try, where possible, not to label these pupils as different to their peers. The reality is that those with behavioural difficulties are different, and won’t always conform to the school’s behavioural expectations. Peers will be unaware of the reasons why a classmate has not changed their behaviour after receiving repeated referrals: that is, they are often deeply disturbed or traumatized and not simply ‘naughty’. Allan illustrates this lack of understanding by peers in her studies about ‘Peter’, a boy with EBD in a mainstream school, and his peers’ feelings about whether he should be deserving of their help and support:

The classmates were highly uncertain about where to place him on the deserving/undeserving divide. This arose from their difficulty in understanding what was actually ‘wrong with him’. Without the high visibility of a medical condition it was difficult for Peter’s peers to make sense of his simultaneously odd and normal behaviour. (1999, p. 33)

Pupils interviewed were unable to remember rules from the classroom expectations displayed in classrooms. Even those recalled were not recalled accurately, as the pupils stated they didn’t ever look at them. Galvin (1999) suggests that the writing and displaying of expectations will not bring about a dramatic change in behaviour. He suggests that they must be ‘brought alive’ by the teacher referring to them throughout lessons in relation to the tasks set. By doing this pupils are constantly reminded of what is expected of them. Similarly it is often assumed (incorrectly) that pupils will know the rules without being taught them (Martin and Hayes, 1998). Pupils should be fully aware of classroom expectations if staff have been following the behaviour policy in their daily lessons, as it states the necessity of referring to them regularly in lessons to reinforce agreed behaviour in the classroom.

It is important to examine how the school’s behaviour policy affects inclusion in relation to teaching and learning. Staff and pupils indicated that they feel teaching and learning are being affected by the disruptive and emotional behaviour of some pupils in the school. Some staff feel they are particularly affected when there is no in-class support available for pupils with EBD.

On these occasions they feel that their lessons are dominated almost exclusively by working with pupils with EBD, meaning that pupils with learning difficulties (as well as the main body of pupils) are not included in the learning process, because they are unable to gain teacher help. Some staff feel behaviour management is being put before teaching and the content of the lesson, and that staff are not integrating the two by differentiating work. Another said that sometimes behaviour management is all
that happens in a lesson, but they also felt that learning is not able to take place until the behaviour is taken care of.

Hayes and Martin (1998), in their observational analysis of pupils, found that all teachers involved were more concerned with controlling pupil behaviour than ensuring pupils were working effectively.

Some teachers said that others are not always willing to adapt their teaching approaches to cater for all pupils and that accordingly teaching and learning are being affected. This is because of the ineffective way in which some staff are dealing with behaviour, or because they are using ‘safe’ teaching styles (to avoid losing class control) whilst simultaneously losing pupil interest. For example, some are removing pupils from their classrooms in the first instance rather than trying strategies to deal with the disruptive behaviour, or differentiating the work. This action opposes the written behaviour policy, which states that pupils must be given three warnings before being asked to leave the room. Consequently this means that a number of pupils are being excluded from learning by staff not following behaviour management strategies laid out in the policy. It seems that enabling inclusion is dependent on teacher effectiveness and their skills in working with a range of pupils, including those with EBD. Teacher philosophy and determination will determine the extent to which all pupils are catered for and included in lessons (Lowenstein, 1990).

Pupils recognized that their learning is being affected by the disruptive behaviour of others. They said that when classes are very loud, they are unable to hear the teacher, and are sometimes unable to understand the work set. They are also aware that the teachers who are not able to control classes seem more anxious and more often issue blanket punishments than those in control. Pupils feel that their learning is being affected because the teacher’s attention is always on those who are disrupting the lesson, and rarely on others who are behaving well. Some pupils with EBD noted that both their own and the class’s learning is affected by their behaviour. They are often sent out, so they are unable to learn, and the teacher has to spend time talking to them about their behaviour, rather than teaching the class.

The findings of my research indicate that there is a significant difference between how staff should deal with poor behaviour (as laid out in the behaviour policy) and what is actually happening in lessons. There are obvious discrepancies between the policy in operation, and the nature of the pupils that attend the school. The policy overlooks a number of important factors.

Firstly, it does not mention the vital role of the SENCO. Nor does it mention the role of the learning support assistants (LSAs) and how they can be used to contribute to lessons, especially in their work with those with both learning difficulties and EBD. It also fails to mention the named
pupil system (part of the SEN policy) in operation for pupils with severe EBD. This is particularly relevant, as to some extent it exempts these pupils from general school discipline, as they are supposed to be dealt with as individuals according to their difficulties. Unfortunately this is not always the reality of the situation, as a number of staff disagree with treating pupils with severe EBD differently.

Therefore, the policy fails to recognize the differences between pupils with special needs and those without. This includes those with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties, those with racial or cultural differences, as well as those who are eccentric and as such do not fit into the 'average pupil profile'.

It is important to examine the effectiveness of the policy in relation to the type of school that it operates in. It is not relevant to take raw examination results into account in doing this: they are totally unreliable as a measure of school performance as they make no allowances for pupils' social background or ability (Levacic, 1994, p. 55). Smith, in his survey of school exclusions, states:

Performance indicators such as league tables effectively encourage schools to exclude difficult children rather than retain them. (1998, p. 13)

Schools' rates of exclusion are not reflective of those schools, or of the disorder or harmony to be found within them (McManus, 1989, p. 35). However, they are an indicator of the extent to which the behaviour policy is working effectively. Despite its shortfalls, our policy is working reasonably effectively when certain factors are taken into consideration. They are: 53% of the total number of pupils are on the learning support register; 20.1% of pupils have free school meals; and the numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions for 1999–2000 were 88 and 5 respectively.

The policy as it stands is not achieving some of the aims it intends to meet. For example, it aims to publicly recognize that most students are well behaved and cooperative, and reward them as such. This is not achieved by the behaviour policy, as the school's reward system has been set up as a separate policy. What is significant is that the policy aims to ensure that the staff are working consistently to promote the code of conduct and classroom expectations, accepting common responsibility for maintaining good discipline. This is not happening or even close to happening at present. Pupils clearly recognize when teachers are ignoring the policy, or are not enabling the inclusion of all pupils in the curriculum. These factors are not reducing the frequent displays of poor behaviour by pupils or the ineffective behaviour management strategies by staff.
Implications

- Parts of the policy were drawn up without consultation with staff, pupils or parents. The research has shown that writing a policy without the full support of staff will not be effective, as they will have no sense of ownership and few, if any, shared values.
- The majority of staff lack knowledge of the policy and its procedures. This leads to a lack of consistency in the enforcement of rules across the school (from both experienced and newly qualified staff). Pupils lack knowledge of classroom expectations, and are confused by the many different expectations of staff.
- Pupils are not being enabled to learn because of a lack of differentiation of work. Pupils across the ability range are becoming bored and consequently disruptive as a result. Able pupils are not engaged in learning because the teacher focus is constantly on those with EBD, who are also not engaged in their work because it has not been differentiated.
- The policy fails its pupils with regards to inclusion. It makes no mention of pupils who experience learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties, and is written in a way that assumes all pupils are the same and can be treated as such. Failing to recognize that pupils are different, and have different needs, is leading to an emotionally charged and confrontational working environment for both pupils and staff.
- The policy only partially achieves its intentions. Though there are significant gaps in the written policy, my underlying concern is the lack of collective responsibility by staff for pupil behaviour and, at times, achievement. Any behaviour policy in operation would fail to succeed in these circumstances.

Recommendations

- The new policy should be written after full consultation with staff (teaching and non-teaching), pupils, governors and parents if it is to be successfully implemented, owned and valued. The policy must be reviewed frequently, and be seen as a working document to refer to in daily practice.
- New staff induction and staff in-service training (INSET) must take place to ensure that all staff are working consistently, and towards a child-centred approach (demonstrated by Galloway, 1982, to reduce exclusion). Pupils need to regard the rules in the policy as important by receiving daily reinforcement of consistent rules from all staff.
- As well as rewriting the behaviour policy, careful consideration needs to be given to differentiated learning through a range of teaching approaches.
and materials, which must be discussed with the learning support staff prior to the lesson. LSAs are not being utilized in lessons owing to a lack of joint planning and understanding of their function in lessons by teachers.

- The policy needs to include a range of agreed procedures for all pupils for rewarding and sanctioning (for example the use of a withdrawal/time-out card for pupils with EBD). Pupils with severe EBD should be dealt with by their ‘named person’ in all instances, without escalating issues to SMT level as a first response.
- Staff who do not take responsibility for all pupils’ behaviour and learning need to be closely monitored and managed by the SMT. The policy will not be effective if a minority of staff undermine the good practice of others. Staff INSET provided on behaviour management should be compulsory.

Conclusion

I was originally concerned that staff had a lack of understanding of pupils with SEN, particularly those with EBD, and that the behaviour policy failed to recognize any differences between these pupils and the remainder in the school. I wanted to find out what the disparity was between what staff and pupils were supposed to be doing, and what they were actually doing. As I expected, the two showed little relation in practice. However, I was surprised when interviewing staff that most believed that pupils with SEN should be treated as individuals in terms of both work and behaviour, even though they didn’t follow this practice in the classroom.

I believe that I achieved an understanding of the aims set out, and that I have made suitable recommendations for writing a new behaviour policy. In the writing of this article I have restored a small amount of my lost faith in my school’s ability to enable the inclusion of pupils with SEN; staff views are not as resistant to change as I believed, as long as they are able to practise them in the classroom.

References


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Including students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in mainstream secondary schools

A major theme running through this issue of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties is a concern with the ways in which British mainstream secondary schools support students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The topic of including students with Special Educational Needs in mainstream schools is itself of current interest to educators throughout the world. This collection of articles reminds us of three particular features of inclusion. First, all six articles remind us of the particular challenges experienced by mainstream schools attempting to include students who are perceived to be a threat to the good order of schools. In the UK such students are unique in the risk they run of being formally 'excluded' from schools as a direct result of the difficulties they pose and/or experience. Coupled with this is the clear possibility that the school's failure to adequately cater for the child with SEBD's needs will result in significant disruption to the school. This makes inclusion a high risk process where students thus labelled are concerned. The articles by Turner; Turner and Waterhouse, and Kane, Head and Kogan, remind us of a second point: namely the close relationship between interventions designed to support students with SEBD and more general whole school 'ethos' factors and such routine features of school life as the school's behaviour policy. All three of these articles draw our attention to the importance of having a behaviour policy which reflects a commitment to understanding what lies behind students' negative behaviour and the need to deal with students as individuals. Furthermore, we are reminded that such commitment must not only be enshrined in policies, but must be reflected in the day to day practices of staff. Turner, and Turner and Waterhouse also remind us that first hand testimony from the students themselves is an invaluable source of data when one is trying to assess the values of a school that are reflected in its actual practices, rather than in its policies alone.

The article by MacDonald, Chowdhury, Dabnet, Wolpert and Stein,
emphasises the important role that professionals external to the school setting and education profession can play in supporting students with SEBD. In this case health service professionals are involved in delivering a social skills training programme based on principles of cognitive behaviourism. One of the interesting features of this article, which echoed strongly in Kane et al.'s article, is the importance attached to informing and involving students' parents owing to the crucial role they play in enabling behavioural and social gains to be generalized to different settings and maintained over time. For MacDonald et al. effective communication between the health professionals, parents and school staff is a key feature of successful intervention. Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick also take up the issue of multi-professional cooperation in relation to exclusion, reporting the findings of an innovative study carried out in Scotland. These articles indicate that without effective communication there is a lack of co-ordination and coherence in the student's experience leading to the student moving from one setting to another without the consistent pattern of reinforcement that is necessary to effect sustained change to ingrained patterns of behaviour. Only when there are open channels of communication and practices rooted in appropriate values are the best chances for success made available. Students' behaviour is, after all, largely a reflection of the world that they experience.

PAUL COOPER
University of Leicester
Behaviour support in secondary schools

What works for schools?

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JEAN KANE  University of Glasgow, UK
NICOLA COGAN  University of Glasgow, UK

ABSTRACT  Between June 2000 and December 2001 a team from the University of Glasgow evaluated the effectiveness of behaviour support in one education authority’s secondary schools. The context was Scottish Executive incentives to education authorities to develop more inclusive approaches to young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This education authority enabled its 21 secondary schools to shape their own responses, resulting in the emergence of sometimes very different forms of behaviour support across schools. The evaluation project set out to answer four questions: what is working; where are systems not working; what else is needed; and is the initiative providing value for money? Two sets of information collected over the first year of the project were analysed, including exclusions data, school reports on the initiative and case studies relating to 116 pupils receiving behaviour support. The article gives findings from the first year and discusses the implications for informing behaviour support policy and provision.

Introduction

In Scotland, England and Wales, the rise in numbers of pupils excluded from school has provoked considerable concern amongst policymakers and professionals in education and beyond. In this article, we present the experience of one education authority in reducing the number of exclusions from its secondary schools. The first part of the article describes the background to the exercise. In the second part, we offer the education authority’s findings in terms of the methods used and their effectiveness. The final part of the article offers a brief discussion of these findings and some implications for the next stage of the research.
Background

In recent years, the Scottish Executive Education Department and its predecessor, the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, have supported local authorities to pursue government policy on social inclusion. Central to this policy is educational inclusion. Through its programme for social inclusion Social Justice: A Scotland Where Everyone Counts (1999), with its milestones and targets, the Scottish Executive set a target of a one-third reduction in school exclusions and made available to education authorities funding to pursue that target.

One education authority in the west of Scotland took advantage of this scheme to enhance its existing behaviour support initiative at the start of the 1998 school session. The initiative was aimed at the authority’s 21 secondary schools and the funding from the Scottish Office was used to pay for extra teaching pointage for each of the schools. This pointage was to be used specifically for the reduction of exclusions but each of the schools was free to pursue that aim as it saw fit, leading to a variety of approaches to behaviour support across the education authority.

In terms of structures, for example, some schools chose to use the extra staffing to address exclusions directly by allocating it to a specific teacher whose remit would become, wholly or largely, behaviour support. Other schools decided to enhance staffing within guidance and pastoral care in the hope of reducing exclusions through increased monitoring of behaviour and pastoral support. The range of ways of working with young people were just as diverse and were not dependent upon particular structures of behaviour support. This article offers an account of those strategies and an indication of emerging judgements of their effectiveness.

Methodology

To judge the effectiveness of the project, the education authority and its schools wanted to address four questions:

• What is working?
• Where are systems not working?
• What else is needed?
• Is this aspect of behaviour support providing value for money?

In November 1999, the education authority approached the writers and asked them to evaluate the initiative over a three-year period. In order to answer the evaluation questions, four criteria were developed through consultation with the school and education authority representatives and members of the evaluation team. All concerned would know the evaluation was working if:
There was a reduction in the number of exclusions.
There was increased provision of support for pupils.
There was an increase in appropriate staff development.
Pupils, parents and schools reported positively.

The discussion which follows is based upon data from the first year of the evaluation. Those data had been collected by the education authority from its 21 secondary schools. Each school had been asked to identify six pupils receiving extra support as a result of their referral to behaviour support services in the school. Schools were asked to consider two pupils for whom it was envisaged that intense support would be needed, two for whom a moderate amount of support would probably be adequate, and two who would require little support. The intention was to track each of these pupils through the three years of the evaluation by asking schools to report annually on a standard form known as the case study form. Schools were also asked to report on each year’s behaviour support activity on a second form known as the annual report form. Using the 21 annual reports and the 126 case studies, the education authority hoped to unearth a continuum of experience for pupils, parents and staff. It was also the intention to track the case studies and developing behaviour support provision throughout the three-year period of the project.

In the event, 116 case study forms were returned, giving information about:

- attendance rates
- the referral procedure
- reason(s) for exclusion
- agreed plan of action, timescale, nature of support
- current level of attainment
- involvement in behaviour support.

All 21 secondary schools in the education authority returned the annual reports, offering information on the nature of behaviour support and perceptions of its effectiveness. Responses were organized under six main headings:

- ways in which behaviour support was accessed in the school
- management and structure of behaviour support
- methods of support used
- effectiveness of each method
- attitudes to behaviour support
- staff development.

Both the case study form and the annual report form had sections where respondents could make open comment. In most cases, both sets of forms
Findings

Rates of exclusion
With regard to the first criterion, information from Scottish Educational Establishments Management Information Systems (SEEMIS) provided two sets of statistics: the total number of openings (half-days) lost through exclusion and the total number of incidents leading to exclusion (see Table 1). The SEEMIS figures indicate a moderate success rate for the initiative during its first two years. Secondary school exclusions had been reduced by more than 22% between 1997 and 1999.

However, the target-setting approach to reducing exclusions has been criticized (Cooper et al., 2000; Munn et al., 2000; Parsons, 1999) as leading to superficial and short-term approaches to the problem of exclusions. Indeed, national exclusion statistics published in 2000 and 2001 (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2000; 2001) indicate that target setting had no positive impact at all on exclusion rates across Scotland. Between 1999 and 2000, exclusions rose by 4%, giving rise to reports that the Scottish Executive would cease its use of a target setting approach to reducing exclusions (Buie, 2001).

The question is worth asking, then: within a target setting approach, what did this education authority do to achieve a reduction in levels of exclusion?

What schools did
The annual reports from the 21 secondary schools gathered information about the nature and effectiveness of behaviour support. Questions were asked about:

- the range of methods used to support young people with SEBD
- the effectiveness of each of those methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>SEEMIS data: secondary schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total openings lost</td>
<td>21567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total exclusion incidents</td>
<td>2548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School respondents were asked to score each method on a five-point scale. Table 2 indicates the range of methods and the frequency of use of each method. Table 3 indicates the perceived effectiveness of each method.

The most frequently used methods were those deployed outside the ordinary classroom: one-to-one support and small group work (Table 2). The behaviour support teacher used available time to work with individuals or small groups in ways which might or might not have been related to the curriculum.

Sometimes, young people brought materials with them from their subject classes and continued to work on the same activities as their peers but with increased levels of teacher support. Issues were raised here about the subject-specific nature of the secondary school curriculum and the inability of behaviour support teachers to provide teaching informed by understanding of core concepts and skills. On the other hand, there was recognition of the importance of providing curriculum continuity for pupils.

At other times, the individual and small group work related to personal and social development, using counselling and therapeutic approaches. These were seen as broadening the range of strategies traditionally available to secondary schools, with their emphasis on pedagogy and curricular structures. Comments on staff development within the annual reports indicated that it was in the area of counselling that schools identified the greatest need to develop new skills. The high level of use of such approaches suggests that, at least initially, schools wished to develop support on levels other than the curricular.

There were three strategies specified which were designed to support pupils through the ordinary timetable without extraction to a behaviour support base. Of these three, cooperative teaching was the most commonly used with 71% citing it as a strategy. Two further methods of classroom support (target setting and monitoring, and daily behaviour assessment sheets) were used by fewer than half of the respondents. Cooperative teaching is an approach commonly used by learning support teachers in Scotland. Its policy origins are in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) and in the HMI Progress Report (SED, 1978) where it was endorsed as one of four ‘new’ roles for remedial teachers, signifying a shift in the way learning difficulties were conceptualized. The difficulties were seen as residing within the curriculum rather than within the pupil. No longer appropriate, then, was extraction from the classroom and the remediation of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. Instead, energies would be devoted to the development of the ordinary curriculum through close classroom cooperation between learning support and class teachers. The use of cooperative teaching in the project described here reflected the desire on the part of
### Table 2: Methods used and frequency of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods used by schools</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual (one-to-one) support</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative teaching</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison with parents/guardians</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other methods</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual target setting</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily assessment sheets</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: Effectiveness of methods used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effectiveness of each of the methods used</th>
<th>Cooperative teaching</th>
<th>Daily assessment sheets</th>
<th>Individual target setting</th>
<th>Liaison with parents/guardians</th>
<th>Other methods</th>
<th>Individual (one-to-one) support</th>
<th>Group work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very effective</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ineffective</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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those involved in behaviour support to change not just the young person, but the curricular and pedagogical context in which the young person was learning.

The number of respondents citing liaison with parents as a method used (52%) is perhaps surprisingly small. Evidence coming from other sources in the evaluation suggests that this might reflect the great difficulties secondary schools report in developing partnerships with the families of this group of pupils in particular. Work elsewhere (Hamill and Boyd, 2001; Lloyd et al., 2001; Riddell and Tett, 2001) has considered the challenge of developing effective inter-agency working to draw families into a support network for young people in danger of exclusion. What is more surprising, given the attention paid (in policy and in research) to inter-agency working, is that schools did not cite joint working as a 'strategy'.

The range of methods used across the sample of schools and within a large number of individual schools suggests a pragmatic approach to supporting pupils with SEBD. On the one hand, it is viewed as something best directed towards individuals experiencing difficulty (through one-to-one sessions or in small groups); on the other, it is constructed as support for teachers in the context of the classroom and the curriculum. The variety of responses favoured by schools reflect awareness of the diverse range of difficulties experienced by pupils and a desire to develop a similarly broad range of approaches within each school.

With regard to perceptions of effectiveness (Table 3), cooperative teaching received the strongest endorsement from respondents with 93% rating it as either effective or very effective. The two most frequently used methods, one-to-one support and group work, were both rated as effective by 60% of respondents but group work was the only method to be classed as ineffective (by 7% of respondents).

These figures suggest that 'effectiveness' in relation to a reduction in exclusions is perceived as being about more than retention under the same roof as other young people. Instead, it seems that behaviour support is understood to be, at least partly, about the development of ethos, curriculum and pedagogies better to provide for diversity (Watkins and Wagner, 2000).

It is argued that schools provide more effectively for all pupils by creating a better ethos (Munn et al., 2000). This enterprise relates to creating supportive relationships amongst children, staff and parents and nurturing positive attitudes towards the school and its aims. Very different rates of exclusion in schools are likely to be explained by factors such as teachers' understandings of children's lives, their empathy with them and their fundamental values in relation to inclusion. 'Strategies' in themselves will not achieve the fundamental shift in values which is needed but some strategies enable schools to be critically reflective of their provision overall.
Curriculum and pedagogy, too, will have a bearing upon the extent to which young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are able to participate in the life of the school (Watkins and Wagner, 2000). Much of the broader literature on inclusion relates to the notion of young people as stakeholders in the organization, both shaping and being shaped by the context in which they are learning (Ainscow et al., 2000). Participation is viewed as more than formal (and sometimes tokenistic) involvement in management or decision-making processes. Rather, participation is about partnership in learning itself, through engagement with the core processes of shared planning, negotiation of aims, design of tasks and activities, and formative and collaborative assessment of progress.

The site where school inclusion/exclusion happens is the classroom. In rating cooperative teaching so highly as a strategy, all of the schools in the project recognized classroom experience as important to pupils’ sense of commonality with others. However, they also recognized, in the range of strategies they adopted, that different young people required different forms of assistance towards greater participation.

The model of inclusion described above demands very flexible ways of working for learners and for teachers. Again and again, schools noted their desire for ‘flexibility’ to enable appropriate responses to young people and their view that behaviour support offered some scope to make choices about appropriate support strategies.

Conclusion

The data gave insights into the different models of behaviour support which were emerging as the project progressed. These models existed on a continuum from behaviour support as a separate and distinct strand in school provision (very often in an identifiable place) to behaviour support as permeating all aspects of learning, teaching, curriculum and pastoral care. The aspirations of all schools, however, were to develop more flexible ways of working whatever the choices regarding strategies.

This sense from schools that inclusion requires schools to have ‘room for manoeuvre’ reflects a broader view that the flexibility required for schools to do well by all children may be irreconcilable with the emphasis on outcomes as the measure of school and teacher effectiveness. Schools interpret the drive to raise attainment as a concern with results and report difficulty in educating children with very challenging behaviour whilst, at the same time, raising levels of attainment through the target-setting approach. Indeed, some commentators attribute the rise in exclusions to the prevailing influence of ‘market systems’ of education (Cooper et al., 2000; Hayden, 1997; Stirling, 1996):
The introduction of published league tables of examination results and other indicators of performance in schools has created a climate less likely to be sympathetic to children not only producing no positive contribution to these indicators, but who may also prevent others from doing so. (Hayden, 1997, p. 8)

The flexible approach to supporting some pupils did not necessarily result in a loosening of the tight structures within which most children received their education. There may be a contradiction in responding to some in highly responsive ways whilst maintaining the majority in rigid curricular systems.

The range of strategies was wide but each school had been in a position to make choices about the nature of behaviour support. The resulting sense of ownership over the project felt by schools would vindicate the education authority’s decision to devolve to schools the responsibility for designing strategy in accordance with each school’s perceptions of what was needed. Ultimately, this factor, rather than any one approach, may have been responsible for the success in reducing exclusions within the allotted timescale.

Views given were wholly positive about the project. This was not surprising, perhaps, when all schools had been allocated additional staffing as a result of their participation and when there was a desire to retain that staffing.

A further phase of the evaluation will focus upon gathering the views of pupils, parents and teachers not directly involved in behaviour support. The researchers anticipate some methodological and ethical difficulties here. Schools have reported their frustration at recognizing the value of working with families and yet finding themselves most often unable to fulfil that aim. The views of pupils themselves will also be difficult to obtain, and, when gathered, may be coloured by the pupils’ perceptions of the researchers and their relationship to the school. Nevertheless it is hoped that this further work will provide some basis for understanding the perspectives on behaviour support of pupils, parents and subject teachers.

References
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A social skills group for children

The importance of liaison work with parents and teachers

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ABSTRACT  An NHS Trust set up groups to teach social skills to children and adolescents using a cognitive behavioural framework. One group of seven children (five boys and two girls) is described. Parents were invited to a parallel parents' group. Each group lasted for 90 minutes and ran weekly for 6 weeks. Extensive liaison with parents and teachers took place before, during and after the group. Analysis of pre- and post-group questionnaires sent to parents and teachers indicated improved social functioning, outside the group, for most of the children. Parents valued the dialogue with professionals and often felt supported by them for the first time. Therapists' contact with teachers ensured full knowledge of children's behaviour and the transfer of skills to schools. Cognitive behavioural techniques with children undergoing group work require intensive liaison to facilitate generalization of skills learnt.

Introduction  

A significant number of children who are referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have problems understanding and processing interpersonal cues and planning appropriate responses to these...
cues (Frith, 1996; Lochman and Dodge, 1994; Matthys et al., 1999). Whatever the underlying causes of these processing problems, a child with social skills deficits is likely to experience difficulties with peer relationships and general interaction with parents and teachers. This, in turn, is likely to have an impact on the child's general mental health and well-being. Owing to an increase in referrals of such children to the family consultation clinics within the Bedfordshire and Luton Community NHS Trust, and owing to a lack of services to meet these children's needs locally, groups were set up to help children with their social skills development. These groups, like other social skills groups described in the literature (Dogra and Parkin, 1997; Lambert and Christie, 1998; Schaefer et al., 2000), have been perceived as successful and are well received. However, although children are able to learn skills within the group setting, some appear to have difficulty generalizing these to the environment outside the group (Marriage et al., 1995). In response to this, groups were planned to include an active liaison with parents and teachers. This article describes the structure of a group and the impact of a more intensive liaison with parents and professionals.

**Method**

Invitations to refer to the group were sent to two family consultation clinics based in Luton and Bedfordshire. To meet the referral criteria, children had to be between 8 and 11 years of age, to have significant difficulties making and keeping friends, and to have had an assessment undertaken by the referrer. Four therapists volunteered to help co-facilitate the groups, with two psychologists responsible for the overall management of the groups.

Twelve referrals were received and all were invited to an assessment interview. Eleven attended the initial screening interviews, which were undertaken by the lead psychologists. At this interview the child's main social difficulties were discussed as well as possible strengths. Seven of the 11 children (five male and two female) were selected for the group, on the basis of having similar social skills deficits; their ages ranged from 8 to 11 years. All the children had experienced difficulties making friends and maintaining friendships.

Parents were sent a letter offering their child a place on the course together with a consent form requesting written permission to contact teachers. They were asked to complete a set of pre-treatment questionnaires:

- The Family Grid (Davis and Rushton, 1991), a measure of a parent's satisfaction with their child.
- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997),
which assesses positive and negative attributes, chronicity, distress, social impairment and burden for others.

- Ratings of individual functioning on a range of social skills (from 1 = does not have this skill at all, to 10 = is competent in this skill). These behaviours included eye contact, listening, taking turns, sharing, compromising, initiating conversation, staying on topic, emotional recognition of others and attention span.

These questionnaires were also completed after the group, and the social skills behaviours were rated again by parents at a 3 month follow-up review.

A named teacher for each child was requested to fill in two pre- and post-treatment questionnaires:

- The SDQ (for teachers).
- The Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaire for Teachers (PBQ) (Weir and Duveen, 1981), which measures helpfulness, generosity and cooperation in a school setting.

The children’s and the parents’ group ran concurrently for 90 minutes each week for 6 weeks. The therapists involved in facilitating the groups met half an hour before each session to plan and coordinate activities. There was a debriefing session at the end of the group lasting for 1 hour. The psychologist facilitating the parents’ group would join the therapists involved in the children’s group for the last part of each debriefing session to provide feedback about the parents’ concerns and comments.

The children’s group used various cognitive behavioural techniques, with interpretation of group process also taking place. Three main themes were discussed and worked on in the sessions. These themes were feelings, developing friendships and communication skills. Small group discussions, role-play exercises, art activities and feedback were used to explore and learn about these themes. As the children enjoyed playing games, each week a child was asked to lead the group in playing a game s/he had chosen. These games not only served the purpose of introducing some fun and physical activity into the group but also gave the children a chance to learn how to cooperate with one another and develop friendships. Ideas from therapists of different theoretical backgrounds were also welcome. For example, one of the therapists, with a family therapy background, suggested writing a goodbye letter to each of the children, highlighting the positive changes they had made.

The parents’ group was primarily a support group and therefore less structured. The first part of the session involved the two facilitators informing parents of what the children would be learning in their session and the homework task for the week. Thereafter, the parents set their own agenda for the discussion.
Each week, parents and teachers received a detailed letter, outlining the content of that week's session and asking them to continue the work at home or school. Both parents and teachers were invited to give ongoing feedback in the contact books they had been given. The children were also given homework at the end of each session, and a letter to the parents outlined what the homework entailed. The homework tasks were specifically designed to involve parents partly because the tasks were of a social nature and partly to enhance the parent-child relationship.

Results

Quantitative results

Clinically significant change for the SDQ, the Family Grid and the PBQ was tested using criteria proposed by Jacobson and Truax (1991). This is established when, following an intervention, a participant moves from outside an instrument's 'normal' range to within its normal range. No significant differences between pre- and post-group scores on the SDQ were found. Pre and post Family Grid questionnaires were returned by four parents (Figure 1).

Three children moved from outside the normal range (level of discrepancy between parents' perceptions of 'my child' and 'my ideal child' at >2) to within the normal range, with one child staying within the latter category. Pre and post Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaires were returned by four teachers, with children showing a significant initial deficit (Figure 2). Two teachers reported a substantial improvement, with child 6 moving from outside to within the normal range (18.3–24.3).

![Figure 1](image-url)
Ratings for all children were obtained from parents for a range of social skills behaviours (Figure 3). Six out of seven parents reported an improvement over the course of the group in terms of eye contact, listening, taking turns, sharing, compromising, initiating conversations, staying on topic, emotional recognition of others and attention span. At a 3 month follow-up, we were able to contact the parent(s) of six out of the seven children. Improvement continued, or was maintained, over the course of a 3 month period following the social skills group for all those contacted. None of the children's behaviour reverted to the original pre-group ratings.

Qualitative results

Results of post-group interviews with parents

One or both parents of each child were interviewed between 2 and 4 weeks after the final session of the group. The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to understand, from the parents' perspective, what aspects of the group were seen as helpful or unhelpful both for themselves and for their children. Any perceived changes in target behaviours were discussed. In addition, parents were asked to suggest changes or improvements to the group in terms of content, location, structure and number.

Every parent expressed a reduction in feelings of isolation and alienation after having attended the parents' group. Comments received from parents included the following:

- There was an empathy which was non-verbal and a real moral boost.
- Not being looked down on or being seen as a bad parent.
- I didn’t feel alone anymore . . . There was a comradeship and an understanding
of what you’re talking about... it was a big relief off-loading at the group, like Noah’s Ark.

Parents reported an improvement in their patience with, and understanding of, their children. They were able to share, and later implement, strategies for managing their children’s behaviour and dealing with professionals and statutory bodies. Friendships were made within the group and a follow-up social event was initiated by parents. Providing the children with an opportunity to socialize in a controlled environment rather than in a one-to-one context was also seen as being ‘worth its weight in gold’ in terms of practising skills and providing a more complete picture of the child to clinicians.

Parents reported that their children found meeting other children with similar problems very helpful. For one child this had ‘made the most impression on him’, and another child ‘saw that she was not alone’. Some of the children reported making friends within the group, being keen to keep in contact and to see them again. Homework tasks provided children with an opportunity to discuss, perhaps for the first time, particularly challenging social skills with their parents (e.g. managing anger and initiating and maintaining friendships). Playing games as a group was also seen as positive, as was the provision of positive adult role models.

Aspects of the group seen as least helpful to parents included the following:

- feeling that the sessions were not long enough to really discuss anything in depth
- feeling frightened of being ‘abandoned’ after the course

![Figure 3](image-url)
• requiring more behaviour management strategies from professionals
• feeling embarrassed and awkward at first, particularly when having to talk in pairs with a stranger
• going over topics perceived as irrelevant and feeling uncomfortable discussing children with a male facilitator.

The parents felt, with regard to the children, that the following aspects of the course were not useful:
• pitching the content of the homework tasks either too high or too low for the child's ability
• the lack of a follow-up session to ease the sudden ending
• recording the session on video
• imitating behaviour seen in the group, at home.

Case studies

Case study 1: the importance of parent liaison
The case of D illustrates the importance of parent liaison work. D had difficulties expressing emotion and would often hit out and bully other children. He had also had frequent arguments with his father who had taken a lead in looking after him while his mother had been suffering from depression. She had felt unable to go to appointments made for her son and unable to attend the group with her husband. D remained guarded during his initial sessions in the group. However, he began to talk about his relationships at home as the sessions progressed. Through the use of homework books in which both parents were able to feed back their experiences, D’s mother was able to remain involved. It was also noticeable that her contribution increased over time. Thus, the homework books enabled parents who were not able to attend the group, for whatever reason, to have some form of input, and the books also provided the therapists with valuable additional information. The midpoint telephone contact between a group facilitator and the parent(s) also enabled D’s mother to be included in discussions regarding her child’s progress. She did eventually come to the final feedback session with her husband and acknowledged the progress that D had made.

Case study 2: the importance of teacher liaison work
The usefulness of having intensive teacher contact was seen in the case of P, who presented with severe behavioural difficulties, including high levels of aggression. There was weekly contact via letters from the psychologist and the teacher contact book, which included a daily review of P’s behaviour at school.
It was apparent from the teacher's feedback that P did not always understand the social rules associated with certain classroom situations and the way he was required to behave. It was thought that the use of 'social stories' might be a useful teaching aid for P. These are stories written by the child in a personalized manner, containing clear steps which describe how s/he should behave in various social situations (Jenison Public Schools, 1994). Information on 'social stories' was sent to the teacher who then modified the way this aid was used to suit P's particular needs. As P had found writing difficult, the teacher asked him to memorize a few simple statements about what he could do when he had to join a different class for the first time. This was an impending situation that was causing him significant anxiety. The teacher reported back that P enjoyed memorizing the statements and later returned 'extremely proud of himself' for remembering what he could do in that situation and successfully handling the situation without any problems at all. This served to boost P's self-esteem and might not have occurred if there had not been teacher contact.

Discussion

Clinically significant change, no longer falling outside the 'normal' range, was noted for three children using the Family Grid (Davis and Rushton, 1991) and for one child using the Prosocial Behaviour Questionnaire (Weir and Duveen, 1981). All parents reported an improvement in social skills behaviours, either after the group or at a 3 month follow-up.

The case studies show how close contact with parents and professionals played an important part in this group, particularly in terms of parents feeling understood and heard for the first time. Active parent and teacher liaison ensured that each individual child's social skills needs were being addressed. It was also observed that, after the midpoint telephone feedback, the parents would often arrive early at the children's group to give feedback on their child and the events of the previous week. In one particular case, a mother told us that her daughter had had an extremely difficult week and as a result might behave in an unpredictable manner within the group. Her behaviour in the group was indeed more challenging, and the therapists were able to understand that behaviour and respond more appropriately.

Debriefing was also an integral part of the group and indirectly helped to improve communication between parents and the facilitators of the children's group. It enabled members of the multidisciplinary team to obtain a holistic view about each child in the group from listening to the observations of each therapist. A therapist from the parents' group also joined the debriefing session halfway through. This enabled the therapists facilitating the children's group to gain a degree of insight into the child's
home environment, and to obtain feedback about parents’ concerns and requests for information. A request for halfway feedback, relayed by the therapist facilitating the parents’ group, led to the idea of midway telephone communication feedback to parents and teachers.

When the group was originally set up, invitations to interested Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service clinicians to act as co-therapists were sent out. Since there were several interested staff members it was decided to run the children’s group with two lead therapists and two co-therapists who acted mainly as observers. This multidisciplinary approach was valuable. There were also occasions when children became disruptive, and the presence of extra therapists was again valuable.

Conclusion

Social skills training courses have often been criticized for the fact that the skills taught on the course are seldom transferred to the external environment. The course undertaken in Bedfordshire tried to rectify this problem by having extensive parent and teacher liaison built into the structure. This liaison might not necessarily have led to immediate transferring of skills but it did give parents and teachers access to information on social skills training. They were, therefore, able to continue the work after the course finished, as a six-session course cannot hope to accomplish major changes in such a short time.

Looking at the 3 month follow-up data obtained from parents, it would seem that some transferring of skills had occurred. What emerged from the contact with parents and teachers was that they felt understood and supported by therapeutic professionals. Parents and teachers were also able to make the therapists aware of individual difficulties, so that the therapists could introduce parents and teachers to relevant social skills techniques for a child’s particular social difficulties. Furthermore, this liaison work, which also involved the referring therapist, helped to establish what further work still needed to be undertaken by the referrer, family and school once the group had concluded.

Possible future developments to improve on this liaison work could include developing a manual on social skills training to be given to parents and teachers at the end of the course. This would then help them to continue their work and prevent them from feeling ‘abandoned’ once the course has concluded. A follow-up telephone consultation, a few months after the course has concluded, a top-up group and/or an annual review are other ideas which could be considered to help maintain the changes made by the children while attending the course, and again providing continuing support for parents and teachers.

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References

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Book review


This book makes harrowing but instructive reading at a time when, in England, we regularly have more children locked up than in any other European country. Despite the existence of an increasing number of non-custodial options, the eagerness of Home Secretaries to be seen to be doing something about crime has led to a rising number of children from the age of 10 being locked up. This means that young people who have often been vulnerable from birth, are locked up in situations where they experience unprecedented risks of loneliness and bullying. As an adult prisoner explained to me, ‘In here we look out for each other but it wasn’t like that in Young Offenders. There it was like a zoo, and you hit out before you got hit.’ In the last 18 months 500 imprisoned children have deliberately harmed themselves and four teenagers have killed themselves.

The argument for and against purpose built units for young people, such as those built during the seventies and eighties, is discussed. The problem is, if enough secure accommodation is available for those children whose freedom has to be curtailed in the interests of society and themselves, there is a greater possibility of children being placed in such accommodation on flimsier grounds (rather than support unfilled places). However, it is because of the shortage of such accommodation that it is inevitable that some youngsters land up in the adult prison system. For children, even more than adults, secure accommodation should be the very last resort and only for those whose offending is either of a high level, is so persistent as to need these strong measures, or, puts others in extreme danger.

In this book we are faced with the reality of how the child (until the age of 18 young people are children!) feels when shut in the ‘sweat box’, in a prison van, heading blindly towards a secure placement, often in an adult prison. Although there exists a protocol for admitting a child into
custody which is aimed at giving an accurate assessment of that young person’s vulnerability, we learn that because of distances to be covered at the end of the day, and shift patterns in prisons, many young people are swiftly isolated in a secure cell before the protocol has been completed. The voices of the children are recorded throughout this book.

A voice that stays with me is that of the trepidation, fear and anxiety of the first night inside of a 16 or 17 year old who had not expected to be taken out of his home and community. Despite recommendations of H.M. Chief Inspector of Prisons, there is rarely first night support for young people. Because it is late in the day when they arrive most are immediately ‘behind the door’. One officer spoke of ‘first night packs with radio, colouring book, crayons and a comic’, a poignant reminder that many of the young people locked up have almost infant needs.

This book is an easy read but not a comfortable read. The first night inside is often just the start of a nightmare of bullying, abuse and intimidation, extortion and theft. Children are looked after by officers who are not trained in caring for adolescents and may well miss the subtleties of bullying – the eye-contact and body language.

It is hoped that this book will be read by those who can influence both policy and the media. Each young person whose story is told has had a history of vulnerability as well as wrong doing. In the words of the author, ‘the conditions that create and sustain such vulnerability have to be systematically and comprehensively addressed. Treating symptoms and invariably treating them badly in secure, penal settings, is simply not good enough.’

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EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES 8(1)
Joined-up approaches to prevent school exclusion

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ABSTRACT This article explores findings from a recent research project, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and contextualizes these in a discussion of some current thinking about inclusion and exclusion. Although the research found that it was possible to prevent disciplinary exclusion from school and that inter-agency working was central to this, nevertheless strategies for preventing disciplinary exclusion often meant that young people were no longer very fully included in the mainstream school curriculum. This has implications for how we think about and use the idea of inclusion in practice and raises questions about how we can include the most challenging young people into inclusion theory and practice. This research was carried out in Scotland, and the article also discusses some key differences in policy and practice from England.

Introduction

Current government policy constantly advocates joined-up, inter-agency working, particularly in relation to young people in trouble in school and in their neighbourhoods, or those identified with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This article discusses issues raised by a research project which explored inter-agency working to support young people in trouble and to prevent exclusion from school. We begin with a short account of the differences and similarities in the education systems of Scotland and the rest of the UK. Second, we outline what is meant by disciplinary exclusion. Then we report the findings of the research, discuss the key issues raised and discuss how they contribute to our thinking on some current processes in education. In particular, we are interested in the idea, argued by Slee (1995) and others, that inclusion increasingly reproduces
the dividing practices of special education, especially in relation to young people excluded from school.

Scotland and devolution

Since 1998 Scotland has had a devolved Parliament, responsible for education along with other domestic matters, including justice and social welfare. International and British economic matters, including taxation, are still decided at Westminster. Scotland has always had its own legal system and educational legislation was always separate, although often following quite closely the model of England and Wales. There have been some key differences however, and Paterson (1998) describes Scottish educational policy making as ‘relatively independent of that in the rest of the UK’.

Concern about school discipline in the 1990s resulted in an increase in exclusions from school in England (Parsons, 1999), paralleled in Scotland although on a lesser scale. There are a number of reasons for the difference in the scale of exclusion. These include: the broader commitment to the comprehensive (i.e. non-selective) school system in Scotland; a lesser degree of autonomy of schools, with an associated greater power of local education authorities to ensure policy compliance; commitment by local authorities to policies of inclusion and exclusion reduction; and the existence of, and widespread support for, the Scottish Children’s Hearing system. The last is the approach to child welfare and juvenile justice in Scotland which has a strong welfare and non-punitive approach (Hallett et al., 1998).

Exclusion from school

School exclusion is a complex, multi-dimensional process. The term can be used in a wide sense to denote children and young people who are excluded from full participation in school for various reasons, for example because they have difficulties accessing the curriculum; because they stay away from school; or because their families, for example traveller families, traditionally have not attended school (Booth, 1996; Lloyd and Norris, 1999).

Disciplinary exclusion is more precise and describes the response of schools to pupils whose behaviour is considered to be unacceptable. In Scotland most pupils are excluded for a short period and then readmitted to school, a smaller number being excluded and ‘removed from the school register’ (not officially referred to as ‘permanent exclusion’ in Scotland). Disciplinary exclusion from school occurs disproportionately among young people, mainly boys, from poor families in disadvantaged areas.
Young people with identified special educational needs and those looked after away from home are over-represented. However the numbers excluded vary quite considerably from school to school, even in similar areas. So the ethos and educational ideology of schools, and the way schools operate their disciplinary and support systems, affect the level of disciplinary exclusion (Cooper et al., 2000; Munn et al., 2000; Parsons, 1999).

The most recent educational legislation in Scotland, the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Etc. Act 2000, contains a presumption of mainstream education for all pupils, but also recognizes a continued need for specialized out-of-school provision for some pupils, including those described as regularly displaying severely challenging behaviour. Disciplinary exclusion is still permitted for situations where a pupil’s attendance would be seriously detrimental to order or the educational well-being of other pupils. However the number of instances of temporary exclusion suggest that sometimes it continues to be used as part of a routine disciplinary system, rather than as a last resort (Munn et al., 2000; SEED, 2002).

Other key aspects of current educational policy context in Scotland include the report by HMI (2001) on Alternatives to School Exclusion and the report of the Discipline Task Group chaired by the Minister of Education (SEED, 2001). There have been a series of funded initiatives on school discipline and the prevention of exclusion, including a staff development CD-ROM for all schools on preventing classroom disruption (Lloyd et al., 2001c). Considerable attention has been paid to enhancing the capabilities of schools to effectively manage classrooms and create a positive ethos of inclusion. However, as in other countries, there is still considerable concern about disruption in school, particularly in the context of the pressures on schools for formal attainment. The reports mentioned earlier therefore, while arguing for a reduction in the use of exclusion, do contain suggestions for further development of out-of-class, and out-of-school, provision for some young people (HMI, 2001; SEED, 2001).

All the above reports stress the need for ‘joined-up’, multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working. Scotland has a long history of inter-agency working to prevent school exclusion. Frequently this was based in local authority policies, often called youth strategies, which emphasized the importance of supporting children and young people in their own homes, schools and communities, and regarding special educational or care provision as a last resort (Kendrick, 1995). Such policies have more recently been incorporated into wider strategies of inclusion. At the level of the school inter-agency working was often focused on a regular meeting, sometimes called a school liaison group or a school assessment team.
The research project

The research design and methodology were developed in partnership with three Scottish local authorities with established histories of inter-agency working. The research set out to:

- outline the context within which inter-agency initiatives developed in the three councils with regard to the prevention of disciplinary exclusion from secondary schools
- investigate the effectiveness of inter-agency initiatives in relation to the prevention of school exclusion in the three councils
- explore stakeholders’ perceptions of inter-agency initiatives
- identify factors which facilitate or inhibit the development and/ or effectiveness of such provision.

Each authority identified two secondary schools where there was established inter-agency practice. The six schools were publicly funded, comprehensive secondary schools managed by the local authority. Four were neighbourhood schools; two were Catholic schools drawing from a wider catchment area. The six schools varied widely in their socioeconomic composition. Thirty pupils were identified, five from each school, for whom inter-agency initiatives were seen as effective in preventing or reducing exclusion. Of these young people, 22 were male and eight female, a slightly higher proportion of young women than would be indicated by their representation in exclusion statistics. However, young women have been equally under-represented in the exclusion research (Osler et al., 2002). They were all white. Ethnicity does not feature as an issue in the Scottish exclusion statistics as it does in England; this does not of course mean that it is not still a significant issue at the level of individual schools (Lloyd et al., 1999).

Interviews were carried out with these 30 young people, their parents, school staff, other professionals who were directly involved with the young people, and with senior personnel in each authority (a total of 150 people interviewed). School and local authority policy documents were analysed and school-based inter-agency meetings were observed. Focus groups were also held with key authority policy makers and managers.

School-based inter-agency meetings

School-based inter-agency meetings were central to effective working to avoid or reduce exclusion from school. The research identified two different models of school-based inter-agency meetings, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Case-based meetings focused solely on
individual young people and this type of meeting involved the participation of young people and their parents or carers. While young people and their parents often found participation difficult, they still felt it was important to be there. The other kind of meeting combined discussion of individual cases with broader strategic planning. Such meetings fostered positive working relationships and a wider creative approach. However, young people and their parents tended not to be present at these meetings, and this raised issues about confidentiality and how their views were represented. In all meetings across the three authorities there was a problem of irregular attendance by key personnel, caused by pressure on staff resources. While staff participation in meetings did increase awareness of the roles and responsibilities of other professionals, and fostered shared values, there were still some barriers to working together.

In addition to school-based inter-agency meetings, inter-agency working took a number of forms, including assessment and planning; direct joint working by professionals of different agencies; and multi-agency working where more than one agency worked directly with young people, but not necessarily jointly.

Exclusion from the six schools

Table 1 summarizes the disciplinary exclusions from the six schools during 1999–2000. The schools are listed in order of the proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, as other research suggests that this is often highly related to the rate of school exclusion. However, as we discuss below, other factors may be important and may be reflected in dissimilar rates of exclusion from schools with similar levels of disadvantage among their pupils. We accept that the level of free school meals is not a totally adequate proxy for this, but consider that it still provides a useful basis for some comparison.

There was very little use of exclusion involving removal from the
register (like permanent exclusion in England) in the six schools. The overall rate of exclusion (exclusions per 1000 pupils) mainly follows the levels of disadvantage as indicated by free school meals. However, this does not account for the marked differences between, for example, St Mary's and St John's with very similar levels of free school meals.

Most research on disciplinary exclusion from school suggests that excluded pupils are not a homogeneous group but that a range of different factors is involved in the process which leads to them being excluded. Many of these factors are to do with aspects of school life and how schools use the process of exclusion. Effective inter-agency working is only one of a number of factors which affect rates of school exclusion. Professional ideologies, attitudes of staff and school ethos remain important factors in determining rates of school exclusion between similar schools. In this case one key factor seemed to be the existence of a tariff system for discipline with an inevitable exclusion once other sanctions had been used. This system involved a progressive scale of penalties, not necessarily associated with a progressing level of indiscipline, so that the stage of temporary exclusion could be achieved fairly quickly, for example as a result of being repeatedly punished for swearing.

The young people

Table 2 shows the range of issues currently relevant for the young people in the study, based on the interviews with the young people and their parents.

As part of our analysis, and from our knowledge of the other research and literature on exclusion from school, we developed a typology in which

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously excluded</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record of special educational needs (statement)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referred to Children's Reporter¹</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's Hearings</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With foster carers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-recorded learning difficulties</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had been bullied</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health concerns</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosed with 'medical' conditions with behavioural implications, e.g. ADHD</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current problems in family</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delinquency outwith school</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex difficulties across a range of settings (9 male, 5 female)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The Reporter is the gatekeeper to Children's Hearings.
we suggest that young people excluded from school could be seen to fall into one of four groups, as in Table 3.

The first group includes the large majority of pupils temporarily excluded from school, and was not included in this research because of its focus on inter-agency working. Other research evidence indicates that the main approaches to addressing the issue of short-term temporary exclusion are the ethos of schools, their curriculum and pedagogy, staff ideologies and systems of discipline and pastoral care (Cooper et al., 2000; Munn et al., 2000).

The support provided for each group

In our study the pupils in group 2 (12 pupils) had problems that were mainly school based but required some additional support. Ten of the
pupils in group 2 were still attending school, mainly full time, and were not being further excluded. Their situations suggested that something effective had been done and that the provision of the right support at the right time had improved things (Table 4).

Pupils in group 3 were considered to have difficulties in school associated with particular identified and labelled special educational needs, for example attention deficit disorder and Asperger syndrome. There were four pupils like this, with records of special educational needs. Three of these pupils were continuing to be supported in school (Table 5). The fourth was transferred to special school, against the wishes of his mother.

The pupils in group 4 (14 pupils) had multiple difficulties identified across a range of settings, family and school and community. Some were facing very serious issues in their families, including violence and abuse,

Table 4  Support strategies (group 2)

- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support teacher
- Extra support from guidance teacher
- Reduced/modified timetable
- Reduced timetable plus out-of-school placements
- Small-group work in school, jointly run by teacher and local specialist youth project
- Careers group in school
- Involvement in community-based specialist youth provision
- Extra support from educational psychologist
- Mediation
- Change of school
- Interview with Army
- Support from educational welfare officer (school attendance officer)
- Befriending scheme

Table 5  Support strategies (group 3)

- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support teacher
- Extra support from guidance teacher
- Reduced/modified timetable
- Transfer to special school
- Group-work project for girls
- Intensive in-school support: extraction for behaviour and learning support
- Psychiatric consultations and medication
- Social work support
- Package of further education college plus work experience plus school
- Classroom auxiliary
and some had parents with serious mental or physical health problems. Three lived with carers and one with relatives during the study. Several were seen to have serious problems involving drug use, including aerosols, alcohol and in one case heroin. All were involved in some level of delinquency outwith school. Support strategies for this group are shown in Table 6.

So which strategies seemed to work?

The study found that there were strategies which were considered to be effective, by young people, their parents and professionals, in providing support for difficulties and in preventing or reducing disciplinary exclusion. There was no single approach, however, which was perceived to work best. Support strategies for young people with the less complex difficulties were often not that different from those provided for young people facing more complex problems, but were more likely to have been a one-off intervention and were more often regarded as successful. Support appeared to be most effective when it was built on the individual circumstances and views of the young people – the right help at the right time. The views of young people were however not strongly apparent in much inter-agency discussion.

Some young people with very complex difficulties were seen as high maintenance pupils, continuing to need a considerable level of support.

Table 6  Support strategies (group 4)

- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support teacher
- Extra support from guidance teacher
- Reduced/modified timetable
- Individual interviews/meetings
- Group work by school staff
- Group work by youth social work staff
- Joint group work with school staff/voluntary or local authority youth support workers
- Planned regular phone calls with parents
- Individual meetings with educational psychologist
- Part-time attendance at education support unit
- Transfer to work preparation project
- Social work (children and families teams)
- Specialist youth social work agencies
- Meeting with fire brigade
- Meeting with community police
- Mentoring project
- Referral to young people’s psychiatric unit
Being flexible, imaginative and just not giving up were central to successful intervention. The style in which support was offered also affected how it was received by young people and their families. Most saw support as helpful when professionals were informal, equitable and non-judgemental. Their formal professional status, for example teacher or social worker, was less important (Lloyd et al., 2001b).

However, some pupils were still experiencing real difficulties in and out of school and for several attendance at school was sporadic. Several were still being temporarily excluded (Table 7).

There was, however, a strong sense that the pastoral care staff in the schools and the inter-agency meetings were still trying to find appropriate support, still ‘hanging on in there’, often when school colleagues were pressing for more punitive measures. This was the most difficult group to include in school. The schools in our study were identified by their councils as schools who were working effectively to avoid exclusion. With this small group of young people they were, however, still finding it hard. The school staff, and often the parents, felt that for the pupils with the most difficulties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>Pupils with complex problems: school position at time of interview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Braehead School (5 pupils)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Out of school, half-time in off-campus support unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes in school plus outreach teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Left, transferred at own request to another school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In school, full-time normal timetable plus extra help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Only occasionally in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mooredge School (3 pupils) |
| • Out of school, full-time work-focused project |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable, still some truancy |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable |

| St Mary's School (1 pupil) |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable, still some truancy |

| St John's School (1 pupil) |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable plus group work |

| Lochside School (2 pupils) |
| • In school, full-time plus extraction, with behaviour support teacher |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable plus extra help |

| Benview School (2 pupils) |
| • Out of school, some tuition in library |
| • In school, full-time normal timetable, still truancy |
success was sometimes simply keeping in touch, being willing to keep trying.

Preventing disciplinary exclusion by reducing inclusion?

Our study suggests that it is possible to support the most difficult young people and avoid disciplinary exclusion. Sometimes, however, the strategy used to prevent formal disciplinary exclusion effectively meant that young people did not attend mainstream school. One pupil was still excluded and receiving part-time tuition in a library. Two (and a third just after the end of the project) were in full-time special schools, and one was in a full-time vocational preparation project. Two were attending half-time educational support centres, and two had out-of-school alternative curriculum packages involving work experience and some participation in a further education college. Some were going to school but still truanting. For some of the young people being provided with alternative provision, out of school, it was a relief to be away from the pressures and problems of school. It was certainly a relief to school staff.

So alternatives to disciplinary exclusion do not always keep young people included in the curriculum or in school. This raises significant questions about the notion of inclusion and about the particular challenge of including young people whose behaviour is challenging to school discipline.

What counts as inclusion?

In Britain at the moment there is a strong national and local policy commitment to the notion of inclusion, both general social inclusion and school inclusion. However, there is no consensus about either the meaning, or the desirability, of inclusion. There has been a recurring debate in British professional and academic journals about the meaning and value of the concept of inclusion. Recently Garner and Gains (2001) argued that inclusion, as currently pursued in government policies, is irresponsible and they press for a more ‘responsible inclusion’. They describe a ‘headlong dash’, where ‘Ideology had taken precedence over common sense’, blaming the ‘ideologists’ of the ‘full inclusion lobby’ (2001, p. 20). This statement suggests a situation where most pupils who would previously have attended special school are now thrust inappropriately into mainstream schools. This assertion is however not borne out by the figures. In Scotland, for example, there is still about the same proportion of pupils in special provision as have been there for the last 20 years (1.1%: SEED, 2001). Some groups of pupils are more likely to attend mainstream school,
for example those with physical or sensory disabilities. However, pupils identified with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties are still educated outwith the mainstream in quite large numbers. Strategies to support such young people in school still frequently involve a reduction in their full participation. The ways that the data are collected mean that there is probably a considerable underestimate of the number of pupils actually being educated outside mainstream schools, not to mention those educated outside mainstream classes. Many pupils remain on the roll of their mainstream school, even when they may never enter it.

Our research findings suggest that what counts as inclusion or indeed exclusion is complex. It also suggests that there are no easy technical solutions. We could not fail to recognize that what has been offered to some of these young people outwith the mainstream was experienced by them as supportive, and preferred to mainstream school. Equally some of what was offered, and received, as supportive was in some schools available in the school, but in others only outside the school. A number of recent studies by the National Foundation for Educational Research explored effective strategies for supporting young people in school to prevent exclusion and also for excluded young people. They identified very similar features in effective professional practice both within and outside school (Kinder et al., 1997). No school in our study felt it had the full range of resources it required to support young people whose behaviour was really challenging in class, yet some were successful in supporting young people who may well have been excluded elsewhere.

The key to appropriate support for the young people in the study was to take account of the lives, values and choices of the young people and to combine imagination and flexibility with a non-judgemental, human style. This finding is supported in other studies. Hill (1999) emphasizes the wishes of children to be seen as whole human beings, not simply in relation to one ‘problem’ or ‘disorder’. Listening to young people’s views is really important, yet still something that schools often struggle to find the time for (Fletcher-Campbell, 2001).

The support that was available for the young people in our study, both in terms of direct work by professionals with individuals and groups and in terms of curriculum differentiation and out-of-school provision, was in general only accessed negatively. You were only able to access a more individualized curriculum if you were ‘bad’ or had ‘special needs’. This was not about a widening of the school curriculum or a greater diversity of pedagogy in relation to all pupils. It did not imply a wider consideration of the relevance of current curricula for all the school population; indeed it reflected a commitment to continue with the more conventional approach, except for those unwilling or unable to participate.
The official discourse of support for pupils whose behaviour is challenging in school is increasingly in terms of individual needs: not ‘We cannot cope with Annie in the classroom’ but ‘Annie’s needs will be better met in a more specialized setting.’ One response to exclusion from school seems to be an increasing range of specialized facilities where young people fail to access a full curriculum but vanish from the exclusion statistics. Slee (1995) argues that the problem of disruptive student behaviour has been linked to deficient pathologies which increasingly attract a psychological gaze. He develops Foucault’s concept of dividing practices, which are employed to differentiate, categorize, hierarchize and exclude students in the name of disciplinarity or normality (1995, p. 36 quoting Foucault, 1979, p. 183). There is increasing use in Britain, and elsewhere, of terminology drawn from the psychiatric lexicon, often from the American Psychiatric Association, for example ‘oppositional defiance’ replaces ‘disruption’. Armstrong and colleagues (1993) suggested some years ago that increasing pressures on teachers, the increasing central control of the curriculum and the measurement of attainment had led to a narrowing of the teacher’s role and an associated resistance to address what increasingly were defined as problems requiring more specialized intervention by other professionals.

Our study found that there were professional skills associated with providing support for young people which were perceived to be successful in preventing exclusion from school. However, these were not highly technical skills; rather they were often counselling and group-work skills offered in an informal style and not difficult to develop. They were effective when young people were valued as individuals and when support was offered in a systematic approach and was evaluated, not when young people were defined in terms of disorders requiring a particular prescribed response.

The findings suggest the need for a wider discussion of the curriculum and pedagogy of schools, in particular an exploration of the priorities which make listening to individual pupils in difficulty so hard to achieve. When this was done in our case study, school staff felt that they often achieved this only by neglecting other things. They felt under constant pressure in relation to their other tasks, in particular their own teaching, their curricular and pedagogical duties, which were seen as more important or were constructed as the proper work of schooling. It would be easier in some ways to argue for more time if the work of supporting pupils in difficulty was more professionalized: attracting staffing and funding for this work is easier if pupils are identified with labelled special educational needs, for example ADHD (Lloyd and Norris, 1999). Our study suggests, however, that preventing exclusion and providing support in school were effective when young people were responded to as whole individual
human beings, their views valued and their responses to the curriculum taken seriously, and when this was seen as an important aspect of the work of school staff. To do this may represent a challenge to our current model of schooling.

Acknowledgements
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What is the reality of ‘inclusion’ for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties in the primary classroom?

SARAH SHEARMAN Islington Behaviour Support Services, UK

ABSTRACT Current education policy is oriented towards including children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms. Hitherto they have been, on the whole, educated in special schools. Children with special educational needs include those who are physically disabled, those with learning difficulties and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is the inclusion of this last group which is raising problems in mainstream classrooms. The article draws on psychoanalytic concepts in order to examine the reality of inclusion for three primary-age children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Observational material is presented which shows the impact of inclusion policy on the children, their teachers and their learning support assistants. There is also discussion of the work of the behaviour support teacher, whose job is to reduce exclusions and help schools to become more inclusive.

KEYWORDS behaviour support; emotional and behavioural difficulties; inclusion; psychoanalysis

Introduction

Ideas about the inclusion of students with special educational needs (CSIE, 2000) came into prominence at the same time as the current government’s formulation of ‘social inclusion’ in the 1990s. These ideas, which pointed towards all children, whatever their special needs or learning difficulties, being included in mainstream education, crystallized into policy in 1998, at which point inclusion was said by the DfEE (1998) to be the ‘keystone’ of the government’s education policy. Tony Blair, the new prime minister, promised:
A Britain renewed . . . where we build a nation united, with common purpose, shared values, with no-one shut out or excluded.

However, Barton and Slee (1999) point out the contradictions of:

Educational policy imperatives of ‘competition’ and ‘selection’ on the one hand, and ‘inclusive education’ on the other.

Current inclusion policy means that many children who in the past would have been in special schools are now in mainstream classrooms. There seems little doubt that the inclusion of physically disabled children and some children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) has so far been beneficial. There is quite a large group of pupils in special schools for children with severe learning difficulties who cannot be realistically included in mainstream classrooms. Severely autistic children are another group who will need to be educated separately. A large group also not included is those who are educated privately. Many teachers feel that a system cannot be called ‘inclusive’ unless it includes the children who are educated in private schools. In fact, in speaking about ‘inclusive education’, we are talking about a middle layer of state education.

Thinking about inclusive education was propelled by an unprecedented rise in school exclusions in the UK in the 1990s (DfEE, 1999a; 1999b). Making links with social inclusion, Barton and Slee (1999) suggest that ‘within a cyclical process, children who are already experiencing discrimination and disadvantage in many forms, encounter further practices of exclusion and marginalisation within the school situation’.

The question of how far inclusion should go has become more than just a practical question. It has become the focus of strong feelings which have tended towards moral standards. For example, Paul Cooper (1999) speaks of:

Our sense of discomfort and fear regarding children in our society. It is almost as if, for the most part, we (at the societal level) do not know what to do with our children, especially when they are ‘difficult’. Our first instinct is to want to ignore them and marginalize them; to send them away somewhere/anywhere.

Booth et al. (1998) write about ‘the contradictory pressures on schools that seek to include and value students in a competitive educational climate which creates economic and social pressures to devalue and exclude students’.

In this article, I would like to look at some of the problems to do with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) which are being thrown up by inclusion policy in my borough. I work in a primary outreach team, attached to a behaviour support service, whose work is designed to
help primary schools to include children with EBD. Most of the children I see are on the verge of exclusion.

Our team works with individual children, classes and whole schools on improving behaviour policy and practices in order to reduce exclusions. At the same time as working in detail with individual children, their teachers and helpers, we also work in a broader way to help schools manage behaviour better, and so promote inclusion in the borough. Our input is usually requested by the headteacher or the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO).

The borough I work in has not had a primary special school for children with EBD for several years. The provision for children with severe EBD is a pupil referral unit (PRU), which children attend part-time while continuing in their mainstream classes. Our outreach team work alongside the PRU and we sometimes help children make transitions from mainstream to PRU and vice versa.

Because my work is with children who are on the verge of exclusion, they tend to be extreme cases. When I started to plan this article, I thought these extreme children were a very small part of the school population in the 42 primary schools in the borough. There are, at one time, 10–15 children at the PRU. The outreach team see in addition to this about another 15 children in schools at any one time. However, it is becoming clear that these are only a few of the children with EBD who are causing concern in schools. The problem of including children with EBD is therefore a larger one than I thought at first.

In the last 2 years I have noticed that although inclusion policy has been beneficial for certain groups of children, and the more generous, inclusive ethos could be said to be beneficial for mainstream children in general, there have been extreme difficulties and stresses in trying to include children with EBD. I decided to explore how psychoanalytic thinking might illuminate what is happening for children with EBD, their teachers and helpers in the current climate.

How can we think about this topic?

I am finding that the inclusion of children with EBD, as it is beginning to be implemented in my borough, has led to enormous stresses and strains. I would like to use the psychoanalytic concepts of splitting, projective identification and denial to try and shed light on the current situation as exemplified in the cases of three primary children I have been concerned with recently. I would like to use these concepts to try and understand some of the unconscious processes at work. This is only one of many ways of looking at this topic, but I hope it may shed light on it from the psychoanalytic viewpoint.
After some general comments about inclusion policy, I will focus on three primary-age boys with EBD. I will introduce the children briefly and then use observations of them in school and of my work with them to explain how, in each case, inclusion has been working.

I will divide the observations and comments into three sections, to show first the impact of inclusion on the child, second the impact on the teachers and helpers, and third the impact on the visiting behaviour support teacher. I will also use some observation of whole-class situations to show how children with EBD can affect the class situation.

I hope to use some psychoanalytic concepts in trying to think about this subject.

Methodology

In this article I use a qualitative approach. I have not aimed at providing proof or testing a hypothesis. Instead, I have used observational material gathered from my work in order to look at the way children, teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) behave in some primary schools in the borough where I work. I decided to try and understand this material using a psychoanalytic framework, which offers a way of thinking about behaviour and the inner world. It will be noticed that some of the observations quoted in this article are as objective as possible. These are the first observations made in the classroom, before I have been introduced to the child I am to work with. Others are participant observations, which show my involvement and something of my approach to the children I work with. In these participant observations, the impact of the child's behaviour on myself plays a large part in our interaction, and my understanding of this impact will be a factor in the outcome. It may also be noted that although my work methods are informed by psychoanalytic thinking, I also use behavioural methods. This combination of psychodynamic and behavioural approaches is, I believe, in common use nowadays in behaviour support work.

When I begin work with an individual child or a class, after talking to the staff involved and sometimes to the parents, I normally make an initial observation. The teacher introduces me just as someone who has come to see the class, so if I am observing an individual child, they are not aware of that fact on my first visit. This enables me to get a fairly objective view of how the child is operating in the situation I am observing. I usually spend about an hour in the classroom, paying careful attention to behaviour problems, their antecedents and their consequences. I then use my observations as a basis for devising a work plan.
About inclusion policy

Most literature about inclusion celebrates the inclusion of physically disabled children. No warm-hearted person could fail to be moved by descriptions of these children being included in mainstream classrooms. However, children with EBD are also children with special educational needs. A feature of 'splitting', as described by Melanie Klein (1946), is that one situation tends to be idealized, another denigrated. If we think of this situation in terms of 'splitting', inclusion is at present idealized; special schools tend to be regarded as 'sinks' or 'bins' where 'very little meaningful education takes place'; and the difficulties of including children with EBD tend to be ignored or denied. The implication often seems to be that if a school is having problems including a behaviourally disturbed child, the fault lies with the school's behaviour policy, which is somehow not broad enough, not flexible enough, not welcoming enough. One could almost call this sort of idealization 'hallucinatory gratification', in which two interrelated processes take place: the omnipotent conjuring up of the ideal object and situation, and the equally omnipotent annihilation of the bad, persecutory object and the painful situation.

The setting

Implementation of inclusion policy takes place in a complex environment. Melanie Klein (1946) writes: 'Children unconsciously work to create a world which mirrors their own internal world.'

In many inner-city classrooms, a high proportion of children have social problems and/or dysfunctional families, or are suffering the traumas of recent loss of country or of war. In some classes in primary schools, there are four or five children with statements of special educational needs, some of which are EBD. However, there may also be about a fifth of the class at the 'action' and 'action plus' stages of the Code of Practice, which indicate that there are concerns about their behaviour or development. Many of these children, to a greater or lesser degree, are acting out their need, their deprivation and their discomfort every day in the classroom.

Bion (1961) became aware in his work with groups that he was being made to feel the emotions which the individual or group was finding too painful to bear.

The phenomenon of being able to engender feelings in another person is explained by Klein when she writes about projective identification. She explains that there exists, on an unconscious level, a phantasy that it is possible to split off part of one's personality and project it into another person. Often what are deposited are unbearable feelings such as
helplessness, panic, guilt, despair or depression. Unsurprisingly, from this point of view, we find these are some of the feelings expressed by teachers and helpers who are working in inner-city classrooms, trying to include children with EBD.

**Introduction to the children**

In order to look in a detailed way at the reality of including children with EBD, I will be using observations taken from my work with three boys in primary classrooms. Before inclusion policy was enacted, these pupils would all have been found in special schools.

Pablo is a 7-year-old boy whose family originally came to this country from Italy. He has moderate learning difficulties and obsessional behaviour. He finds it hard to relate to other children without getting very over-excited and violent. Pablo lives with his mother, who also has learning difficulties. She suffers from epilepsy and depression. The school where I first saw Pablo had been directed by the local educational authority (LEA) to include him. They were doing so reluctantly and were wanting to be rid of him. He had been more or less excluded from one primary school already. Although I did a lot of work to try and keep him in mainstream, this was not successful and he was eventually moved to the local MLD special school. He was excluded from there after less than a term and is at present at home. I visit him twice a week for home tuition.

Leroy is an 11-year-old Caribbean boy diagnosed as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who was taking Ritalin for about 2 years. He is an intelligent boy who shows marked mood swings, lack of impulse control, hostility and aggression. He lives with his mother, who is a doctor’s receptionist. She has found Leroy hard to manage since he was small, and his behaviour is beginning to affect his younger brother, who is now causing concern at his nursery. Leroy’s father visits occasionally, but seems erratic in his treatment of the children, sometimes giving presents to one and not to the other.

Leroy has been 2 years at his present school. He was transferred there when his previous school was on the point of excluding him. The present school has been very committed to keeping him, but recently his behaviour has deteriorated markedly, possibly because he is refusing his Ritalin. The school is on the verge of giving up the struggle. At present he is part-time at the PRU, part-time at school.

Finally, Abdul is a 7-year-old boy who came to this country as a refugee. He has witnessed domestic violence. When he was 4, he spent about a year in a women’s refuge with his mother and older brother. When he first came to his present school he had very little English. He was very withdrawn,
only relating to other children by pushing them out of the way. Because he found it hard to put himself in other people's shoes, he found the classroom and playground situations very challenging. He is now learning well, with support from a full-time learning support assistant, but his behaviour is still problematic. He has just started therapy four times weekly at the local child and family consultation service (CFCS).

The impact of inclusion on the EBD child

In each of the cases described in the previous section, the children were finding being in a mainstream classroom too difficult to manage.

Pablo

Pablo has a statement which allows him to have a full-time learning support assistant. Along with help with behaviour management, the school had asked me to show the LSA how to play with Pablo. I soon noticed that the school were finding Pablo too hard to manage and were wanting him out of the school. My job was to help the school with including him, so from the start our aims were different. This became apparent when I started to put plans forward.

Pablo certainly was having difficulties in the classroom, as the following shows.

Observation in class  Pablo starts to write his name at the top of the page. The child next to him says something disparaging. Pablo stands up. 'You don't even know!' he shouts, bashing his paper. 'Does anyone know what this picture is?' asks the teacher. 'It's a haystack.'

'Oh, for God's sake! It's a haystack!' says Pablo. 'Shall I write H? Underneath? Oh, I've done it wrong! I need a rubber!' Pablo is starting to get agitated. He marches round the table. 'He's going to hit me!' he calls out as he passes one boy. He starts to sing loudly, in a croaking, shouting voice. The other children have been taught to ignore him. They are amazingly tolerant.

Pablo sits down. He has found a rubber and puts it in his mouth. 'Don't put it in your mouth, you might swallow it,' the teacher tells him.

'Ow! I'm going to die!' he shouts, runs about and pretends to spit in the corner.

The LSA, Luke, arrives after his break. Pablo starts roaring and shaking his head. The teacher comes over. 'Pablo. What's the problem? Do you have to make so much noise? Give me the rubber - don't throw it at me, its rude.' Pablo throws a pencil, pushes his paper away, roars, lifts his chair as if to throw it, roars again. He starts to pile some chairs up behind the
Comment  It seemed Pablo's reaction to his lack of success was to be overcome by feelings of rage, frustration and helplessness. I thought he was acting out these feelings in a dramatic way in order to provoke a response from the teacher. It appeared that Pablo needed a response, even a negative one, in order to convince him that he really existed.

In ‘Therapeutic Consultations’, Martha Harris (1987) writes about a very young child with a depressed mother:

- The mother’s woodenness and depression intensify the child’s anxiety and need to evoke some reassuring signs of life within her, to get into her and get something out of her. The violence and determination of his projection of himself into the mother bring concomitant fears of being caught and shut inside an object that contains and is coloured by his own hostile grabbing impulses.

I thought about how this configuration might have impacted on Pablo in his early years.

In this observation, it only takes a disparaging remark from another child to set off a whole chain of extreme reactions. Pablo’s failures in the past have made him very sensitive to criticism. Although being with children who are succeeding gives him good models, it also can reinforce his deep sense of failure, a sense which is compounded by the school’s inability to regard him in a positive light.

Leroy
The same sort of problems were noticeable in Leroy’s case, although here the school were much more committed to including him, and he did not have specific learning difficulties. He is an intelligent boy, whose difficulties with accessing the curriculum come from his extreme restlessness and inability to concentrate.

I worked with Leroy and his teachers from September to February. He was finding it difficult to concentrate and was hurting children most days. The work I did with him was about becoming more aware of his habitual hostile reactions. The most successful period was when the whole school agreed to deal in the same way with his acts of aggression. This sort of consistent handling seemed to be helpful to the staff and to Leroy, but it required quite a concerted effort and it tailed off somewhat.

Observation in class  When I first visited Leroy in class, I noticed he was very restless and found it hard to concentrate. I watched him dabbing paint
onto his picture and then, provocatively, start to dab it onto his neighbour's picture. He shifted from his own place to the teacher's seat and back again, sometimes putting his face right in front of another child's face and saying something to aggravate them. It was hard for me to take any notes or even look at him much, as he was super-sensitive to my observing him. His attention flicked constantly round the room, looking for reactions from other children. As he passed by children's chairs he would give an almost imperceptible kick or push, and they froze as he went past.

**Comment** It seemed Leroy couldn't feel he existed unless he had an audience, and what is more, it needed to be an audience of his peers, applauding his opposition to authority. It looked to me as if Leroy's phantasy was to be the leader of a gang, but because he was constantly irritating, provoking and hurting other children, this phantasy was pathetically far from the reality of his situation. As in the case of Pablo, Leroy's sense of his previous failure, particularly his lack of ability to relate in a normal way to his peers, was being compounded by the lack of success in the continued attempts to include him in the mainstream classroom.

**Abdul**

Abdul was also having difficulty relating to other children.

**Observation in class** Abdul came into the classroom. He looked a bit different from the other children, rather as if he had just come from somewhere far away. He is a thin little 7-year-old with enormous almond-shaped eyes and a beaky nose. He sat down with the others, but almost immediately rolled under the table. He started to push the chairs about by their legs.

I leaned down and put my hand firmly on his stomach. This seemed to surprise and calm him. He lay fairly still for a few moments. He sat up, and I held him loosely, with my arms round his chest. He swung in my arms a little. He didn't seem aware that the teacher was reading, although I tried to point this out to him. He found a rubber on the floor and started making marks on the chair with it. He decorated another chair with rubber marks and then got a bit fidgety.

I lifted him over to a chair and showed him a pen which writes in gold. He copied some letters. There were four other children at the table, some making bids for my attention, but Abdul ignored them all.

**Comment** My instinct to put my hand on Abdul's stomach came from a feeling that he was fearful and holding himself together with difficulty. He seemed caught between pride and fear, not wanting to show he didn't
understand anything that was going on. This was confirmed when I got to know him later by the fact that he found changing activities very difficult. Changing activity is often a problem for anxious children. They seem to be ‘held together’ by getting absorbed in one activity and experience the feeling of ‘falling apart’ when they have to change. Abdul was spending a lot of his time in the classroom playing with construction toys, ignoring what the other children were doing. He would also hide among the coats. In assemblies he would often roll about on the floor making barking noises.

One can observe very young children, beginning with their first relationship to their primary carer, work their way through their extreme fears and unconscious phantasies to a stage where they can begin to understand that the source of their gratification and the source of their frustration are one and the same person. This level of unconscious understanding brings with it the ability to spare the object (the mother) along with the wish to make reparation for the damage the infant imagines his hate has done. Abdul seemed at times to be still operating at the first level, where extreme fears and phantasies predominate.

In the normal development of the infant, feelings of disintegration are transitory. Their reintegration is effected by the primary carer, who mentally processes the infant’s raw emotions and returns them to the infant in a digested form. This process is referred to by Bion (1961) as ‘maternal reverie’, a process in which the mother performs a containing function for the baby. When we consider that the three children I have mentioned are frequently falling in and out of disintegrated states, this containing function is constantly needed. If this sort of containment is not available at home, the question is whether it can realistically be provided at school.

In the cases of Pablo and Abdul, an LSA was employed full-time as part of the strategy to try and keep them in mainstream schooling. In the case of Leroy, this provision had not been put in place in time to help prevent his eventual exclusion.

**The impact of inclusion on the learning support assistant**

Special needs money is nowadays devolved to schools, who often, in the case of children with EBD, spend it on a learning support assistant who is with the child for a specified amount of time. It is often felt that when money has been provided, the problem is then settled, but this is often far from true. Children with EBD present complex behaviour including evasion, manipulation, projection, splitting between adults and sometimes violence, which makes them difficult to be with, even for very experienced teachers. It requires a very exceptional LSA to manage these sorts of behaviours. Much more than common sense is needed, and many LSAs feel a
sense of outrage that their skills are effectively rubbished by children with EBD, a sense of outrage which they often do not feel at liberty to express. LSAs do not always receive special training for their job. They are often people from the local community, sometimes parents of children in the school, who have simply expressed an interest in the work. Sometimes LSAs have started work in the school as meals supervisors or playcentre volunteers. It is a lottery whether a child with EBD gets an LSA whose skills are appropriate for their task.

Pablo
Pablo’s behaviour seemed to have been, at least partly, a product of his early years with a depressed mother. Unfortunately his LSA also seemed to be rather depressed, and had no notion that Pablo might be able to do some of his learning through play.

Observation in corridor I went out to see what was happening outside. Pablo was throwing water out of the basin onto the floor and onto Luke (the LSA).

‘Pablo, can you stop throwing water please. Could you stop it please,’ says Luke in a level tone. Luke looks at me, expressing weariness and exasperation. Pablo is now running about, brandishing a pole. Luke is ignoring him and talking to the teacher from the nursery next door (the school is open plan).

‘I wonder if you would like to make a sandpie and then go back to work,’ suggests the nursery teacher. As soon as she suggests the sandpie, Pablo dries his hands, looks fascinated and goes over to the sandtray. ‘I don’t put sand on the floor,’ Pablo says to me, anxiously. ‘It’ll be alright if you’re careful,’ I tell him, ‘and if a bit goes on the floor, we’ll sweep it up.’

‘Look what I’ve found in the sand,’ says Pablo to Luke, smiling and holding out a little animal. Luke comes over and goes through the motions of making a sandpie, but the sand is too dry, so it doesn’t work. I show Pablo how he can pour it out of a teapot into a container. Luke looks as if he’s a bit fed up with the sand play, but Pablo looks as if he could stay there forever.

Comment It was an unfortunate fact that in some ways the depression of the LSA mirrored the depression of Pablo’s mother. I thought this was bound to be stirring up a lot of uncontrollable feelings in Pablo.

Observation outside classroom When I first sat down with Pablo, I showed him how to make a Plasticine snake and a little dish with pretend food in it. Pablo liked the simple game of making the snake pretend to eat.
I felt all the time that Pablo might run off, so I arranged the table and chairs so he couldn’t easily get out.

The next time we played, the LSA came to watch. I explained how children can learn through play and asked him about his own childhood. Adults playing with children in this way had not been part of his experience. I got a cardboard box and cut some windows and a door, got a handful of little toys and started pretending they were running out, hiding, calling out of the windows etc. Pablo was very excited by this and soon started to join in. The LSA looked on, sceptically.

Comment The behaviour programme I made indicated that Pablo should complete about 10 minutes of classwork, and the teacher should then praise him and tell him he could go and play. The LSA should then play with him until the start of the next session. We made a little play place with toys. I asked the LSA to fill in a chart showing what they had done and how Pablo had liked it. The idea was that, as Pablo could not sustain a lengthy task, he would work in short, achievable sessions of about 10 minutes, so he could succeed and be praised, instead of dragging through a lengthy session, when he was likely to fail.

I also made a reward and sanction chart to help with Pablo’s behaviour. He was to get a sticker on his chart for each session that he managed without preventing other children from learning. The stickers added up to a special time when he could do his favourite ‘thing of the moment’. If he hurt another child or prevented children from learning by throwing things, shouting out etc. the LSA was to take him to a place near the pegs and sit him on a chair for 3 minutes, with a 3 minute sand-timer so he could watch the time.

When I returned the following week, after proposing these interventions, in each case the charts were still blank. The teacher and LSA were resistant to trying out my plans. They had not been fully involved in requesting my visits or in planning, so although we were meant to be working together, they were regarding my intervention as a threat. Because they couldn’t manage Pablo, they were perhaps unconsciously hoping that I would also fail. This would prove no-one could manage him, and therefore they couldn’t be blamed or blame themselves.

Abdul
An LSA was appointed to support Abdul, but he left after only a few weeks. After this false start, a young woman was chosen and she proved to have the energy, thoughtfulness and commitment necessary. Having someone at his side explaining and mediating the classroom experience was a great help and Abdul started to relate to some other children. Bowlby (1969), in
his work on attachment, shows how a baby can start to explore the world from a secure base. We set up a table close to where the rest of the class were working. Abdul and his LSA would work or play at this table and she would ‘join him in’ as opportunities arose, at first just for a few minutes at a time. In the following observation I had taken the place of the LSA for an hour, to get the feel of how Abdul was getting on.

Observation in class  The children were being given different materials, microscopes and magnifying glasses. The lesson was on fabrics. I sat with Abdul at his little side-table. I thought this kind of open-ended activity might be difficult for him to manage. I showed him the weave of my cardigan through the magnifying glass, and started to draw it for him, but he didn’t show any interest. I realized the children were looking at the labels of their clothes to see what they were made of. I said ‘What’s your T-shirt made of?’ and looked at the label. ‘Polyester,’ I told him. ‘What was it?’ I asked, but he looked blank. ‘Polyester,’ I repeated.

‘What’s your shirt made of?’ I asked again. ‘Polyester,’ he answered, shyly, and looked pleased. I drew a picture of him and drew a label for his T-shirt. ‘Can you write it?’ I asked, writing it for him to copy. He shook his head and looked as if he might run off. I wrote it for him.

Later we were doing some painting. Some water spilled on the table so I went to get a cloth. ‘What’s it made of?’ he asked. He went on to ask ‘What are we made of?’ ‘Bones, blood, skin, that sort of thing,’ I told him. ‘Bones’ he said thoughtfully. ‘What are teeth made of?’ he asked.

Comment  Bion (1959) describes how a child may ‘empty of meaning, and thus of feeling, a piece of insight he has just acquired’. Williams (1997) describes a boy using this sort of ‘emptying of meaning’ as the quickest remedy against any painful feelings, as he much preferred to be in a muddle to being in pain. I felt very encouraged by the evidence, shown in the above observation, of Abdul’s capacity to think. It seemed that although he had been disturbed by his experiences in the past, his ability to make links was still intact. It also meant to me that Abdul’s LSA had a good chance of working with him successfully.

Leroy  When I first met Leroy the application for him to get extra funding was not yet under way, so by the time it was completed he had fallen into the deterio rated state I mentioned earlier. We were in any case rather dubious about whether an LSA could be found who would be experienced and skilful enough to manage him. There was an applicant for the post, but unfortunately she encountered Leroy shortly after the interview. He abused her
loudly in the street, and, understandably, she changed her mind. Nobody else had been found by the time Leroy had to be excluded from school.

The impact of inclusion on the teacher

Teachers can feel persecuted on all sides, by children who act out their pain and anxiety in the classroom, and by the political climate. The latter, by using league tables and a prescriptive curriculum, encourages competitiveness and exclusion, but at the same time dictates that a good teacher will be able to include all children, whatever their difficulties.

I was often made to feel that challenging behaviour in my classroom was my fault and I should be able to handle it. (National Union of Teachers, 2000)

Teachers can also sometimes feel persecuted by ‘specialists’ who are called in to help, as I have described in the case of Pablo’s class teacher.

Teachers under pressures of this sort can become demoralized. The following extract is from an observation in a Year 5 class with a long-term supply teacher.

Whole-class observation  I had started to pick out which children were having difficulties with the work, and consequently with their behaviour. There were some in such dire need of help that I felt I had to abandon my observer role, and I started helping two boys sitting near me. The work was too difficult for them; it involved carrying 10, which they didn’t know how to do. I looked up from doing this and saw that R., the boy I had come to observe, had disappeared. I guessed he had ‘gone to the toilet’ because he couldn’t do the work either.

An LSA came to see to a boy who was lying on the floor by the board, crying. She tried to cajole him into going with her, but he wouldn’t, so she left him lying on the floor, his head in his arms. It was distressing to watch this interchange, and several children were obviously affected by it. Soon after, the deputy head came in and managed to remove the crying boy.

R. is back, but is under the table. He and another boy have got a pair of giant callipers and are measuring each other’s heads and laughing. The teacher looks across at me and raises her eyes to heaven, a gesture which doesn’t escape the children. R. is decorating his hair with gold marker pen. ‘What are you putting gold pen on your hair for? Don’t be so silly!’ R. jumps up and down, making a ‘silly’ face.

‘Get up off the floor! This is numeracy hour! Look me in the eyes when I’m talking to you! Don’t hurt me by pushing your chair into me!’

About 17 children are managing to work quite well in spite of all this.
However, the teacher's attention is entirely caught up by the malefactors. One boy is crawling under the desks, barking like a dog. R. looks relaxed, he is flicking little pellets of chewed-up paper around.

The teacher tells the boy with the callipers to sit down. The boy looks at her defiantly, laughing. ‘But I’m having fun!’ he replies. Teacher sits down and gets most children to sit on the carpet. It is time for her to read the story before break. R. is sitting at the back, laughing at the boy who is still clowning around with the callipers. The teacher now gets completely locked into telling these few children off. She puts the book down. ‘Actually, I’m not bothering reading. I’ve had enough now.’ Caliper boy flicks a rubber band at her. Three children are running in and out of the classroom. There is a fight in the classroom next door, and they want to see it.

Comment  Klein (1946) explains the origins of splitting in the earliest stage of infantile development:

The first object is the mother's breast, which to the child becomes split into a ‘good’ (gratifying) and ‘bad’ (frustrating) breast. This splitting results in a severance of love and hate. The frustrating and persecuting object is kept widely apart from the idealised object. From the beginning, object-relations are moulded by an interaction between introjection and projection, between internal and external objects and situations.

One could say that in the previous observation, the children who are misbehaving are challenging the authority of the teacher in a hating way. We can see how this projected hatred pushes her to become more punitive and negative until she actually becomes, for the moment, a hateful figure, full of the split-off and projected feelings of the disturbed children. Watching children with EBD in classrooms, one can observe them sometimes regressing into states where persecutory anxiety is so high that they project their intolerable feelings into the object (the teacher) and turn her into a hated, persecutory figure, separate from the teacher they know and love. Although this process happens in unconscious phantasy, it propels the child to act it out in real life.

What is a mainstream teacher to make of the task of containing this amount of infantile rage and persecutory anxiety? In a specialized setting, with small groups of children and teachers with some notion of unconscious processes, one can imagine this sort of containment happening, but in a class of 26–30 children it becomes an impossibility. The teacher is constantly aware of the more disintegrated children’s needs, but is unable to meet them; so she can fall, herself, into a state of persecutory anxiety and guilt.
Pablo
The reaction of Pablo's teacher seemed to be that of splitting off the feelings of anxiety provoked in her and the rest of the staff, by simply denying that there was any way in which her thinking could be enlarged to include Pablo. This became apparent when I started to put plans forward for the management of his behaviour. The class teacher and the LSA would listen politely and then firmly assert that the plans were unworkable. While sometimes the arrival of the behaviour support teacher may be greeted with relief, in this case my arrival provoked anxiety.

The only way to get a behaviour plan working seemed to be to involve the headteacher. After she had taken on the supervision of the plan, things improved quite rapidly. Pablo seemed to me to be feeling more secure now that some limits and boundaries had been defined, and he looked forward to our play sessions. I also noticed him being quieter and more aware in the classroom, but the teacher and the LSA felt that the improvement was not significant.

Leroy
Because Leroy was not able to manage for long in the classroom, he ended up spending a lot of time in the headteacher's office. The secretary and other staff were able to be very positive towards him, because they were not having to manage him in a classroom with other children, and he built up a strong relationship with the headteacher, James, who became a sort of surrogate father to him.

In the following observation, I am looking after Leroy in James's office, while James is out taking a class.

Observation in the office When I reached the offices, I found the teacher had put Leroy in one office, and another boy who had been causing trouble in the other. Leroy started to try and get through the door to join the other boy. I held the door handle, and told him the teacher had said they weren't to be together. Leroy wrenched at the door handle, but I held on firmly. 'Why are you holding the door? I don't know you! I know your name, but I don't know you, you don't work here!' he told me. I laughed and said he should know me by now.

I showed Leroy what I had brought for him to do. I suggested he take his bag off, but he told me he always wears it as it has his Game Boy in it. He started to relax. I sat by the door. He started to rummage around the shelves, where James keeps some interesting things. He got out a Box Brownie camera. He came over to me and asked how it worked. I explained he couldn't use it as there wasn't any film in it. I showed him how it worked. It seemed by now he had remembered we were friends. 'It's James's
camera,’ he said. He then took out a huge sword in a scabbard. ‘Be careful,’ I said, ‘I expect it’s very sharp.’

‘I felt the blade once,’ Leroy told me. ‘James took it out once, and I felt it.’ He put the sword down and sat himself at James’s desk, rattling the drawers importantly.

Comment  Leroy’s class teacher was able to be fairly relaxed about the fact that she was barely able to include Leroy in her class, because she knew she had the total support of the headteacher, James, and that he was willing to look after Leroy whenever she had to exclude him from the classroom. In fact, Leroy spent more time with James than with anyone else except his mother during the few months before he was finally excluded from school.

When the time came for James to exclude him, it was a very painful moment. James had obviously had a very difficult time coming to the decision. We carefully arranged Leroy’s goodbye to the school, and he was given the same parting gifts as would be given to a child leaving in a normal way. I was walking to the playground with Leroy some weeks later.

‘Why did I have to leave school?’ he asked me. I told him it was because he wasn’t managing at school, that perhaps he could think of the present time as a little break, while people thought about where he should go next.

‘I hate James,’ he said ‘He’s a hard bastard.’ Although Leroy had not shown any signs at the time that leaving school had been a severe blow to him, he expressed clearly here his anger at what he perceived as a rejection from the headteacher, who had spent so much time with him.

Abdul

When I first met Abdul, his teacher was managing the class and Abdul without any support. The only way he could do this was to ignore most of Abdul’s behaviour, as to try and confront him would have meant dropping his attention to the rest of the class. He was obviously distressed at not being able to meet Abdul’s needs, so when an LSA was appointed this gave great relief, and I was able to help her to set some boundaries around Abdul’s behaviour. The next school year Abdul moved into a class where the teacher and his LSA were able to work very well together and his behaviour and socialization started to improve greatly.

Observation in class  Angela went to fetch Abdul from the playground. We paused on the stairs and looked down. ‘There he is,’ she said proudly. He was standing first in line and we saw him take the teacher’s hand to go upstairs.

I went to the classroom and waited for them to come in. When the children came in, Abdul came up to me, smiling, with two pieces of red
wool. ‘They are snakes,’ he told me, with a smiling, fierce look. ‘They want to eat you.’ He wriggled one of the snakes near my arm and I pretended to be scared.

Later, the teacher started to read ‘Avocado Baby’ to the class. Abdul suddenly realized he could understand it. He sat down at the back, and then moved forward so he could see well. Angela looked at me and at Abdul, sitting quietly on the carpet, absorbed in the story. ‘Well, would you believe it?’ she whispered to me.

Comment It seemed to me that the degree to which containment could be offered to each of these three children depended on how much support was offered to the teachers and LSAs. In the first school, that of Pablo, the headteacher had already made up her mind that the school was not going to manage Pablo. Although the school were successfully including other children with learning difficulties, it seemed that Pablo, with his sometimes bizarre behaviour, was ‘a bridge too far’.

Leroy’s teacher was saved from excessive anxiety by the containment that the headteacher James was able to offer.

In the case of Abdul, I was able to support his LSA sufficiently for her to do a demanding job successfully.

The work of the behaviour support teacher

Most of the support offered by specialized behaviour support teachers in schools is in the form of short-term interventions. These can be either to support an individual child or a class, or to help a whole school revise their behaviour policy. The idea in the case of individual child support is that after getting to know the child and the whole situation, the support teacher gives advice which can be incorporated by the class teacher and school into their everyday practice.

The fact that this intervention is short term can make for difficulties. In psychoanalytic terms, one could say that when a good object is established, the ego is less liable to identify indiscriminately with a variety of objects, a process which is characteristic of a weak ego. There is a tendency in many EBD children, who have failed to internalize a sufficiently good object in their early infancy, or whose good object relations have been upset by trauma, to flit from one adult to another in an indiscriminate fashion. One could say that the present policy, to keep EBD children in mainstream classrooms, supported by a variety of professionals, some of whose work is designed to be short term, can actually reinforce this shallow, flitting tendency. The advantages of a ‘secure base’, shown by Bowlby (1969) in his work on attachment theory, appear at first to be supported by the
inclusion policy, where children are kept in mainstream schools with their peers and siblings. However, in fact the individual, close and detailed work done with children with EBD in schools is often done by teachers whose intervention is only short term.

Klein (1946) writes:

Among other factors, gratification by the external good object again and again helps to break through these schizoid states.

Nobody knows this more than the teacher for children with EBD. The 'again and again' of containing and managing children in disintegrated states, of repairing damages to the psyche, requires a high level of long-term commitment. This repairing work done again and again can gradually break a cycle of distortion and hostility. This long-term work should be done by child psychotherapists, but this facility is only at present reaching a very few of the children with EBD in our borough. In the case of Leroy, he and his mother were referred to the child and family consultation service, but after two or three sessions she felt it was not helping and stopped going. Pablo and his mother attend the CFCS weekly, and Abdul has recently started in therapy four times weekly.

Barton and Slee (1999) write of inclusive education as being about responding to diversity; it is about listening to unfamiliar voices, being open, empowering all members and about celebrating 'difference' in dignified ways. From this perspective, the goal is not to leave anyone out of school.

The rationale here is to accommodate differences, but hitherto the effort has been to help the child accommodate to the existing norms of school life. Some schools have undertaken radical restructuring to accommodate physically disabled children, but it is not yet clear how far schools are going to have to change in order to successfully include children with EBD.

**Pablo**

Given these constraints, the behaviour support teacher can still be quite a help in some cases. In the case of Pablo I was asked to support the LSA and look at behaviour strategies. I think, looking back at this case, that a good idea would have been to involve all the school staff from the beginning. This might have given more confidence to Pablo's teacher that the behaviour programme I suggested was workable. In fact, when the programme was finally implemented properly, things started to improve quite rapidly, but by this time the school had decided Pablo was to move to a special school for children with moderate learning difficulties.

I thought about Pablo's mental state with reference to the fact that his mother had been depressed when he was very young. In experiments
described by Trevarthen (1974) mothers were asked to be deliberately unresponsive to their babies for a few seconds, to behave in the manner a depressed mother might behave. The infants reacted first of all by attempts to make the mother change her behaviour, and, when this failed, by self-comforting (turning away and thumb-sucking). When the mother resumed normal behaviour, the infant's negative mood and avoidance of eye contact continued for quite a few minutes. One could see the obsessive, repetitive aspects of Pablo's behaviour as a sort of self-comforting, which over time had become ritualized or stylized.

It seemed to me that Pablo's sense of self in relation to others was impaired or very underdeveloped. This could be partly due to some insufficiency in the capacity of his mother to respond in the way which allows an infant's raw feelings to be processed and returned to him in a digestible form, described by Winnicott (1956) as 'maternal containment'. It seemed that Pablo was at quite an infantile stage of emotional development, and it would certainly have needed a massive shift in thinking to provide the sort of environment which would meet his needs in a mainstream school.

There was evidently something about Pablo which deeply upset and disturbed people. What was it that made it so hard to plan for and think about this little boy? Perhaps Pablo's lack of empathy and obsessional behaviour were frightening to those who were not used to this sort of child. Somehow the fear of a mental state which perhaps cannot be cured or fixed could be very worrying.

Leroy

The work I did with Leroy was designed to make him more aware of his habitual hostile reactions. We also did some work about 'what do other people think, what do other people like'. Leroy found trying to put himself in another person's shoes difficult and distressing. The most successful intervention was when the whole school agreed to deal in the same way with his acts of aggression. This sort of consistent handling by all the staff seemed to be helpful to them and to Leroy, but it required a large concerted effort and it was difficult to keep the momentum going for long. Leroy desperately wanted to have friends and seemed to have no idea how to go about this. I gave him a picture of a magic box which could grant wishes. Leroy immediately drew a little figure coming out of it and labelled it 'a friend'.

Observation in the library  Leroy told me a story of his early childhood. He was staying in Jamaica with his grandparents. He was happy there. His grandparents had given him a puppy, but when they found he couldn't take the puppy back to England because of quarantine restrictions, they had it put down.
Comment

I expected to hear more of these stories but, as it turned out, in nearly 2 years this was the only account he gave me of his early life. I thought perhaps the story was about his extreme anxiety that because he was unacceptable, he would be ‘put down’. This anxiety was reinforced by his mother, who wanted to send him to boarding school; by his father, who in effect had abandoned him; and by his school, from which he was often temporarily excluded for hurting children.

None of my interventions seemed to help to shift Leroy’s uncompromisingly hostile position. When asked to write ‘What do you like about school?’ he wrote ‘Nothing’. When asked ‘What do you hate about school?’ he wrote ‘Teachers bossing you about. I’d give them one whack in the head.’ He told me the first thing he remembered was ‘hitting people with my rattle’. Later, in a more thoughtful mood, he said ‘I’d like to stop hitting people’ and ‘I’d like to stop punching people’, but it seemed he was unable to internalize any help directed towards achieving these goals.

Leroy reminded me of a boy described by Gianna Williams (1997): ‘While provoking violent emotions in others, he himself appeared to be, most of the time, devoid of feelings.’ She describes ‘an alarming quality of numbness’.

In Leroy’s case I thought this numb quality came from a specific lack of empathy. It seemed it was almost impossible for him to imagine what went on in other people’s minds. I felt puzzled about whether this was an organic dysfunction which was part of his ADHD, or whether the numbness stemmed from his early experiences.

Abdul

When I first met Abdul the most important thing was to get him an LSA full-time to help him through his work and play times. When this was achieved, having someone at his elbow explaining and interpreting what was going on in the classroom was a great help, and Abdul began to relate to other children. It appeared that as soon as he was sufficiently contained by his LSA, he could venture to start making relationships with others. Just as a baby can begin to explore the world, while constantly returning to his carer, Abdul started to make tentative moves towards other children. His understanding and vocabulary also improved greatly. One of the things he continued to have difficulty with was changing activities. He would get absorbed in one activity, which served to give him the feeling of being ‘held together’. When he had to change to another activity, he seemed to experience the feeling of ‘falling apart’. His LSA became skilled at moving him from one activity to the next. Apart from a few setbacks, Abdul started to make steady progress in learning and socialization.
Conclusion

In looking at the reality of inclusion for three children in the primary classroom, from the point of view of the child, the teacher, the LSA and the behaviour support teacher, I hope to have highlighted some of the problems thrown up by the inclusion of EBD children in the classroom.

Inclusion involves restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality. (CSIE, 2000)

One of the main problems at present seems to be that although some schools are undertaking restructuring to include children with physical disabilities, it is still very unclear what restructuring is needed in order to include children with EBD.

A second difficulty I have highlighted in all three cases is that of containment. Without sufficient support and containment, the task of the teacher and the LSA to include EBD pupils becomes almost impossible. It seems to me that the CFCS could begin to be extended to perform this important function in schools. Therapists are already working to support teachers in special units such as the PRU, and it would be very valuable if this work could be extended into mainstream schools.

At present, the work of therapists tends to be poorly understood by teachers and LSAs. It would be helpful if more work could be done to make links between the CFCS and schools, so the contribution of therapy and psychoanalytic thinking could be better understood. The case of Leroy, where his mother visited the CFCS a few times and then gave up, is very typical in my borough. Parents and teachers are often cynical about the value of therapeutic intervention and I believe this cynicism often comes from ignorance.

In each of the three cases I have described, my work as a behaviour support teacher was planned to last for one or two terms, but in fact after nearly 2 years I am still involved with these three children, although my support has now necessarily to be more limited. In the case of Pablo, my support is now limited to visiting him at home twice a week and keeping in touch with the relevant departments who will find a new school for him. In the case of Leroy, since his exclusion I will be working with him as part of a part-time PRU placement until alternative provision is found for him. In the case of Abdul, I am now visiting the school monthly to support teacher and LSA and to promote links between the CFCS, where he is in therapy, and the school.

It seems to me that to be successful, the sort of help offered by the behaviour support teacher needs to be longer term than was at first envisioned. In some cases this support may need to be continued for the whole
of the child's time in primary school. As was seen in the case of Pablo, the
behaviour teacher's work is more likely to succeed if the class teacher and
LSA are involved initially with inviting and subsequently with planning the
intervention.

I have described some of the difficulties encountered by teachers and
LSAs. A positive result of the implementation of inclusion policy has been
that more guidance is starting to be given to teachers about the manage-
ment of behaviour, although this continues to be only a tiny part of initial
teacher training. Guidance at present is given on in-service training days
and in twilight sessions. There needs to be a greater focus on understand-
ing of the underlying causes of EBD and the management of behaviour, now
that EBD children are included in mainstream.

The success or failure of strategies to help children with EBD depend
to a large extent on the work of the LSAs, whose training up to now has
been inadequate or non-existent. Understanding of unconscious processes
involved when working with disturbed pupils needs to be brought onto
the training agenda. Although psychoanalytic thinking is informing, to
some extent, those who devise policy, this thinking is not available to those
working with children on a day-to-day basis.

A body of psychoanalytic literature exists about how institutions
manage difficulty and change. An example is the study of the nursing
service in a general hospital by Isabel Menzies (1970) in which she uses
the concepts of splitting, projective identification and denial, as I have done
in this dissertation. Obholzer and Roberts (1994) write: 'We at times
behave as if unconscious processes only occur in the smaller configurations
of mankind, as if understanding of the institutional functioning process is
not necessary before we embark on change.'

The institutional process involved in implementing inclusion policy is
too large a subject to write about in this article, but I have been aware while
collecting this material that the unconscious processes I have described are
operating at the broader, institutional level as well as at the smaller, class-
room and individual level. To manage the changes implied by inclusion
policy successfully, these need to be understood.

Many would maintain that the needs of children with severe EBD
cannot be met in mainstream classrooms; or, if they are, that the cost to
teachers, LSAs and the other children in the class is too high. In our
borough, as I write, plans are going ahead for learning support units and
for a new EBD provision. It will be interesting to see how these plans can
be developed so they do not turn out to be a step backwards from the ideal
of inclusion for all children.
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References

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