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Introduction

Debates about behaviour management in schools can be explosive with some extreme positioning. In reality most schools face similar challenges, albeit with some particular contextual variations, and follow largely similar policies.

A survey by Teacher Tapp in October 2021 suggested that over 50% of primary teachers with over 10 years of experience thought behaviour had deteriorated in the time that they had been teaching. Only a third of secondary teachers however agreed.¹ A report for the DfE in 2012 found that as of December 2011, according to Ofsted inspections, 92.3% of all schools in England were judged as Good or Outstanding for standards of behaviour (93.9% of primary, 84.4% of secondary, 92.9% of special schools, and 83.2% of pupil referral units) (Education Standards Analysis and Research Division, 2012). In 2019/20 (with caveats for the disruption to education and suspension of inspections during 2020), under the new Education Inspection Framework, 81% of schools were judged good or outstanding for behaviour and attitudes (Ofsted, 2020). Whilst the comparison is not entirely like for like, it might suggest a decline in behaviour in schools. The difficulty is in having any certainty about the ability to measure behaviour, outside of proxies such as attendance and exclusion rates.

Ofsted

Ofsted has highlighted the problem of persistent low-level disruption as being detrimental to pupils and teachers alike (Ofsted, 2014). In 2019, Amanda Spielman reflected that headteachers tended to underestimate the problem of low-level disruption, and teachers reported a lack of consistency and complained of a lack of support from senior leadership teams. She called for the explicit teaching of behaviours and making them routine: safe movement around school, smooth running of lessons, and minimum loss of learning time (Spielman, 2019).

¹ <https://www.teachertapp.co.uk/whats-the-worst-weather-for-behaviour/> [accessed 17/01/2022]

The new education framework has a distinct category for behaviour and attitudes and seeks to evaluate consistent and fair application of expectations to engender positive attitudes towards education. It makes direct reference to relationships reflecting a positive and respectful culture among learners and staff (Ofsted, 2019a).

Whole child development

Understanding that behaviour and learning are explicitly linked is important in understanding how to manage behaviour. It is important to recognise the cognitive, social and emotional aspects of learning and that there will be significant diversity of developmental stage across and within groups of pupils. This awareness will help to avoid blaming teachers for poor behaviour in the classroom, as well as avoiding pathologising individual pupil behaviour (Ellis and Tod, 2018).

Pupils demonstrating social, emotional and behavioural difficulties often pose the greatest challenge to inclusion. This is particularly heightened in schools within areas of high social deprivation (Harris *et al.*, 2006). There are a wide range of internal and external factors that impact on how schools manage behaviour and their use of exclusion as a tool, but research suggests that schools can successfully achieve an inclusive ethos that supports a wide range of needs of their pupils. These schools acknowledge the importance of personal and social development as an aspect of managing behaviour, but also recognise the tension with national pressures to focus on academic achievement (Hatton, 2013).

School culture

The school culture determines how effective whole school policies are in managing behaviour and whether or not they work for every member of staff, whether they are support staff or classroom

teachers, trainees or senior leaders. Consider how pupils behave for supply teachers – is this a barometer we can use to determine the learning culture of a school?

Teachers alone cannot intervene with the same impact as school leaders, but when behaviour in general improves across a school, it has a positive impact on pupil achievement, and staff satisfaction and retention (Bennett, 2017).

Hatton's study looks at how the school ethos might influence the management of challenging behaviour and identify differences between excluding/non-excluding schools in areas of high social deprivation. She identified 10 themes out of 13 that indicate a difference in view with significant differences on themes of responsibility,

clarity, consistency, behaviour management, beliefs about inclusion, and beliefs about reducing exclusion (Hatton, 2013).

Good schools are ones where students and teachers can expect a minimum standard of respect whoever they are and whoever they interact with.

(Didau, 2018)

Behavioural psychology

Expectations and aspirations

It is important to distinguish between expectations and aspirations. Aspirations are about wanting to be better, whereas expectations indicate a belief in the likelihood of succeeding. Research consistently shows that young people generally have high educational and career aspirations (Rose and Baird, 2013). Raising expectations has been proven to help, the same is not true of raising aspirations. Interventions aiming to raise aspirations have little or no positive impact on educational attainment (Education Endowment Foundation, 2018). In fact, having unattainably high aspirations can have a negative influence, leading to frustration and disappointment. Expectations are more likely to be associated with socio-economic circumstances, especially in conjunction with future educational behaviours such as attending university (Khatab, 2015).

Aspirations can be seen as structuralist, where young people's choices are governed by environmental factors such as their socio-economic background over which they have little control. This sees aspirations as largely rooted in cultural norms and values, whereas expectations are more determined by the socio-economic structures and associated opportunities. They may converge with attainment, but often diverge. Social capital, such as strong parental involvement or values, can overcome disadvantage (Khatab, 2015).

Another view explains

Aspirations arise from, and are embedded within, social contexts where they have performative value. In other words, the aspirations expressed by young people reflect the expectations and constraints inherent within their setting, rather than a free choice of desired outcome, and are determined as much by the

needs of the moment as by a genuine expectation for the future.

(St Clair and Benjamin, 2011, p. 502)

Alternative views assume rational choice, where costs (financial, effort, identity) are weighed against benefits (material, prestige) and risks. It has been noted that a purely rational approach is rarely observed in reality (Rose and Baird, 2013).

Aspirations have long been a central spoke in government policy but understanding the varied factors that determine aspirations is not straightforward. Aspirations are not fixed but change throughout childhood and beyond. They are shaped by context, both by their immediate peers and parents, but also wider social forces such as the labour market. Morrison Gutman and Akerman suggest that aspirations decline as children mature, as they grow in understanding of the world and the possibilities open to them. This is particularly true of those who face multiple barriers such as financial constraints. Nonetheless, they emphasise the role of attitude in determining aspiration, observing that those who believe they can achieve and attribute their success to hard work, rather than luck or fate, tend to have higher aspirations than their peers (Morrison Gutman and Akerman, 2008).

One paper considers how ambition and drive relate to academic outcomes in the form of high-stakes exams particularly. It considers differences in ambition and drive from teenagers of different demographic backgrounds. The findings suggest substantial gender and immigrant gaps in ambition, with more mixed evidence for socio-economic differences. However for drive, socio-economic differences seem more important than gender. They conclude that academically ambitious and driven teenagers achieve better grades, even when controlled for prior academic attainment and school attended (Jerrim, Shure and Wyness, 2020).

Other studies indicate that the issue is not a lack of aspiration amongst young people, but the

reality of opportunities actually available (Rose and Baird, 2013).

The classic study of how teacher expectations can shape student outcomes is *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1992), which described the self-fulfilling prophecy that could follow labelling of student types or behaviours. Whilst the study has been critiqued due to its lack of replicability, nonetheless other research would indicate that teacher expectations are important in shaping student outcomes.

Teachers' expectations may be shaped by factors beyond the student, such as unconscious/conscious biases. This can impact pupil attainment negatively and contribute to the attainment gap between diverse groups. Low teacher expectations of student achievement for children in low-income communities has been well documented (Timperley and Phillips, 2003).

One systematic review of the effects of 19 teacher expectation interventions indicated that it was possible to raise teacher expectations and subsequent student achievement. The review highlights research showing that teacher expectations influence teacher behaviour and the subsequent performance of students, often through the ways that they treat students differently according to whether or not they have high or low expectations of their ability (de Boer, Timmermans and van der Werf, 2018).

Growth mindset

Carol Dweck's work on mindset is increasingly well known. Although there is a question mark over how replicable interventions have been, the theory is nevertheless extremely influential. The central argument of growth mindset is that where students believe that intelligence and ability is a fixed trait (fixed mindset), they are at a significant disadvantage to those who believe that their abilities and intelligence can be developed (growth mindset). According to Dweck, teachers can play an important role in shaping students' mindsets, though this argument, and the design of specific interventions to change mindsets, are the

more controversial elements of the theory (Dweck, 2008).

John Hattie reflects on Dweck's work, how it has been misinterpreted and critiqued. He highlights the problems with applications of her work, through over promotion and haphazard application, leading to little evidence of impact as a result. He emphasises the importance of her original work and the lack of any claim that there is a state of mind called 'growth mindset'. Her claim is that growth mindsets can inspire different goals and shape views about effort – in other words, it is not an attribute, it is a way of thinking in a particular circumstance – a coping strategy rather than a state of being. The key is to understand when a growth mindset is appropriate:

- when we do not know an answer
- when we make an error
- when we experience failure
- when we are anxious

(Hattie, 2017)

One experiment carried out to explore whether a growth mindset intervention could improve achievement found that a short, one-hour, online growth mindset intervention improved grades among lower-achieving students (Yeager *et al.*, 2019). Hattie's view suggests that greater effects might be seen with lower-achieving students because in a fixed mindset we may accept our current status, and that this affects higher achieving students just as much – they are happy with their existing place in the order. In fact, a growth mindset here may threaten that position (Hattie, 2017).

Yeager *et al.* consider how psychological interventions can address achievement gaps, by focusing on the student perspective rather than the teaching quality and content. Countering beliefs that act as a barrier to students' learning, e.g. a belief that they are 'dumb', can help provide an opportunity to learn and grow. The paper suggests that even short interventions can have a long-term positive impact if they address the particular concerns of students effectively. They conclude that psychological interventions complement rather than replace traditional

educational reforms (Yeager, Walton and Cohen, 2013).

One of the implications from the work on growth mindset is reflected in the pressure of perfectionism. Perfectionism can lead to a fear of

failure and avoidance of any element of risk. One study found a link to a fixed mindset, suggesting that interventions targeting this could help (Chan, 2012).

Classroom management

Teacher Standard 7 refers to the management of behaviour in order 'to ensure a good and safe learning environment'. This encompasses a range of important elements, from rules and routines to high expectations, and the use of strategies appropriate to pupils' needs (DfE, 2013).

Research tells us that the teacher is the single most important factor affecting student achievement – at least the single most important factor that we can do much about

Marzano, R. J., Marzano, J. S. and Pickering, D. (2003) in (Bennett, 2020, p. 35)

Psychological safety

The Core Content Framework, and Early Career Framework develop Standard 7 by outlining the need to learn how to 'develop a positive, predictable and safe environment for pupils', that is supportive and inclusive (DfE, 2019c; 2019b). This is developed further by reference to the importance of knowing how to create 'a positive environment where making mistakes and learning from them and the need for effort and perseverance are part of the daily routine' (DfE, 2019c; 2019b). This is often referred to as the principle of creating psychological safety in the classroom: where pupils are free of the fear of humiliation or teasing for offering ideas, or for asking or answering questions. There is evidence that suggests a relationship between psychological safety and wellbeing, which leads to increased confidence and therefore enhanced development (Baeva and Bordovskaia, 2015).

InnerDrive has compiled a list of the strategies that it believes the research suggests are most beneficial in creating a psychologically safe classroom:

- Engage in active listening.
- Develop an open mindset.

- Ask questions.
- Create a sense of shared identity.

(InnerDrive, no date)

Different approaches

Golden rules

- What you permit you promote.
- It's not your fault.
- It is your responsibility.
- Routines matter.
- Relationships matter too.

(Didau, 2016)

The Bill Rogers approach:

- positive correction
- prevention
- consequences
- repair and rebuild

For example, one popular concept is the 'black dot in the white square' – by focusing on the black dot (the negative behaviour), we forget the larger white square (the positive behaviour of the majority or the normally good behaviour of the individual). Rogers calls for teachers to be assertive, rather than authoritative or indecisive. Importantly, there is the reminder that behaviour is about emotions – for both adult and pupil (Sherrington, 2013).

Tom Bennett outlines 10 key principles of the classroom:

1. Behaviour is a curriculum.
2. Children must be taught how to behave.
3. Teach, don't tell, behaviour.
4. Make it easy to behave and hard not to.
5. No one behaviour strategy will work with all students.
6. Good relationships are built out of structures and high expectations.
7. Students are social beings.
8. Consistency is the foundation of all good habits.
9. Everyone wants to matter.
10. My room, my rules.

(Bennett, 2020)

Seating plans

Seating plans can have many positive benefits for students including helping them to stay on track, encouraging more positive learning behaviours, and improving peer relationships. The debate between whether rows or groups is better is answered by considering the learning that you want to happen. Essentially for focused independent learning, rows are better, and for group work then groups are better (InnerDrive, 2021).

The Bandwagon Effect suggests sitting less motivated students with someone who works harder. Research suggests that this will benefit both students. It may also help to place a more attentive student diagonally in front of a less attentive student in order to encourage them (InnerDrive, 2021).

Routines

Routines are part of the means of establishing and revealing the social norms of the classroom. Creating a classroom culture takes effort and time and constant maintenance (Bennett, 2020).

Duhigg talks of keystone habits that can transform everything: 'success doesn't depend on getting every single thing right, but instead relies on identifying a few key priorities and fashioning them into powerful levers' (Duhigg, 2013, p.100–101). Institutional habits or routines are part of what defines the culture of an organisation. Getting them right, and knowing how to change them when they are wrong, is essential as these keystone habits are small wins that are known to have a wider effect.

Routines are a form of habit, distinct from motivation or self-regulation. They involve automaticity which can overcome obstacles such as tiredness, or exam pressure. Routines or habits such as checking your own work can help students continue to learn (Fiorella, 2020).

Key to the concept of 'threshold' is that the teacher can establish a personal connection with students as they arrive and it reinforces expectations for how they should start the lesson

– TLAC technique 45: threshold and 46: strong start (Lemov, 2015).

Relationships

There have long been arguments that children learn better from teachers they like, or that poor behaviour in a classroom is the result of poorly planned or unengaging lessons due to the lack of a quality relationship of the teacher with their pupils. According to research undertaken with undergraduates, students do not learn more from professors with higher student evaluation ratings – there is no, or minimal correlation (Uttl, White and Gonzalez, 2017). In fact, the evidence suggests that the level of prior interest a student has in a subject is a stronger predictor of how they rate their teacher. There can also be an element of confirmation bias, where a teacher's reputation precedes them and influences how new students feel about them.

People are on average incapable of maintaining more than 50 relationships, so it seems unrealistic to expect teachers to form close relationships with upwards of the 250+ pupils that a secondary teacher may teach in any given year. In a school, like wider society, relationships between adults and children matter, but the quality of their education should not rest on the quality of individual relationships with teachers. There has to be an expected standard of decency for all (Didau, 2018).

One of the challenges with the relational approach to behaviour is that much of its precept rests on anecdotal or personal experience rather than research evidence. That does not mean it should be discounted, but that it highlights the importance of individual context.

Mental health and wellbeing

Research demonstrates a clear link between hunger and increased negative behavioural incidents. This impedes learning. There is also a wealth of knowledge about sleep hygiene and its centrality to health, both physical and mental. Even good ventilation is important for cognitive function, with reduced ability to concentrate and

focus in rooms with high concentrations of CO₂ (Bennett, 2020, p. 83).

The importance of movement, particularly for young children, is also very well known. NHS guidelines encourage activity throughout the day for babies under 1, with toddlers aged 1 to 2 years being physically active for at least 180 minutes every day, and the more the better. Pre-schoolers are encouraged to include at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity within this minimum. More importantly, children under 5 should not be inactive for long periods, except when asleep. This will have implications for EYFS provision in schools.²

Young people aged 5 to 18 should perform both aerobic exercise and exercises to strengthen their muscles and bones. This includes aiming for an average of 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity a day across the week. They should also reduce the time spent sitting or lying down and spread activity through the day.³

The main focus of wellbeing is subjective, i.e. how happy we are – both the experience of pleasure, and the positive experiences associated with achieving potential and living a meaningful life. However, it has been argued that these also require a third component in making a positive contribution to the lives of others regardless of gain to ourselves. We do not exist in isolation and it's clear that our experience of wellbeing is both directly and indirectly influenced by our connections and relationships with other people (Ashcroft and Caroe, 2014).

Sanctions

Rewards and consequences must follow school policies in order to maintain consistency and be effective across the school, for every pupil and every teacher. The balance between reward and consequence, particularly in terms of how well they affect intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic, is much debated.

Punishment does not do a very good job of deterring people from reoffending or helping to change their behaviour. It can sometimes even make the situation worse by creating resentment. Positive reinforcement means rewarding the behaviour you want in order to increase its frequency. Verbal rewards work best and they mean more from a person who is respected – so relationships are important. Rewards that are tangible tend not to be very effective in improving target behaviours (Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, 2019).

The main concern with rewards is that they could negatively affect intrinsic motivation. Whilst previous meta-analyses have suggested that rewards have negative effects, another meta-analysis suggests that in general, rewards are not harmful to motivation to perform a task. However, whilst verbal rewards can produce positive effects on free-choice motivation and self-reported task interest, when the rewards are tangible and expected and loosely tied to level of performance, then negative effects are found (Cameron, Banko and Pierce, 2001).

² <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-under-five-years/> [accessed 17/01/2022]

³ <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-children-and-young-people/> [accessed 17/01/2022]

Whole school policies

Statutory guidance for safeguarding requires that all schools have a behaviour policy (DfE, 2021). The requirements vary according to the type of school, but should include measures to regulate conduct, prevent bullying and promote good behaviour. Maintained schools must publish this policy on their website and whilst academies are not required to do so, it is considered good practice. Home-school agreements are no longer required (DfE, 2016).

Whole school behaviour systems can work to unify school culture. The policy outlines what is considered to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and provides guidance for both staff and students. These systems require effective leadership to function (De Nobile, El Baba and London, 2016).

Leadership

Successful schools share common features that include visible leaders and high staff support, as well as consistent practices that are clearly communicated in order to create a strong and shared positive culture (Bennett, 2017) (Teach First, 2020).

Headteacher views are fundamental in encouraging/predicting an inclusive approach according to some studies. The ethos of the school can influence the way behaviour is managed and viewed by all staff (Hatton, 2013).

A study from Australian primary schools considered how well implemented whole school behaviour management systems and policies were. The study found that whole school approaches should be designed to encourage students to be self-responsible, to develop positive relationships and support staff members. The researchers identify 10 elements of what they call the leadership elements framework:

- Work from values.
- Lead democratically.
- Involve the community.
- Give it time.
- Use data.
- Provide support.

- Review regularly.
- Professionally develop the staff.
- Utilise external help.
- Communicate with parents about behaviour issues.

(De Nobile, El Baba and London, 2016)

Behaviour policies must be clear and well understood by staff, students and parents. It is vital that it they are consistently applied. Headteachers are encouraged to reflect upon ten key aspects of school practice:

1. a consistent approach to behaviour management
2. strong school leadership
3. classroom management
4. rewards and sanctions
5. behaviour strategies and the teaching of good behaviour
6. staff development and support
7. pupil support systems
8. liaison with parents and other agencies
9. managing pupil transition and
10. organisation and facilities (DfE, 2016)

Teacher attitude

Hatton's study revealed differences in teacher attitudes and beliefs that related particularly to exclusions. She highlights that above-average exclusions of particular groups of pupils may indicate a problem in the conceptualisation of pupil behaviour. SEND and socio-economic status can both lead to viewing pupils as 'problematic' and the pathologising of educational difficulties. How teachers understand difficulties also influences how behaviour is managed. These attributions can relate to factors both within and outside of the school environment, with root causes often linked to factors outside of the teacher's control, such as parents. Low excluding schools seem less likely to attribute difficulties to external factors relating to socio-economic deprivation. Poor understanding of difficult behaviour can lead to a more punitive approach, such as one including exclusion (Hatton, 2013).

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is inspected alongside leadership and management by Ofsted, with a written judgement (not separate numerical grade) about whether arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective. The Education Inspection Framework also has a clear expectation that all learners will receive a high-quality, ambitious education, with reference to the Equality Act 2010 (Ofsted, 2019a).

Safeguarding in schools is the responsibility of everyone and means that at all times, they consider what is in the best interests of the child. All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for learning, and help to identify children who may need help (DfE, 2019d).

Attendance

Research suggests a strong statistical link between absenteeism and underachievement, with effects remaining even after controlling for factors such as neighbourhood, teacher, classroom etc. This is particularly true for unauthorised absences as opposed to authorised ones (DfE, 2019a). A briefing note from UCL claims that each day of individual pupil absence results in around 0.3–0.4% of a standard deviation reduction in achievement meaning that 8 days of absence (annual average in England) would move a pupil one place down a ranking of 100 pupils. Pupils from low-income households see a larger negative effect from each day of absence. Over 10% of pupils are absent for more than 10 days (10.9%) according to DfE statistics (Sims, 2020).

There are many contextual factors associated with absenteeism, related to both home and school environments. One US study indicated a significant relationship between school absences and neighbourhood attributes such as poverty, family structure, home ownership status and race. Building conditions have also been identified as a contributing factor, with stronger effects in lower socio-economic areas, though other research finds no statistically significant links between absenteeism and socio-economic status, so this requires further consideration (DfE, 2019a).

The UCL paper highlights the differing effects of absence on different pupils, for different reasons, and at different points in the school year. For example, proximity to examinations that test achievement, can lead to a larger negative impact from absence. According to Liu et al (2019), the effect of absences in the autumn term could not be detectable by the subsequent spring term. This suggests that ability of students to 'catch up' on work missed during an absence if they have sufficient time to do so. However, there is limited research on pupils with high levels of absence (Sims, 2020).

It has been suggested that attendance is the strongest predictive factor of the progress made by pupil premium (pp) students. Schools with lower absence rates have smaller progress gaps and pp students make more progress at schools with lower absence rates. This correlation is regardless of the starting rate – low, medium or high. There is an important link to curriculum as non-attendance means gaps in learning which may be fundamental to their understanding and ability to build on prior knowledge (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).

Approaches for improving attendance are not all effective. Whilst home-centred approaches are associated with higher progress for pupil premium students, neither punitive nor reward approaches are associated with progress (Social Mobility Commission, 2021). A recent report by Ofsted highlighted the approaches taken by schools that improve attendance from a low baseline, minimise persistent absence and maintain high levels of attendance. They identified and summarised common features as 'listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate' (Ofsted, 2022).

A literature review by Kearney and Gaczyk (2014), as referenced in the DfE (2019) guide to absence statistics, identifies several approaches to reducing absenteeism: identifying and intervening early, monitoring progress over time, assessing functional behaviour, and implementing evidence-based procedures and protocols and team-based approaches (DfE, 2019a).

Several experiments to address absenteeism show that improved communication with parents can be beneficial to attendance (Sims, 2020). One US study explored adaptive text messaging as a strategy to reduce chronic absence at elementary school level (it is unknown how well it would work with older students who may be more independent and absent without parental knowledge). It found that adaptive text messaging as a strategy reduced chronic absence, with one approach to intensified messaging working particularly well for certain students. The text messaging strategy did improve student attendance, but had no impact on reading or mathematics achievement during the study year (Heppen, Kurki, and Brown, 2020).

Exclusions

Internal exclusion is often used by schools as an informal means of dealing with classroom disruption. Schools have varying approaches from sending pupils to another lesson, or another room specifically for internal exclusion. Concerns arise particularly from repeated isolations from the main student body, and/or where pupils are not given the same curriculum as this is detrimental to their progress (Mason *et al.*, 2020).

Fixed period exclusions are limited to 45 days in the school year. For the first five days of a suspension (previously known as a Fixed Term Exclusion or FTE) a school is required to set work, and from the sixth day to arrange suitable alternative full-time education. Whilst permanent exclusion rates have plateaued, the rate of suspensions and multiple suspensions has been steadily rising, reaching its highest recorded level this year at 53.6 per 1,000 pupils (Wilcock and Hummel, 2020).

Permanent exclusions (PEX) have increased by 60% over the last five years, with 'persistent disruptive behaviour' continuing to be the key identified factor. Pupils with SEND are disproportionately represented in these figures, as well as those from poorer backgrounds and certain ethnic minority groups and those who have been in care (Mason *et al.*, 2020). The Timpson review found that 78% of PEX were issued to

SEN pupils or pupils classified as in need, or eligible for free school meals (FSM). Of this group, 11% were pupils with all three characteristics (Timpson, 2019). One of the greatest concerns is the estimated 24,000 pupils who exit school for an unknown location between Year 7 and Year 11 (Crenna-Jennings and Hutchinson, 2019). The most notable feature of the increase is the peak in Year 10, with a 70% increase since 2012/13 (Wilcock and Hummel, 2020).

A study of two cohorts of students up to the end of Year 11 reveals that pupils who experience exclusion will tend to be excluded again. A large proportion of exclusions relate to individuals who have or will go on to have a history of repeated exclusions whilst at school. 2.3% of pupils had experienced a suspension of permanent exclusion by the end of primary school. The rate then increased through secondary school until by the end of Year 11 15.3% of the 2009 cohort and 15.6% of the 2010 cohort had experienced a suspension (previously fixed term exclusion) or permanent exclusion. In each cohort 2% of pupils experienced nine or more exclusions during their school career – almost half of the total number of exclusions relate to these pupils (Thomson, 2022).

Off-rolling

Ofsted analysis of pupil movement between Year 10 in 2016 and Year 11 in January 2017 identified 19,000 pupils leaving state-funded secondaries and for half of them their destination was unknown. They found around 300 schools that had exceptional levels of pupil movements when compared with schools with pupils with similar characteristics. They repeated the analysis for 2017–18 and identified 20,000 pupil movements with a similar unknown destination for about half. In 2019 they identified 340 schools with exceptional movements. On average 13 pupils left each of these 340 schools at a critical stage in their education. Of the 20,000 who left their schools, 22% were in one of these 340 schools despite that 340 comprising only 11% of all secondaries (Ofsted, 2019b).

Beck Allen explores the unintended consequences of accountability measures based

on progress and academic outcomes. The data highlights two elements: numbers leaving the mainstream sector have been rising since 2012, and the numbers leaving in Year 10 are considerably higher than in Years 7–9. For most schools, pupil mobility doesn't significantly affect how their performance is assessed, but for some extreme cases, it can have a significant impact on performance – both negative and positive (Allen, 2019).

ACE/trauma informed

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are common and often linked to the ability of children to engage with school, from difficulties with processing information, organising self and work, to working with others. They can have long-term implications for health into adulthood (NHS Scotland, 2017).

Families, not schools, have the most impact on educational attainment (Marmot, 2020).

Exclusion itself can be a form of ACE and can have negative, life lasting consequences. A study found that pupils excluded from school at age 12 are four times as likely as other children to be jailed as adults (McAra and McVie, 2013).

Awareness of ACEs and how they may affect a child's experience of school can be beneficial, but there are critics of the approach. In particular, scoring systems that don't consider the severity of the adverse experience but just the number, have been rejected by many professionals. Others have raised the importance of not seeing ACEs as self-fulfilling or a defining label.⁴

SEND

Pupils with SEND are disproportionately excluded, or off-rolled. Behaviour policies must be flexible enough to allow for differences between the needs and capabilities of individual students,

rather than limiting the approach to one-size fits all.

Including children on the autistic spectrum in mainstream classes is complex. Research suggests that they are at an increased risk of a range of negative outcomes, but that at the right school children can thrive. One model developed at a school in the north-west of England is based on 'saturation'. This starts with developing an understanding and awareness of student needs which can then lead to more concrete strategies and approaches (Morewood, Humphrey and Symes, 2011).

Sanctions

Many schools use traditional systems of reward and punishment, with merits or equivalent points awarded for positive behaviours, and negative demerits or consequences given for undesirable behaviours.

To be lawful, punishment for poor behaviour must satisfy three conditions:

1. The decision to punish a pupil must be made by a paid member of school staff or a member of staff authorised by the headteacher.
2. The decision to punish the pupil and the punishment itself must be made on the school premises or while the pupil is under the charge of the member of staff.
3. It must not breach any other legislation (for example in respect of disability, special educational needs, race and other equalities and human rights) and it must be reasonable in all the circumstances (DfE, 2016).

Punishment must be proportionate and take account of the pupil's age, any special educational needs or disability, and any religious requirements they may have. Discipline may also be exercised for behaviour outside the school gates, for example when taking part in school-organised activities, travelling to or from school, identifiable

⁴ E.g. Dr. Jess Taylor
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE-pncpeGw4&feature=emb_logo

as a pupil at the school, or further misbehaviour that could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school, that poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public, or could adversely affect the reputation of the school (DfE, 2016, p. 9).

Consequence systems

A typical approach to employing a warning system before a detention might consist of a verbal warning (C1), a written warning (C2 – name on the board) and final warning (C3 – teacher-led detention). In some situations there may be a C4 which is a central detention, or removal from the lesson. For some behaviours, it may be considered acceptable to move straight to a C3 or C4. The challenge for schools is to codify the system and apply it in a manner that pupils perceive to be 'fair'. As it is impossible to create a complete list of what is undesirable lesson behaviour, it is often left to the teacher to decide, creating inconsistency across the school. Likewise, in a classroom with a significant amount of so-called 'low level' disruption, such a system might result in a significant proportion of time being devoted to warnings, with inevitable arguments from pupils about the relative negativity of their behaviour in comparison with another pupil's.

In some schools, a recognition of the drawbacks of such a scheme has led to a 'no excuses' policy (often erroneously called zero tolerance – an approach primarily of use in the US).

Seclusion/isolation rooms

Pupils may be placed in an area away from other pupils for a limited period. Use of such seclusion as a disciplinary penalty should be made clear in the behaviour policy. Only in exceptional circumstances should a child be prevented from leaving a room of their own free will. Health and safety of pupils and safeguarding requirements must also be ensured. It is for individual schools to decide the length of seclusion or isolation and the staff member in charge to determine what may be done or not done by pupils whilst there. However, pupils should not be kept in isolation longer than necessary and the time should be used as constructively as possible. Pupils should

also be given time to eat and use the toilet (DfE, 2016).

The Centre for Mental Health has highlighted that pupils who have already experienced trauma in the past may experience more psychological distress if they are secluded from other pupils and isolated, and this may lead to poorer behaviour (Wilton, 2020).

Research has also brought in the voices of the pupils who have experienced isolation (Sealy *et al.*, 2021). Some pupils reported feeling behind their fellow pupils due to isolation and others reported the significant impact it had on their wellbeing:

*I can't put into words
what you felt like ... almost
a dog in a cage ... that's
what you felt*

Research participant (Sealy *et al.*, 2021)

Reasonable use of force

Key points from government guidance:

- School staff have a power to use force and lawful use of the power will provide a defence to any related criminal prosecution or other legal action.
- Suspension should not be an automatic response when a member of staff has been accused of using excessive force.
- Senior school leaders should support their staff when they use this power.

Reasonable force can be used to prevent pupils from hurting themselves or others, from damaging property, or from causing disorder. Such force as is reasonable can also be used to search pupils without consent for specific prohibited items, but not for items banned under the school rules (DfE, 2016, p. 5).

Consistency

Jo Castelino points out that the most important element of consistency is in the implementation of any policy: it is about what students experience and the impact any variation has on the whole school (Castelino, 2021).

This was apparent in the research we did for the *Thriving Schools* report. Those schools sustaining success had an uncompromising approach to consistency, both in the design of their practices and their implementation (Teach First, 2020).

Mayer 2001 identified inconsistencies in leadership, structures and rules as contributing to the development of behaviour problems (in Hatton, 2013).

Analysis in one study suggested that in schools designated as 'excluding', staff and pupils lacked a clear understanding of the behaviour policy and that it was not implemented consistently. This contrasted with 'non-excluding' schools where there was greater consistency in how behaviour was managed and the policy was considered clear to staff and pupils (Hatton, 2013).

Student voice

Various studies indicate that pupils can have a positive influence when they are invited to participate in decision-making. This can be an important element in establishing positive relationships between pupils, staff and parents. Ref Munn *et al.* 2000, Osler 2000 in (Hatton, 2013).

Parental engagement

The importance of the relationship with parents is highlighted by some schools in relationship to behaviour, particularly in avoiding exclusion. Where staff attribute behaviour to external factors, this can lead to a sense of absolved responsibility (Hatton, 2013).

According to research by Parent Ping during 2021, the most important quality of a school valued by parents is that their child is happy there, and that they feel safe. Social development came out higher than academic development, although academic development was the third most important single factor (Wespieser, 2021).

A report by CREST estimates that 312,000 children are affected by parental imprisonment.

Children of prisoners are significantly more likely to have negative outcomes than children not affected. Unfortunately, data is collected inconsistently and therefore true numbers are not known and the ability to identify those affected and to offer support may be non-existent. Children with a parent in prison are more likely to grow up in poverty and are at greater risk of antisocial behaviour, and may have complex behavioural and emotional needs that result in them doing less well at school (Kincaid, Roberts and Kane, 2019).

Not many studies look at parental engagement and its influence on behaviour specifically though there are a few that consider specific strategies. One such study from the US looked at the impact of text messages to parents to reduce chronic absence in elementary school pupils (Institute of Education Sciences, 2020).

One report looked at evidence around early parental involvement and behaviours and how they are associated with the outcomes of children. Two kinds of parental behaviour were found to be positively associated with school readiness and successful school outcomes: reading to children in the early years, and the quality of parent-child interaction. Two mechanisms were referenced to explain this effect. The first is the 'parent as teacher' which includes using resources in the home, reading to children etc. The second is 'parent-school alignment' where cultural norms of behaviour and communication at home are similar (or different) to those expected at school (Huat See and Gorard, 2015).

Goodall focuses on how a deficit model of parenting has influenced the discourse around parental engagement and educational outcomes for children. This narrative seeks to understand the achievement gap by looking at parental behaviour and engagement. She argues that this myth of poor parents (i.e. those who experience poverty) are also poor parents (i.e. who do not meet expected norms) is pervasive and wrong. She calls for a reframing of thinking (Goodall, 2019).

In offering some practical strategies for engaging with parents around behaviour, Tom Bennett refers to the Benjamin Franklin effect, the idea

that people are far more likely to support you if you ask them to help you. This approach helps to recognise the parents' emotional connection to their child whilst engaging them in a partnership aimed to improve behaviour (Bennett, 2020, p. 285).

The EEF systematic review of parental engagement in learning found a positive association between parental engagement in children's learning and learning outcomes,

regardless of the child's socio-economic status and grade level. However, different types of engagement were more important at different developmental stages. A number of interventions relating to behaviour seem to have been effective, but the evidence is very mixed (Axford *et al.*, 2019).

Behaviour approaches

Pivotal education

Pivotal education⁵, based on the work of Paul Dix (Dix, 2017) focuses on five pillars:

1. Consistent, calm adult behaviour
2. First attention to best conduct
3. Relentless routines
4. Scripting difficult interventions
5. Restorative follow up

Whilst there are many positive elements in the approach, it has, nevertheless, been criticised by some. Dix's book has been accused of being critical of teachers, with negative and even derogatory language being used of those who employ disciplinary approaches that he does not favour.⁶ In 2019, he spearheaded a campaign calling for a ban on booths used in some schools as part of behaviour management strategies, which, again, many considered used inflammatory language and was unnecessarily divisive. Whilst Dix is no longer part of the company, his ideas still permeate the approach.

Zero tolerance

Zero tolerance behaviour policies have largely been associated with US Charter schools, linked to the 'broken windows' theory that suggests that ignoring disruptive behaviour leads to further breakdown of community controls and norms (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). Introduced in the early 1990s, originally as an approach to drug enforcement, zero tolerance policies were widely adopted as a set of predetermined consequences, usually severe and punitive in nature, and intended to be applied regardless of the seriousness of the incidence, any mitigating circumstances or situational context.

One review examined the assumptions on which zero tolerance policies are based, questioning the

idea that violence was out-of-control in schools, and increasing (it isn't); that it has increased in consistency (it hasn't); higher rates of exclusions and suspensions will result in a more conducive learning environment (they have the opposite effect); zero tolerance is a fairer approach (disproportionate disciplining of students of colour and those with disabilities is a rising concern). Another impact of the policy appears to be an increased use of referrals to the juvenile justice system (Reynolds *et al.*, 2008).

There are concerns in the UK around schools or MATs that have implemented strict discipline systems, for example with mandated fixed term exclusions based on accumulation of behaviour points. This can mean students are repeatedly excluded for repeated low-level issues without the causes ever being addressed (Mason *et al.*, 2020).

Warm strict

Often derided as a vague indeterminate approach, or just common sense, this probably encapsulates the general approach of a large proportion of schools. Proponents claim it is an approach which unashamedly has rules but enforces them compassionately – lying somewhere between no excuses and relational approaches.

No excuses

The most well-known proponent of this approach is Michaela Community School, under the leadership of Katharine Birbalsingh. The school has clear expectations and, in their own words, 'do everything [they] can to enable our pupils to meet them'. They are absolutely firm on the use of detentions, but work extremely hard on building relationships with pupils through such approaches as 'family lunch' (Birbalsingh, 2020).

⁵ <https://pivotaleducation.com/staff-behaviour-training/>

⁶ Omar Akbar, <https://theunofficialteachersmanual.blog/2020/02/19/why-we-should-boycott-pivotal-education/>

What is clear if you read either of the books (*Battle Hymn of the Tiger Teachers*, 2016 and *Michael: the Power of Culture*, 2020), written by the teachers and staff at the school, is the fundamental commitment of all staff to a clear and concise agreed set of values and principles. Regardless of the attractiveness, or otherwise, of elements such as drill and silent corridors, it is clear that the culture of the school is shared by staff and pupils alike, and this is why it works (Birbalsingh, 2020).

Restorative approaches

Restorative justice

The Campbell Systematic Review argues that evidence of the efficacy of restorative justice in schools is nascent and needs further exploration, particularly in the context of reduction in exclusion (Valdebenito *et al.*, 2018). Anecdotally, examples of schools adopting an entirely restorative approach (particularly at secondary level), appear to have seen a deterioration in behaviour.

Restorative conversations

A related but perhaps diluted approach is that of restorative conversations, often included as part of a wider behaviour strategy, rather than as one in of itself. These meetings or conversations can be an opportunity to set the terms of reintegration following removal from a lesson, or a fixed term

exclusion, and should be a meaningful conversation about unpacking the problems in order to prevent a reoccurrence (Bennett, 2017).

Restorative practice

This intervention can be seen as a relational approach that emphasises the importance of connectedness. (Finnis, 2021).

Relational approaches

[Relational Schools](#) argue that there has been a decline in interpersonal relationship capability, and that schools show this decline visibly, but also offer a corrective opportunity. They argue that relational capability can be learned and that effective relationships lead to better educational outcomes. They want to centre on schools as sites for the creation of society, to build strong foundations for thriving societies in a global world. The underlying model, of 'relational proximity', is defined as the measure of the distance in the relationship between two people or organisations which determines the quality of their interaction. There are five domains in the underlying relationship: communication, time, knowledge, power, and purpose (Relational Schools, 2016).

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