Overview

This briefing covers the fourth interim report by Sir Alan Steer in this series and focuses on three main issues:

- Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships
- learning, teaching and behaviour
- special educational needs, disabilities and behaviour.

Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships remain relatively new and there continues to be great variation in their practice. The report makes recommendations on how these partnerships can be improved, for example, by active engagement of all their members and reporting annually to their Children's Trust Board.

The report discusses how the quality of teaching and learning and behaviour in schools are inseparable. It recommends that schools can ensure that their teaching is of a consistent high quality by having: a strong learning and teaching policy; pupil self assessment; and improved transition between Key Stages.

On meeting pupils' special education needs the report recommends that effective early intervention with intelligent, caring action on behalf of the school and support agencies, as well as the regular monitoring and evaluation of interventions, would vastly improve educational outcomes for pupils with SEN or disabilities.

This briefing will be of interest to officers, headteachers and governors and also to lead members for children's services and other councillors who as school governors have an interest in promoting good behaviour in schools. Other partners with a role in community safety and in Behaviour and Attendance partnerships, such as police and youth services, will also find this briefing useful.

Briefing in full

Background

In October 2005 the report of the Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline was published and its recommendations were incorporated in the 2006 Education Act. The Children's Plan, December 2007, requested a review headed by Sir Alan Steer into the progress made in raising standards of school behaviour and discipline since the publication...
of Learning behaviour, the 2005 Practitioners' Group report. See 'Related briefings' for briefings on this 2005 report and the Children's Plan.

This briefing looks at the fourth interim report that addresses the issues:

- Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships
- learning, teaching and behaviour
- special educational needs, disabilities and behaviour.

The final report in the review should be completed in April 2009.

**Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships**

The report welcomes the proposals now included in the Apprenticeship, Skills and Children and Learning Bill, that all maintained secondary schools, Academies, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and special schools should be required to be members of Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships. Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships should aim to improve both behaviour and attendance.

While schools may be committed to working together, Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships remain relatively new and there is great variation in their practice. Partnerships currently tend to concentrate on behaviour and give less attention to attendance issues. At present few partnerships go beyond trying to ensure that there is an appropriate and equitable distribution among schools of hard to place pupils and those who have been permanently excluded.

The report identifies the key characteristics of effective Partnerships as follows:

- active engagement of all member schools and other bodies within the partnership reflecting their ownership of the partnership.
- inclusion within the partnership of local PRUs and other providers of alternative provision
- engagement of the partnership with primary schools and further education Colleges
- alignment of the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership with the local Safer School Partnership (SSP) and full engagement of the police so that each partnership has at least one allocated SSP officer
- clear protocols for pupil managed moves and for the placement of ‘hard to place’ pupils to be operated by all members of the partnership
- a focus on early intervention
- use of ‘pooled’ resources to enable the partnership to buy in specialist support
- intelligent use of data so that the partnership can monitor its performance and identify strategic objectives
- staff training related to behaviour and attendance.

The benefits of effective partnership working can cause significant reductions in the number of permanently excluded children. Through co-operative working, children can receive the additional support necessary for them to remain in their school. Managed moves to another institution can help children who are exhibiting significant and unacceptable behaviour. Where these moves are carefully planned and where the pupil and the parent are fully involved in the process, the disruption to education is minimised and the level of distress greatly reduced for all round.

**Fixed term exclusions** are necessary on occasions, as are permanent exclusions, and they can bring beneficial outcomes when used carefully. They should not be used as a
substitute for taking other forms of effective action to address the problems. Where fixed
term exclusion numbers are high this should be seen as indicating a need to provide
support to the school in question.

The relationship between Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships and their **Children’s Trust Board** should be clarified so that there is clear accountability. Partnerships should be reporting annually to these Boards on how they are working and achieving.

**PRUs and schools** need to work more closely together. As in earlier reports the proposals in the White Paper ‘Back on Track’ is welcomed by this report (see ‘Related briefings’). The rate of reintegration of pupils into mainstream schools is often far too slow as schools fear they lack the support to meet the child’s needs. The greater engagement of PRUs with other schools through Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships should help to ensure that there is a better dialogue between them and mainstream schools.

**The Building Schools for the Future programme** needs to take more account of the need to provide schools with the space and accommodation they need to offer partnership extended services. **Inspection procedures** also need to take account of the impact of school partnerships on outcomes for children.

**Learning, Teaching and Behaviour**

Learning, teaching and behaviour are inseparable issues in schools and it has been found that consistent high quality teaching is the single most important factor in raising standards. A significant amount of poor behaviour is due to the inability of the child to access learning, rather than as a result of an unchangeable character defect.

**Consistency in practice** within a school in teaching and learning and behaviour management is key to raising standards and behaviour. Performance variation by students in the same schools points to lack of collegiate practice and lack of clear direction. In these cases training for school and subject leaders should be provided.

All schools need a written **Learning and Teaching policy** to promote a consistent high quality teaching for pupils. This should identify baseline good practice and be reviewed regularly. There is a trade off in placing more requirements on teachers and the benefits that arise in the future from efficient working practices.

**Improving the transition between various Key Stages** is essential. Concerns over transition problems usually focus on the move from primary to secondary school, however, problems arise from progressive Key Stage moves also need to be addressed so there is continuity for pupils in their learning.

**Assessment for Learning (AfL)** is highlighted as an effective way to encourage the engagement of pupils. AfL requires teachers to use the assessment information gained to modify and develop their teaching strategies. Pupils benefit most from the use of AfL when their experience in one lesson is reinforced in the next.

**Special Needs Education (SEN), Disabilities and Behaviour**
In 2007 only 9.4% of pupils with special educational needs achieved 5 A*-C GCSE grades (including English and Mathematics), whilst 53.8% of pupils with no identified special needs achieved these grades. Low expectations for these learners are a problem in schools and can result in poor behaviour and low school attendance. Pupils with SEN also experience higher rates of exclusion from school than others.

**The use of informal or unofficial exclusions** - the report states that this is both unlawful and damaging to children, especially those with SEN and disabilities.

**Effective early intervention and accurate identification** - this is essential for pupils with SEN and disabilities; without this their behaviour is likely to deteriorate. Whatever the reasons for the wrong identification of SEN there will be adverse effects on pupils that need extra support. Support may not be provided or will not be sufficiently focused due to the use of resources on individuals who do not have SEN and have been identified wrongly.

**Monitoring and evaluating** the impact of interventions on the progress made by pupils with SEN and disabilities is crucial. If progress remains unsatisfactory schools need to consider what further or different provision might be made.

Currently resources and attention are more often directed towards dealing with the treatment of problems, rather than with preventative work. Early years and primary education staff need appropriate training and time to identify children with SEN and to intervene effectively at an early point. Teachers need to be confident in dealing with individuals with SEN.

**Children and Adolescent Support Service (CAMHS)** should be more pro-active to ensure that there is proper access to its services for those that need it. Local areas should have a clear description of the services available locally for pupils and their families to support their mental health and psychological well being in terms of both early intervention support and specialist services.

**Parent Support Advisers** are identified as having a valuable role in working with parents and children, especially in informing them what disability services are available both in and beyond the school.

**Comment**

The Government has accepted most of the recommendations of this fourth interim report by Sir Alan Steer on improving behaviour in schools. It has accepted that the value of Attendance and Behaviour (A & B) Partnerships would be increased if there was broader and more active membership of these partnerships. The current Apprenticeship, Skills and Children's Learning Bill requires all maintained secondary schools, including academies, PRUs and special schools to be members of these A & B Partnerships.

Like his earlier reports it emphasises the value of partnership working between schools and parents and also between schools themselves and their partners as part of A &B Partnerships. In this report Sir Alan Steer says that ‘schools working closely together can create far greater systems to support and enrich children's lives than when they operate alone’. He also recognises that this requires headteachers to develop trust between each other and accept responsibility to contribute to the well-being of all children in the community not just in their particular school. He identifies local authorities as having an important part to play in supporting these developments and in helping make these Partnerships work well.
The interim report also emphasises the benefits of having Safer School Partnerships involved and of having at least one police allocated to each A & B Partnership. This is likely to help schools to tackle problems arising from gangs or drug abuse in their areas.

Sir Alan Steer also states that he found evidence that BSF design principles have yet to take full account of the building needs arising from the creation of school partnerships and school based extended services. This may be the aim but there seems to be evidence that this is not always happening in practice.

It emphasises that high quality learning and teaching is essential to improving pupil behaviour so there is an important role for the local authority as well as for organisations like NCSL and teacher unions to support the professional development of school leadership and teachers to achieve greater consistency of quality teaching in and across schools. This should also include ensuring school governors understand the importance of this and the need to review school policies on learning and teaching. The report recommends that an earlier report from the Practitioners Group, chaired by Sir Alan, entitled Principles and Practice - What Works in Schools (DFES 2006), should be re-circulated to schools and attention drawn to it. (See 'Links' for this earlier publication).

The interim report highlights that exclusion rates for pupils with SEN/disabilities is too high and that this is often due to the non-identification of these needs by teachers. It stresses that this must be addressed by further training at initial teacher training stage and later on the job training. There are moves underway to strengthen the skills of teachers through changes to initial training and also by the introduction of the requirement that all SENCOs are qualified teachers by 2011.

In 2009/10 Ofsted will report their findings on how best to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities. In 2009 the Lamb review will examine the level of parental confidence in SEN services provided by schools and local authorities.

Behavioural and attendance partnerships have the usual benefits and pitfalls of partnership working. Where partners can see benefits for each them in being active members of these partnerships there will be strong incentives for all the partners to work well together and share resources. But in partnerships where some schools face more problems with behaviour issues and need more resources than others there may be reluctance by some schools to contribute time and resources. Notwithstanding these difficulties, it is probably beneficial for partnerships to have a mix of schools so that there is opportunity to share good practice and learn from schools that have overcome such issues.

**Additional Information**

**Covers**

**Question**

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**Related links**

- Interim Report 4
- Principles and Practice - what works in schools
Related briefings

- Learning Behaviour
- Children's Plan: Building brighter futures
- Back on Track White Paper

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