

**ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT IN  
SCHOOLS: DIVERGING FROM A FOCUS ON PUNISHMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A significant number of children are excluded from school each year in England. Exclusion from school is often just another step within a cycle of challenging behaviour and punitive responses. Despite this ongoing cycle, most schools in England still use punitive approaches as a substantial part of their behaviour management system. In addition, disruptive behaviour remains a key stress factor for teachers.

The main aim of this study was to explore why many schools in England are reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses when managing undesirable student behaviour. To investigate this question, the research considers the experiences and perceptions of senior school leaders about current behaviour management systems in schools; students' perceptions of behaviour management in their school; and the perceived barriers to implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management in schools. Data were gathered through conducting interviews with senior school leaders in English schools and internationally; an online survey sent to senior school leaders in mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units in England; and focus groups with students at a case study school.

The key findings of the study are that senior school leaders generally appear to have a positive attitude towards alternative approaches to behaviour management. However, there are a number of barriers that prevent these changes from being made, namely; time and resources, perceptions of others, and leaders being risk averse. These barriers contribute to why punitive approaches are still the predominant way of managing behaviour in English schools. The most important aspects of behaviour management for students were for the system to be seen as fair and consistent.

These research findings suggest that alternative approaches to punitive responses could be used more frequently in English schools. However, there is a need for support to enable schools to overcome the barriers that are currently preventing this.

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References. The word count of this thesis is under 85,000, including references.

The thesis has been reviewed by a professional proof-reader, Katherine Smith. This assistance was in accordance with the University's Guidance on Proofreading and Editing. I accept full responsibility for the authorship and standard of the submitted work.

Within this thesis I make reference to previously published work of which I am either the sole author or a co-author. These sources are cited in the text and included in the Reference list. The work presented in the thesis, where reference to these publications is made, is not an exact duplicate of that included in the published papers.

Two of the papers are ones that I have worked on collaboratively with my colleagues; George W. Holden for one paper, and John Tillson for the other.

The published papers which I mention in this thesis and that I am a sole or co-author of, are listed below:

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*It will be very beneficial, when the teacher is obliged to use punishment, to win the heart of the child before doing so (Demia, 1716; cited in Foucault, 1991, p. 180)*

As long ago as 1716, over 300 years ago, teachers recognised the need to build relationships with students rather than rely primarily on the use of punishment to manage undesirable student behaviour. Yet the predominant behaviour management systems in schools in England (hereafter referred to as English schools) today continue to focus on using punitive responses to students who transgress school rules. Most notably, these systems include an emphasis on sanctions (also referred to as punishments) for undesirable behaviour and rewards for desirable behaviour and academic achievement.

For the purposes of this thesis, punishment refers to a response to undesirable student behaviour which is intended to be unpleasant in some way and aims to deter the student from repeating the same behaviour (Oxley and Holden, 2021). The distinction between punishment and discipline is discussed in Chapter 2: Literature review. Common examples of punishments used in schools in England include detentions (for example, having to stay inside at break time or lunchtime, or having to stay at school for a period of time at the end of the day), and exclusions. Exclusions can be either fixed term or permanent. Fixed Term exclusions mean that the student is not allowed to attend school for a fixed period of time, usually between one to five days. Permanent exclusion means that the student is not allowed to return to their school at all and an alternative educational placement will need to be sought for this student.

The focus on punitive responses to undesirable student behaviour is perpetuated and endorsed by government guidance (Department for Education, 2014) and OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) recommendations, leaving little room for schools to consider adopting different, and potentially more effective, approaches to encouraging positive student behaviour.

One result of this restraint on innovation is that a core minority of students who are unable to manage in a mainstream school environment are being excluded from English schools. The cost of this to society is high. For example, almost 125,000 state secondary school students received at least one period of Fixed Term exclusion from school in a single academic year (Department for Education, 2016). This is just under 4% of the entire secondary school population. A significant proportion of this group (37.9%) received more than one period of

Fixed Term exclusion in this academic year and the majority of these exclusions were recorded as being due to ‘persistent disruptive behaviour’ (Department for Education, 2016). Exclusion statistics for English schools show a recurrent pattern, year after year. This pattern indicates that the same students are given multiple Fixed Term exclusions for the same type of undesirable behaviour and these exclusions are mostly given for persistent disruption during lessons that has built up over time.

While there is evidence that the current system of sanctions and rewards is generally effective for most children and young people, this core minority of students, who present with persistently undesirable and disruptive behaviour in school, appear to lack the skills to respond to this approach in a positive way (Greene, 2008). This has created a situation where teacher stress is rising (Jerrim, Sims and Taylor, 2020; Kyriacou, 2001) and these students are being failed by the English education system. By failing to resolve persistently undesirable behaviour in an effective and sustainable manner, these students often become disengaged from education and trapped in a cycle of undesirable behaviour followed by ineffective punishments. Imposed punitive measures create feelings of resentment and rejection, leading to an escalation of undesirable behaviour (Martinez, 2009; Searle, 2001; Kinder, Kendall, Downing, Atkinson and Hogarth, 1999). Ultimately this often leads to exclusion from school, increasing the risk factor for involvement in criminal activities (Parsons, 2011) and diminishing their life chances.

Evidence suggests that being excluded from school is a key risk factor for young people becoming involved in criminality. A report by the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (Bacon, 2015) found that 85% of boys in detention within the criminal justice system had been excluded from school. Justice Secretary, Michael Gove, has also spoken about school exclusion being one of the principal triggers of potential criminal behaviour (Bacon, 2015).

It is acknowledged that correlation between school exclusions and involvement in criminality does not necessarily equal causation. It is an increased risk factor as opposed to a foregone conclusion. It could be argued that the behaviour of the students who are excluded from school is what leads to criminality, rather than the exclusions. However, being excluded from school means that these vulnerable students with a past history of making poor behavioural decisions are out in society during the school day. As the majority of other young people are in school and it is not always possible for constant adult supervision to be in place, these students are at increased risk of coming into contact with aspects of criminality.

Resolving the difficulties that lead to recurrent negative behaviour is a complex issue with a number of inter-related factors contributing to undesirable student behaviour in the classroom. Moore et al. (2019) suggest that a wide range of factors can influence student behaviour in school and only some of these factors can be addressed by teachers.

A study of 346 teachers in Spanish schools (Alvarez Martino, Alvarez Hernandez, Castro Paneda, Campo Mon and Gonzalez de Mesa, 2016) found that teachers perceived the most common underlying causes of problems in the classroom to be: lack of rules and limits in the family, general change in society, lack of coordination between family and school, use/abuse of social networks, abuse of mobile applications, and lack of rules and limits in school. Some of these perceived factors, such as a general change in society, are outside the influence of school to change. However, other perceived factors could be addressed or at least mitigated by effective school procedures and the development of a close working relationship between school and family. It is also important to remember that these factors have been identified from the perceptions of the teachers involved in this study, rather than being the definitive factors underlying problematic behaviour in the classroom. This means that there may be other factors which also have a role to play but were not identified by this study.

Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), which is a common term for alternative educational provision settings for students who have been, or are at imminent risk of being permanently excluded from mainstream school, provide education for students who have not responded to the usual school discipline systems over a period of time. From professional experience, the researcher is aware that it is usual for these students to have had Fixed Term exclusions prior to their referral and to have also been subject to other less serious disciplinary actions, such as detentions and verbal warnings. Yet this same discipline system is then often continued at the PRU, despite the evidence that the student's referral there indicates that this has not been effective in changing their behaviour. It is worth noting that there are also alternative educational provision settings for students with specific medical or mental health needs or learning difficulties, which are also referred to as PRUs. As many students who are subject to exclusion from school are also likely to have mental health needs and undiagnosed learning difficulties (Weale, 2017), there is likely to be some overlap between the students attending these different types of provision.

Regardless of the evidence base suggesting that exclusion and punishment is not an effective way to modify behaviour, the prevalence of Fixed Term exclusions and other school punishments continue to be commonplace. As stated by Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel (2009, p.49):

*The punitive response, which predominates in today's schools, limits educational authorities to simplistic choices. To punish or not to punish. How much punishment? How many detentions or days of suspension?*

As Flanagan (2014) suggests, if something is not working to change behaviour, there is a need to try something else. There is little point in continuing with the same approach, edging ever closer to the spectre of permanent exclusion. In the famous quote attributed to Albert Einstein, the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So, why are punitive approaches, such as Fixed Term exclusions, still being used as a means to change student behaviour in English schools?

In many schools, exclusions are seen as a last resort and the decision to exclude is not one that is taken lightly. However, there are schools in England, which the researcher is aware of from her professional experience, where the behaviour policy includes an objective and rigid procedure. The stages of the behaviour policy lead to exclusion if the student does not change their behaviour as the result of less severe punishments. This leads to the whole process being determined by an inflexible system of compliance, which is devoid of thinking about the psychological impact of this approach on both pupils and staff.

This inflexibility can sometimes exacerbate a behaviour issue, leading to an escalation in severity of sanctions. An example from the researcher's professional experience concerns a student who was excluded for one day and refused to complete the day of isolation that the school policy prescribed on their return from the exclusion. This led to the student being excluded for a further period and eventually this resulted in the student disengaging from education and seeking a move to a different school. Cooper et al. (2000) suggests that some schools can have a pre-occupation with systems and policies. These can overshadow the importance of idiographic experiences and can have a negative effect on children's experiences in school.

While the schools that adopt this type of system are doing so in the belief that this is in the best interests of their school community, it indicates a lack of consideration for students who require a different approach to managing their behaviour. Treating all students the same, as in equally,

does not necessarily equate to all students being treated equitably. Different individuals require different amounts of support to reach the same standard of behaviour and achievement. Challenging students are often the most vulnerable and troubled within the school community, and the psychological impact of punitive approaches on these students should be taken into consideration. If teachers view these students as troubled, rather than as deviant or aggressive, then a more compassionate approach is likely to be taken.

It could be argued that the primary aim of a school exclusion is not to change a student's behaviour, but to safeguard other students or staff, prevent teaching time from being wasted, or to send a message to the school community. The researcher would argue, from her professional experience, that this is still an ineffective way of managing undesirable student behaviour, as being excluded from school does nothing to resolve the issues that led to the behaviour in the first place. This PhD research project is focussing on the core minority of students who have multiple Fixed Term exclusions from school and the statistics (Department for Education, 2016) show that this is most often due to 'persistently challenging behaviour'. While it can be reasoned that a Fixed Term school exclusion for a physical assault, for example, could be imposed to safeguard another student while an investigation is carried out, it is more difficult to argue this case for repeated disruptive behaviour which is not a clear safeguarding issue.

One factor that may skew exclusion statistics is that support for challenging students, such as access to a PRU, is sometimes only available if the mainstream school is able to evidence that the student has had a certain number of exclusions. This is something that needs to be addressed by referring authorities as it tends to lead to support, such as referral to a PRU, being viewed by the student and their family as yet another punishment, rather than as something that is intended to help the student succeed in their education.

### **1.1 Professional experience**

The origins of the researcher's interest in this area stems from her professional work with students who have been excluded from school or are at imminent risk of being so. For the past fourteen years the researcher has worked with students who find it difficult to manage within a mainstream school environment and during this time the researcher has seen various strategies used to try to support them with their behaviour. Not all the strategies have been supportive; some have been punitive and designed to 'shock' the young person into behaving, for example in the case of a short Fixed Term exclusion from school. In the researcher's view,

the strategies that have worked best have been those which include the young person in the process of change, and acknowledge that systemic changes often have to be made to enable that young person to learn new ways of behaving. For example, the researcher has worked on cases where students who have been involved in a physical altercation with each other have then taken part in mediated restorative work together. They have been able to resolve the issues and make a successful return to mainstream school. Whereas in other cases, the school has taken the decision to exclude the students for a period of time without addressing the issue of why the undesirable behaviour occurred in the first place. When these students have returned to school, the issue has continued and the same behaviour has been repeated, resulting in multiple exclusions and in some cases referral to a PRU. This professional experience resonates with the literature on behaviour management. Yet schools still appear to be reluctant to deviate from the 'traditional' approach of punishment for unacceptable behaviour. K. Hewitson (personal communication, 18 April, 2015), who runs a consultancy company based on alternative and creative approaches to engaging and motivating learners, has also found in his experience that senior leaders in schools are reluctant to be open to change and suggests that they feel 'it is much safer to do more of what does not work because it is a recognised approach'. There may also be other reasons why schools continue to use the same approaches to behaviour management, such as limitations on staff time and resources, an underlying belief that undesirable behaviour needs to be punished, or potentially a covert agenda to simply follow the required process until a student can be moved away from the school.

This is not referring to off-rolling, where a student is illegally removed from a school roll, but instead is referring to legitimate methods of moving the student away from the school. For example, by referral to a PRU or alternative education setting, or by a managed move to another mainstream school. A managed move is when a child, who is at risk of permanent exclusion, is offered a place at another mainstream school before getting to the point of actually being permanently excluded.

On a related note, it is important to point out that managed moves, as suggested by Abdelnoor (2007), are intended to be a positive alternative to avoid a student being permanently excluded. Abdelnoor (2007) emphasises that a managed move should only go ahead with the consent of the student and their parents. As with many concepts, the idea of a managed move is open to being used unscrupulously, for example by schools threatening parents with their child being permanently excluded if they do not consent to the managed move. Whilst the majority of schools would not consider doing this, there is the potential for this to happen. The researcher

would like to make it clear that when managed moves are referred to in this thesis, this in no way condones any questionable practices and assumes that managed moves would only go ahead with consent and when it is believed by all parties that it is in the best interests of the student.

## **1.2 Alternative approaches to behaviour management in schools**

There are alternative approaches to continuing with a punitive system of behaviour management in schools. Examples are based on: Restorative Practice (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013); Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Greene, 2008); Choice Theory (Glasser, 1985); Growth mindset (Dweck, 2012); Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (Lewis and Sugai, 1999); and Attachment-based strategies (Bombèr, 2007; Geddes, 2006). These approaches have been adopted in a number of schools already and have seen success. For example, schools that have introduced Restorative Practice as a whole school approach have benefitted from a decrease in exclusions, a reduction in persistent absenteeism, and an increase in academic achievement (Cambridgeshire Restorative Approaches in Schools, 2014). Each of these alternative approaches is discussed in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 2: Literature review).

However, adoption of these alternative approaches is not widespread across English schools. To examine the reasons behind schools' apparent reluctance to try alternative approaches, this research has explored the experiences and beliefs of senior school leaders (SSLs) about behaviour management systems, with a particular focus on alternative approaches to the use of punishment. This exploration is intended to highlight where schools have had positive experiences with these alternative approaches, as well as identifying the perceived barriers as to why these alternatives are not more widely implemented in English schools.

The main focus of this research is the small, but significant, minority of students who present with the most challenging behaviour in school. These are the students who have received multiple Fixed Term Exclusions, indicating that, for these students, the current behaviour management system is clearly not working. For example, this is just over 1.5% of the secondary school population (Department for Education, 2016). The fact that these students are receiving the same punishments repeatedly for the same persistently undesirable behaviour indicates that the system is not promoting a positive change in behaviour for these students.

However, it is intended that the recommendations and suggestions discovered through this research will also be applicable to all students. It follows that an alternative approach to

behaviour management that is effective in reducing the undesirable behaviour of the most challenging students has the potential to also be effective for students who display a lower level of challenging behaviour (Greene, 2016).

The below table gives an example of some of the different types of disruptive behaviour that teachers may need to manage in the classroom. This typology is intended to give the reader an idea of the types of behaviour that are being discussed in this thesis and which may lead to a punitive response in school. It was devised by the researcher, and the same typology is used as part of an online survey described in Chapter 6.

**Table 1: Typology of undesirable student behaviour**

<b>Type of undesirable student behaviour</b>
Distracting others during lessons
Being out of their seat during lessons
Shouting out in class
Refusing to do classwork
Using mobile phones during lessons
Seeking attention from the teacher at inappropriate times, interrupting the flow of the lesson
Passing notes in class
Verbal aggression towards other students
Verbal aggression/swearing towards teachers
Damage to property
Leaving the classroom
Physical aggression towards other students
Physical aggression towards teachers



### **1.3 Research questions**

The overarching research question (RQ) to be addressed in this thesis is:

- Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?

To break this down into a manageable research project, three sub-questions were developed:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?
- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

Data have been collected by a variety of methods, namely individual interviews with SSLs, focus groups with students at a case study school, and an online survey sent to headteachers. The majority of data were collected from schools across England. However, to consider the international context for alternative approaches to school behaviour management, data were also collected from Scotland, the Netherlands, and Bhutan. The rationale for selecting these countries is briefly discussed in the following section and detailed more thoroughly in Chapter 3: Methodology.

### **1.4 Contribution to literature**

This research project is anticipated to make a substantial and original contribution to the literature on implementation of evidence-based alternative approaches to behaviour management. It demonstrates this by exploring the barriers that are inhibiting schools from considering these alternatives. This will be achieved through focusing on the beliefs, attitudes, and unmet professional needs of key decision-makers in schools. Another original element to the study is the inclusion of school leaders in PRUs and independent schools as well as mainstream schools, which has allowed a comparison to be made between the beliefs, attitudes, and needs of school leaders across these different educational settings.

The inclusion of behaviour management approaches in an international context has also enabled a comparison to be carried out between the predominant approach in England and that of countries, such as Scotland and the Netherlands, which report much lower levels of school

exclusion. Bhutan was also included in the study to enable an exploration of this country's policy on Gross National Happiness; how the policy impacts on the education system, and whether there is anything that English schools can learn from this approach.

The interview data have been analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is an in-depth qualitative approach focussing on the experience of the individual (Smith, 2009). There are currently not many studies in educational psychology which have used an IPA approach (Oxley, 2016), so this is an additional aspect of originality.

### **1.5 Outline of thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters, beginning with this introduction to the study. Chapter 2 contains a review and critique of current literature relating to behaviour management systems in schools. Chapter 3 examines the methodology used for this current study and describes the methods implemented for data collection. Chapter 4 is an analysis and evaluation of the pilot study, which was conducted in a secondary school in southern England. Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the results of the main study. Chapter 5 documents the results of the interviews conducted with participants in English schools. Chapter 6 reports the results of an online survey carried out with mainstream schools and PRUs. Chapter 7 presents the results of the interviews and online surveys carried out in an international context, namely in Scotland, the Netherlands, and Bhutan. Chapter 8 presents the results of focus groups carried out at a case study school to gain a student perspective on behaviour management. The results of the main study described in the preceding chapters are then discussed in detail in Chapter 9. This chapter also presents the conclusions that may be drawn from this study and suggests the potential implications and recommendations for educational practice.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to give an overview of the current literature on behaviour management in schools, with a particular focus on punishment, exclusions, and alternative approaches to managing the behaviour of the most challenging students. Behaviour management in schools is a very large field of research. For the purposes of this review, the focus will be on the working aim for this study and how this is located within the broader literature. The working aim of this study is to explore why schools in England appear to be reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour. The intention of this literature review is to identify gaps within this area of research. The identification of these gaps will then lead to the formulation of relevant research questions to be addressed by this study. These will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

The literature review will begin by considering the typical characteristics of current behaviour management systems in schools in England. As there appears to be a distinct leaning towards Behaviourism present in most Behaviour Management policies seen in schools in England, it will then go on to explore the roots of the behaviourist tradition and offer a critical evaluation of this approach.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, within the context of this thesis, English schools refers to schools that are located in England, as it is acknowledged that there may be international schools that identify as English schools, for example, by following the English curriculum.

Consideration will be given to the issues with using rewards as a way of managing behaviour in school and the impact that this can have on student motivation; how punishment in schools is defined, and the use of shame as a form of punishment. Students' perceptions of behaviour management systems will be explored, particularly in regard to exclusions. Reintegration after exclusion will also be discussed.

This first part of the literature review aims to give an insight into the current situation regarding school behaviour management in England. The second part follows on to consider the impact that this situation is having on students, teachers and the wider society. This includes examining the literature on mental health in schools and teacher stress. The current Covid-19 pandemic and the disruption that this has caused to students will also be discussed.

The third part of the literature review considers potential alternative innovations to the current system of managing challenging behaviour in schools. Literature on alternative approaches to behaviour management is explored, with a focus on six alternative approaches: Restorative Approaches; Collaborative Problem Solving; Growth mindset; Choice Theory; Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (PBIS); and Attachment-based strategies. Behaviour management in the international context is also considered, with a particular focus on the Netherlands, Scotland, and Bhutan. This section highlights the similarities and differences between behaviour management in English schools and elsewhere. The penultimate section of this chapter discusses how senior leaders influence the ethos of a school, with some thought given to the process of change. Research into the process of change in the school context is considered, highlighting the potential barriers to change that have been identified. Finally, the identified gaps in the literature are summarised and the research questions for this study are discussed.

## **2.1 Behaviour management in English schools**

To start investigating the literature on behaviour management in English schools, it is first necessary to consider what current behaviour management systems tend to be like in these schools. This section aims to give a brief insight into their common characteristics.

In English schools, the predominant system of behaviour management tends to be based on rewards and punishments. This is reflective of operant conditioning in Behaviourism, which is discussed in more detail in the next section. This style of approach is perpetuated by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) guidelines which promote these types of systems by rewarding the schools that follow them. The act of rewarding these schools, by giving a high Ofsted grade, is in itself reflecting the principles of operant conditioning. The Department for Education (DfE) also reinforces this approach with guidance such as Tom Bennett's (Department for Education, 2017) independent review 'Behaviour in Schools' and the 2016 guidance 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' (Department for Education, 2016).

An initiative was announced by the DfE in May 2019 (Department for Education, 2019), intended to support schools with behaviour management strategies. This £10 million initiative was led by Tom Bennett and intended to create networks of 'expert schools' to support teacher to manage disruptive behaviour. The language used in the announcement, stating that teachers should 'crack down on bad behaviour', suggested that this initiative would continue to promote the principles of operant conditioning and punitive responses to undesirable behaviour.

Tom Bennett has been dubbed the ‘behaviour tsar’ (Mason, 2015) under the current Conservative government. Bennett has pledged to tackle low level disruption in classrooms and is a prominent figure in debates among educational professionals and academics on social media platforms, such as Twitter, as well as in traditional journalism. For example, he published his ‘top ten tips’ for teachers to maintain classroom discipline (Bennett, 2015), which, like much of his work, mainly appears to focus on ensuring the authority of the teacher through the imposition of punishments.

There were signs that a more positive outlook may be on the horizon when Ofsted announced a change in focus from September 2019 (Ofsted, 2018). The intention was for there to be less of a focus on headline results and more exploration of how schools are achieving their results and whether they are offering a broad, rich and deep curriculum. This approach was intended to discourage schools from ‘teaching to the test’.

The Timpson review (Department for Education, 2019) explored how schools use exclusions and why certain groups of students were more likely to be excluded than others. The review offered recommendations that schools should be held more accountable for students who are permanently excluded. This included the students’ exam results counting towards the school’s overall results. This would remove any perverse incentive to exclude students from school in order to improve the school’s league table positions.

Atici (2007) conducted a study on the strategies that student teachers use to manage behaviour. The study was based in Turkey and found that teachers used one of three main strategies for managing behaviour: corrective, preventative, or punitive. Atici (2007) notes that British teachers are more likely to use preventative methods than Turkish teachers. This is a positive indication that schools in the UK are starting to embrace an approach to behaviour management that is less reactive than it may have been in the past. However, a limitation of this study is the small sample size of only nine teachers. This may mean that the findings are not representative across a larger population.

Goodman and Burton (2010) reviewed the changes in education policy since 1997 in relation to behaviour management. In their small scale, England-based study, Goodman and Burton (2010) surveyed nine teachers’ experiences of including students with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD) in mainstream lessons. The study raises the issue that, despite policy advocating inclusion for all students, there are still barriers that need to be addressed. Examples given are a lack of resources and a need for a greater level of expertise among

educational professionals in managing EBD students (Goodman and Burton, 2010). Similarly to Atici's (2007) study, Goodman and Burton's (2010) was conducted on a small scale with only nine teachers. This is a limitation of the findings as they may not be representative of the teacher population as a whole.

Interventionist behaviour management, such as that which is prevalent in English schools, is rooted in the behaviourist tradition. The following section offers an overview of Behaviourism and a critical evaluation of its use in education.

## **2.2 Critical evaluation of Behaviourism**

Behaviourism, as developed by psychologists such as Pavlov (1897), Watson (1913) and Skinner (1938; 1948), is primarily concerned with observable behaviour. Little regard is given to internal thoughts that may motivate behaviour. Behaviour is held to be the result of simple stimulus-response, determined by the environment. The basic principles of behaviourist theory suggest that all behaviour is learnt from the environment. By discovering the stimulus-response association which underlies even the most complex behaviour, Behaviourism suggests that behaviour can be predicted and controlled.

Key experiments in the behaviourist tradition include: Pavlov's dogs, where dogs were conditioned to salivate at the sound of a bell, even in the absence of food (Pavlov, 1897); Little Albert, where a small boy was conditioned to show a fear response to a white rat, despite not previously being afraid of it (Watson and Rayner, 1920); and the Skinner Box, which used operant conditioning to predict and control the behaviour of non-human animals (Skinner, 1938). Operant conditioning will be discussed in more detail later on in this section (see page 28).

Behaviourism aimed to ensure that psychology was seen as a scientific discipline, in the same way as the natural sciences. Watson (1930, p.11) suggested that the purpose of psychology should be 'to predict, given the stimulus, what reaction will take place; or, given the reaction, state what the situation or stimulus is that has caused the reaction'. This suggestion is reminiscent of the Antecedent Behaviour Consequence (ABC) approach to behaviour management that is used in some schools today (Department for Education and Skills, 2012).

Skinner believed in the behaviourist approach to the extent that he wrote a novel, *Walden Two* (1948), describing a utopian society founded on behaviourist principles. However, there are limitations to this approach, which will now be discussed.

Behaviourism does not take into account the complexities of studying human behaviour and societies. Behaviourist experiments suggest that there is little difference between learning by humans and learning by non-human animals. This resulted in experiments on rats and pigeons becoming the primary source of experimental data for behaviourist theories. This was mainly because the environments of the rats and pigeons could easily be controlled in laboratory conditions. The results of these types of experiments were then applied to human behaviour. There are issues with applying these results to human behaviour as there are clearly differences between the inner lives of humans and non-human animals. While research into the consciousness of non-human animals (Rogers, 1998) suggests that this is an area worthy of further investigation, it is perhaps questionable as to the extent to which it is possible to directly translate results from experiments on non-human animals to make predictions of human behaviour.

Operant conditioning is worth a special mention in relation to school behaviour management systems. It is a form of learning that takes place through the use of rewards and punishments. As such, the behaviourist principle of operant conditioning is essentially the basis of many systems of behaviour management in schools today. Operant conditioning essentially reduces behaviour to a stimulus-response association. It suggests that behaviour that is followed by pleasant consequences is more likely to be repeated, whereas behaviour that is followed by an unpleasant consequence is less likely to be repeated. The individual is taught to make an association between a particular behaviour and a consequence.

Both positive and negative reinforcement strengthen behaviour. Positive reinforcement is conducted through the use of rewards for behaviour that the school wishes to encourage. Negative reinforcement is defined as taking away something unpleasant. The removal of the unpleasant stimulus is the reward, therefore also encouraging repetition of the behaviour. Punishment is often confused with negative reinforcement. But punishment, unlike negative reinforcement, is intended to weaken behaviour. It can be the imposition of something unpleasant, such as a detention in school, or the removal of something pleasant, such as not being allowed out to see friends at lunchtime. Therefore, punishment is intended to discourage repetition of the behaviour.

Operant conditioning theory was developed by Skinner (1938) through a series of experiments involving rats and pigeons. He created a box with a lever on one side, referred to as a Skinner box. When an animal knocked the lever, a piece of food would be released. This positive

reinforcement increased the likelihood that the animal would intentionally press the lever on future occasions. Alternatively, Skinner could use negative reinforcement or punishment to shape the animal's behaviour. Skinner (1938) found that reinforcement was more effective than punishment at controlling and predicting the animal's behaviour. However, there are issues with both rewards and punishments as methods of managing undesirable student behaviour in schools. This will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter.

It is important to note that, while Skinner is widely cited in relation to Behaviourism, there have been many critiques of his work. His view of psychology in absolute terms, akin to a natural science, has been seen as controversial. It can be argued that likening psychology to the natural sciences is reductionist and only presents 'an invalid or partial view of psychological reality' (Stillman, 1975). For example, there is a distinct difference between psychology's study of humans and, for instance, physics and the study of particles.

A further critique is that Skinner's work gives priority to the methodology over the ontology. Skinner assumes that, as his methodology pays little to no regard to internal processes, therefore they do not exist or are irrelevant. The critics cite the behavioural phenomena that Behaviourism is unable to explain, such as consciousness, as support for this argument (Stillman, 1975). Skinner rejected these critiques, suggesting that the critics had misunderstood the science upon which his work was based (Skinner, 1973).

There are clear traits of Behaviourism present in the way that most English schools manage student behaviour. The following sections of this chapter will look in more detail at how the use of rewards and punishments (also referred to as sanctions) translate into the school environment.

### **2.3 Rewards**

Most people who are familiar with English schools would recognise the description of a sticker being given to a child for good work or a child being asked to stay later after class due to being disruptive during the lesson. Rewards and punishments are not only commonly seen in school settings but are an integral part of our society. People encounter these types of systems in many aspects of their life: at work in the form of performance management; in the criminal justice system, with parking tickets as an example; and in parenthood, with reward charts and 'naughty steps'.



Although reward and punishment systems are commonly used in schools, this does not mean that it is the most appropriate, or most effective, way of managing challenging behaviour. This section of the literature review discusses the issues that can be raised by using reward systems, even though using rewards is generally seen as preferable to using punishments.

Rewards are usually seen as the preferable way of managing students' undesirable behaviour in school, by offering rewards to promote positive behaviour rather than resorting to punishment. Back in 1716, Demia (cited in Foucault, 1991, p.180) suggested that teachers:

*...must avoid, as far as possible, the use of punishment; on the contrary, he must endeavour to make rewards more frequent than penalties, the lazy being more encouraged by the desire to be rewarded in the same way as the diligent than by the fear of punishment.*

However, it can be argued that rewards are another way of exercising control and encouraging a reliance on extrinsic motivation. In the context of this thesis, extrinsic motivation refers to situations where an individual performs a task in anticipation of receiving some form of tangible reward. Both rewards and punishments perpetuate the unequal power status between the teacher and student. One of the main critiques put forward by Kohn (1993) of using rewards in education is that rewards frame learning as something that one does in exchange for a prize (extrinsic motivation) rather than as something that is intrinsically worth doing (intrinsic motivation).

Kohn's (1993) work will be referred to throughout this thesis in relation to the impact of rewards. It is acknowledged that this work is now dated. However, it is still of particular note and is directly relevant to this thesis.

It is well evidenced that rewards are successful in increasing the probability that one will be motivated to take certain actions. Offering a reward is an effective, and often used, way of ensuring compliance. However, Kohn (1993) suggests that offering a reward changes one's attitude towards the task. Saying 'do this and you will get that' leads to the 'that' becoming more important than the 'this'. In the short-term, rewards work to ensure compliance, but they do not lead to lasting change. It is also worth considering whether the education system should be intended to teach students to comply or whether it would be more valuable to focus on creativity, critical thinking, and fostering an intrinsic motivation to learn.

Kohn (1993) also suggests that rewards are not particularly effective at improving performance at tasks. Studies have shown that when people have been offered rewards for completing a task, the quality and creativeness with which they complete the task decreases compared to those who were not offered rewards. Earlier evidence also indicates that intrinsic motivation to complete future similar tasks decreases after people have been offered rewards (Deci, 1971). Another issue with rewards identified by Kohn (1993) is that rewards have a negative impact on relationships. They promote competition among peers, rather than collaborative learning. Some people inevitably do not get the rewards they are hoping to receive, thereby resulting in demotivation. In addition, reward systems perpetuate the power imbalance between student and adult rather than promoting positive learning relationships. Rewards discourage risk taking, which is a valuable way of learning. The focus is often narrowed to only what is required to obtain the reward. They also do not require any understanding as to what causes undesirable behaviour in the first place.

Kohn (1993) suggests that instead of continuing to use entrenched reward systems in education, an alternative would be to promote what he refers to as the '3 C's'. These are: collaboration, content and choice. Kohn advocates collaborative learning on the basis that working in small cooperative groups helps students to learn more effectively on a variety of measures, as well as resulting in the students feeling more positive about themselves and others. Ensuring that the content of lessons is relevant to students is important, as students learn best when lessons are contextualised and the relevance to their own experiences is made explicit. Finally, giving students choice and autonomy in the classroom is not only more respectful but also has been shown to increase intrinsic motivation to learn and improves academic achievement (Kohn, 1993).

### 2.3.1 Impact of rewards on student motivation

Education approaches can be roughly categorised into two main views: either formal or progressive (Thomas, 2013). The formal educational view suggests that students are motivated by rewards and punishments, and that competition for academic grades is a positive factor. This view tends to have an emphasis on extrinsic motivation. The progressive educational view is more focussed on fostering intrinsic motivation and takes the stance that students should want to do an activity because it interests them. In practice, the approach that a teacher takes is likely to be somewhere on the spectrum between these two views.

A common approach to motivating students is to encourage them with praise and enthusiasm. However, while this approach is generally thought to be positive, there are some potential drawbacks. For students who are already feeling demotivated or disengaged with education, the use of praise can be further demotivating (Bumgarner, 2019). There is the potential that the students may not believe the positive things being said about them, which can lead to the belief that the teacher lacks understanding and can cause feelings of guilt for feeling unable to fulfil expectations.

Common thinking around motivation is that one must be motivated to perform, but conversely studies suggest that one completes a task and then becomes motivated by the value that is seen in what has been achieved (Bumgarner, 2019). Students tend to be motivated when they enjoy motivating relationships and they feel safe, cared for and valued. Although motivation can be a function of a learning relationship, one person does not motivate another. Instead teachers can assist students to tap into their own intrinsic motivation by connecting a desire to change with something that is intrinsically important to the student (Bumgarner, 2019).

In support of Kohn's (1993) suggestion that choice and autonomy are important in the classroom, several studies have shown that teachers who are supportive of student autonomy catalyse greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and desire for challenge in their students (Deci, Nezlek, and Sheinman, 1981; Ryan and Grolnick, 1986). Ryan and Deci (2000) suggest that facilitating self-determined learning in schools requires classroom conditions that satisfy three basic human needs: connection, efficacy, and agency. Students need to feel connected, effective and agentic as they are introduced to new ideas and practice new skills.

The idea that rewards undermine intrinsic motivation has been seen as controversial (Deci, 1971; Kohn, 1993). A meta-analysis by Cameron and Pierce (1994) argued that the undermining effect of rewards on intrinsic motivation was minimal and not consequential for educational practice. However, a more recent meta-analysis conducted by Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999; 2001) suggested that Cameron and Pierce's (1994) work was flawed and the conclusions they had drawn were not correct. Deci, Koestner and Ryan (2001) suggest that, rather than using rewards to motivate students to learn, more emphasis should be placed on facilitating intrinsic motivation. For example, by making learning activities interesting and relevant to students, providing choice, and ensuring that tasks are at an optimal level of challenge.

Payne (2015) investigated students' perceptions of reward and punishment systems in schools. She found that there was a complex range of student responses to these systems, with particular differences across age groups. The findings suggested that some punishments may impact on students' ability to engage in learning activities by, for example, causing the students to want to stay quiet rather than contributing. Other punishments, such as detentions, were seen as counter-productive to encouraging students to work hard. Rewards were not found to be as effective with older students and also their effectiveness tended to rely on whether the students liked the teacher giving the reward. Two rewards were found to be seen as universally effective. These were the school reward trip and teachers contacting parents with positive news about their child's behaviour.

The next section of this chapter moves away from rewards and considers the use of punishment in schools. It discusses how punishment is defined, the use of shame as a punishment, the effect of punishments on behaviour, and how the impact of this may not always be as expected.

## **2.4 Punishment**

Punishment, also referred to as sanctions, is a common strategy used in English schools as a response to undesirable student behaviour. This type of response is also seen in wider society, for example being issued a fine for breaking a speed limit in one's car. However, in order to have a useful discussion about the use of punishment, it is first necessary to define what is meant by this term within the context of this thesis.

### 2.4.1 Definition of punishment

Negative consequences for undesirable behaviour in school are often referred to as either sanctions or punishments. Within the context of this thesis, the two terms are used interchangeably, to refer to a response to a negative behaviour which involves the imposition of an unpleasant stimulus, for example, being asked to complete additional work after school (detention), or the removal of a pleasant stimulus, such as having to stay in the classroom at break time or being excluded from attending school.

There appears to be no clearly agreed definition of punishment within the literature. Within Psychology, punishment is generally taken to refer to Skinner's definition within operant conditioning. Namely, the imposition of something that is unpleasant or the removal of something pleasant in order to weaken recurrences of a particular behaviour. However, the education of human beings is more complex than operant conditioning allows for. The purpose

of school behaviour management systems is often not only to ensure short-term compliance, but to encourage students to internalise the morals of society. It is thought that by internalising these morals, students are more likely to engage in long-term behaviour change.

Hart (2008) suggests that a response to undesirable behaviour must meet five conditions in order to be classed as punishment:

1. It must be intended to cause pain or to be unpleasant or burdensome to the recipient.
2. It must be a response to an action that went against established rules.
3. It must be deliberately imposed by someone.
4. The person imposing it must have appropriate authority to do so.
5. It must be a response to an actual offender for committing an offence.

Hart's definition is much broader than that of punishment within the context of operant conditioning. Within Hart's definition, a response that was primarily meant to be educational, for example a conversation with a teacher about why shouting out in class disrupts learning, could arguably be classed as punishment as the student could find it to be burdensome. However, what distinguishes educational responses (such as the alternative approaches discussed later on in this chapter) from punishment is the intention behind the response. Punishment is generally intended to be burdensome, whereas educational responses are not intended to be so, even if it appears that they are to the recipient.

Duff (2001) argues that a deterrent alone fails to address students as part of a community. Therefore punishment does not achieve its aim, even if students do not continue to behave in undesirable ways. This makes the assumption that schools intend to support students with long-term behaviour change, rather than only short-term compliance. With punitive responses, students may not display undesirable behaviour because of the threat of a deterrent. However, they may not feel that it is morally wrong to behave in that way. When the threat of punishment is removed, there is the potential that they will then have no reason not to behave in an undesirable way.

Garland (1999, p.24) suggests that the real function of punishment is 'moral affirmation' and not as a deterrent, which Garland (1999) sees as ineffective. Goodman (2006) suggests that it is a tool for society to express disapproval of an action. She asserts that schools should distinguish between punishments for moral wrongs (for example, cheating on an exam) and punishments for offences against school rules (such as wearing the wrong uniform). Goodman (2006) considers that punishments should only be a response to behaviour that is morally

wrong. For other transgressions against school rules, there should be lesser ‘penalties’ in place, for instance a fine for returning a library book late. The intention would be that penalties would not promote the same feeling of shame as a punishment would, and would be a matter of considering whether the cost, for example the library fine, was worth the benefit of breaking the rule, for example getting to keep the library book for longer. However, it would be difficult to know how the recipient of the penalty perceived the response and whether the recipient still felt shame attached to the response even if it was not intended by the teacher. The use of shame as punishment is discussed further in the following section. Furthermore, there would likely be difficulty in ascertaining exactly what behaviours should be classed as morally wrong and what is merely inappropriate conduct within the school environment. Different schools, and even different individual teachers, are likely to have differing views as to which behaviour fits each category.

#### 2.4.2 Use of shame as punishment

It can be argued that many punishments used within school behaviour management systems are intended to shame the recipient. Examples include teachers writing children’s names on the boards when they display undesirable behaviour, isolation rooms (where a student is seated in a separate room to their peers), and systems where children are issued with red cards for undesirable behaviour. This is despite evidence that suggests that shame can have damaging effects on children’s development (Stearns and Stearns, 2017). To some extent, the use of shame as punishment has been recognised within schools as a damaging practice. There are boundaries around how it can legitimately be used. For example, a teacher in Ohio, US, forced a student who had been bullying others to listen to the complaints from other students without being given an opportunity to respond. The teacher was accused of shaming and dismissed from their job (Stearns and Stearns, 2017).

Shame is distinct from guilt, in that shame is imposed by an external authority and makes a comment on the person as a whole, therefore resulting in an emotional impact. In contrast, guilt arises internally and is a comment on a specific act rather than the whole person.

Worsley (2015) suggests that shame is a belief that it is appropriate for others to reject you as a person, whereas guilt is a belief that it is appropriate for others to desire what is bad for you. It could be argued that it is appropriate for a student to feel guilt if they have displayed undesirable behaviour, and that the punishment practices are actually intended to encourage appropriate feelings of guilt rather than shame. However, a counterargument to this is that

students will not necessarily be able to distinguish between whether the punishment is intended to induce feelings of shame or guilt. Therefore, students may still feel that the punishment is a rejection of them as a person; even if the teacher intends it only to be a rejection of the undesirable behaviour.

Taylor (2010) refers to the existence of 'toxic shame' to describe feelings of pervasive shame where children are 'not able to re-establish emotional bonds with others after shame-inducing experience' (Taylor, 2010, p. 84). The child cannot contain their negative feelings, brought about by the adult's response to their behaviour and the use of shame in this response. Instead the child splits off these feelings and disconnects from them as a coping mechanism. This leads to the feeling of toxic shame that Taylor (2010) refers to, and has implications for potentially explosive behaviour in the classroom.

For students who perceive that they have been labelled 'bad', Broderick and Leonardo (2016) argue that this label follows them throughout their time in education. They describe this label as being 'like an albatross around their necks' for reasons that are 'usually mysterious' to the student and 'nearly impossible to undo' (Broderick and Leonardo, 2016, p.58).

#### 2.4.3 Impact of punishment on behaviour

Punishment is a response to behaviour that is imposed on the person who has violated the rules. It is something that is 'done to' the student. For example, they are told that they have to stay after school to complete additional work and they have no choice in this matter. There is often no opportunity for the student to explain their perception of events. There is also often no obvious link between the behaviour that was exhibited and the punishment that is put in place. As an example, in a student's mind, it may be difficult to understand why wearing incorrect uniform results in having to complete additional work. This also sets up academic work as something that is used to punish. If a student is given additional work to do as a punishment, then it follows logically that work is something unpleasant. Thus, this risks taking any pleasure out of learning that students may otherwise feel.

Referring back to Skinner's (1938) research on operant conditioning, he found that punishment was less effective than reinforcement at changing behaviour in a sustainable way. Unlike reinforcement, which aims to strengthen a behaviour, punishment weakens a behaviour. However, it does not address the underlying reasons why a behaviour occurs in the first place and therefore does not eradicate it. This often means that once the punishment is no longer applicable or can be avoided, the behaviour will return. The other issue Skinner (1938)

discovered was that punishment causes increased aggression in non-human animals. It must be noted that there are limitations to the generalisability of this work. However, in humans, punishments can create a sense of resentment and strong negative emotions, which may be expressed through aggression and hostility. The use of punishments also perpetuates the idea that aggression is the way to manage issues. This can lead to a culture of bullying and fear in a school environment. Punishment does not help students to learn how to behave differently in the future, as this approach only reinforces what students should not do. It does not help them to learn what they should do instead.

Punishments are not an effective way of changing student behaviour (Martinez, 2009; Greene, 2007; Kohn, 1993). The use of punishments can be viewed as a form of control through extrinsic motivation. This can create classrooms where the students lack a sense of autonomy. At one end of the scale it can create feelings of anxiety and helplessness, whereas at the other end it contributes to feelings of rebellion against the system (Kohn, 1993).

The use of punishments in schools have two main aims: to teach and reinforce the rules and to create a negative experience for the student which they do not want to repeat. This should then deter them from future undesirable behaviour (Greene, 2008; Kohn, 1993). However, it can be argued that punishments do not achieve either of these aims for the core minority of students who come into regular contact with the school discipline system. The majority of students tend to have very little contact with the formal school discipline system (Greene, 2008). For these students, it appears the current predominant method of behaviour management, which ‘favours the use of a hierarchical framework of clearly defined targets, rewards and punishments for specific behaviours’ (Nash, Schlösser and Scarr, 2015, p. 2), is working reasonably well. But for the core minority of students who exhibit persistently disruptive behaviour, this approach does not appear to be effective.

If the use of punishments was an effective way of deterring future undesirable behaviour, it follows that there should be little need for the repetition of punishments. In reality, repeated punishments are a part of normal school life for a core minority of students. Often these repeated punishments increase in severity as time goes on, which leads to a cycle of undesirable behaviour and punishments, ultimately culminating in exclusion from school (Martinez, 2009).

Punishments in schools generally fail to achieve their first aim, to teach and reinforce the rules, as the issue is rarely that the students do not know the school rules (Greene, 2008). From professional experience, the researcher is aware that students are usually able to recite the



school rules. This is especially the case for those students who are regularly in contact with the school discipline system. However, despite knowing what the rules are, certain students are not able to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour due to underlying unmet needs (Greene, 2008). Repeated punishments do not help them to learn other ways of behaving in future.

The second aim of using punishments in school, to create a negative experience which the student does not wish to repeat, may also fail to be achieved when dealing with this core minority of students. The implication of this second aim is that students will remember the negative experience and therefore decide to refrain from repeating the negative behaviour to avoid a re-occurrence of the negative experience. The crucial issue with this aim is that it assumes that all students have three specific skills. First, the student has to be able to recognise that the punishment is a negative experience, as they may not perceive it as such. Secondly, they need to be able to process the experience and store it in their long-term memory. Thirdly, they need to be able to recall the memory at an appropriate time in the future when they are about to repeat the negative behaviour. These may appear to be skills that students should possess but it is important to remember that the core minority of students, who become caught in a cycle of punishments and exclusions, already lack the skills needed to conform to school social conventions (Greene, 2008). If they are lacking these skills, it can be argued that it is highly likely that they will also lack the skills needed to learn through the use of punishments.

Many students who have difficulty regulating their emotions display undesirable behaviour in school. These students often have a background involving some form of trauma or neglect (Wilkinson, 2006). Disrupted emotional development through trauma or neglect in the early years of life can result in the emergence of undesirable behaviour in later years (Bombér, 2007; Geddes, 2006). Sustained stressful or traumatic experiences cause an increase in the release of cortisol. This is a hormone that is secreted in response to stress as part of the fight or flight response. High levels of cortisol can 'affect a child's ability to think, to retrieve information and manage behaviour' (Bombér, 2007, p.23). Prolonged exposure to cortisol can result in neurons becoming 'burnt out', resulting in reduced functionality and increased risk of mental and physical illness (Bergland, 2013).

Conversely, sustained and repeated traumatic experiences actually cause levels of cortisol to become persistently low. The baseline for reactivity has changed. This is the body's way of avoiding burnout, as it means that the body then only responds to significantly negative experience. This means that the experience of a school punishment, such as a detention, may

be perceived as relatively mild and not cause cortisol to be released. Thus, the experience is not recognised as a negative, stressful and anxiety-inducing experience in the way that it might be expected to be. Therefore, there is no motivation to avoid the recurrence of the punishment.

Excessive cortisol has been shown to have an impact on the functionality of the hippocampus, which is the area of the brain that processes long-term memories (Abercombie et al., 2011). Research by Anderson et al. (2014) also suggests that there is a link between high cortisol levels and the loss of synapses in the pre-frontal cortex which is associated with short-term memory. Loss of these synapses is suggested to lead to reduced functioning in processing and recalling information (Anderson et al., 2014).

Studies (De Bellis et al., 1999) suggest that children who have experienced significant trauma at an early age have fewer connections across the corpus callosum and less activity between the brain's hemispheres. The corpus callosum is a bundle of nerves that connects the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Wilkinson (2006) suggests that affective experiences are first processed by the right hemisphere of the brain before they are transmitted to the left hemisphere of the brain for storage in memory. Having a reduced capacity for this process could mean that punishments in school are not processed and stored as memories of negative experiences.

In the midst of a difficult situation where the student is on the verge of behaving in a challenging manner, it is likely that the student will be feeling frustrated and struggling to regulate their emotions. During this situation, they have to be able to think rationally enough to recognise that this is a parallel experience to the previous one and to then be able to accurately recall the memory and associated feelings from the previous negative experience of a school punishment. This memory has to be strong enough to enable the student to maintain control over their behaviour.

Despite evidence which suggests that students are not always making deliberate choices to engage in challenging behaviour, a study by Nash and Schlösser (2014) exploring emotional barriers to learning found that, within a sample of 80 teachers, 83.8% believed that students were mostly or totally in control of their own behaviour. Nash and Schlösser (2014, p.147) suggest that;

*The underlying assertion is that students who are able to control their behaviour must be deliberately choosing to be disruptive at school. In view of this, it is thought that their misbehaviour warrants 'punishment' and disciplinary procedures at school, in order for those concerned to learn the consequences of their behaviour.*

If this sample is representative of teachers in England, it suggests that the majority of teachers believe that students are in control of their behaviour and therefore punishments are the logical response to challenges and disruptions. This is a barrier that will need to be overcome before alternative approaches to behaviour management can be successfully introduced across English schools.

Foucault (1991, p. 136) makes reference to 'docile bodies' in his discussion of the development of the modern approach to discipline. He suggests that the aim of discipline is to produce bodies which are docile, that 'may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved'. Throughout the school day, every individual body and the student body as a whole is controlled in terms of time, space, and movement, with surveillance being a key way of maintaining discipline. Whether this control is imposed via punishments or rewards, it is still an extrinsic method of managing behaviour.

The power difference between students and teachers can be a factor involved in how teachers react to undesirable behaviour in the classroom. Farouk (2010) conducted a thematic analysis of teachers' experiences of behaviour management in primary schools. The findings suggested a difference between restricted and elaborated anger. The teachers were more likely to restrict their anger when dealing with another adult, but they were more likely to express their anger when the object of their anger was a child. This suggests that it is perceived to be okay to express anger towards a less powerful other such as a child. Yet, it is not acceptable to express this feeling towards another adult as they are an equal and so the anger must be restricted (Farouk, 2010).

The next section of this chapter focusses specifically on exclusions from school as a form of punishment. It considers the impact that school exclusions can have on those involved; student and parental experiences of exclusion; reintegration back into school following exclusion; and the current Covid-19 pandemic in relation to exclusions policy and practice.

## **2.5 School exclusions**

England already has a school exclusion rate that is ten times greater than any other country in Europe (Kupchik, Green and Mowen, 2015). In England in the academic year 2016-17 (Department for Education, 2018), there were 381, 865 Fixed Term exclusions and 7720 permanent exclusions from state-funded primary, secondary and special schools. The most common reason for both permanent and Fixed Term exclusions was persistent disruptive behaviour. The exclusion statistics published by the Department for Education (DfE) show a

recurrent pattern over several years. They indicate that the same students are being given multiple Fixed Term exclusions for the same type of behaviour. This is despite research (Martinez, 2009; Searle, 2001) which suggests that school disciplinary exclusion is not effective in changing student behaviour.

Education, in the form it is in today in English schools, has changed little since compulsory schooling was first introduced by the 1880 Education Act, shortly after the Industrial Revolution. Labaree (2010) suggests that mass formal schooling has helped to ‘socialize students in new norms of self-control and internalized social values that prepared them to play the role of self-regulating actors in a market economy’. Goyal (2016) takes this argument further by describing the formal education system as an agent of social control.

Given the societal advances that have been made since the time compulsory schooling was last introduced, it is perhaps time for questions to be asked about whether the system is still fit for purpose for all children. Thomas (2013, p.10) describes the education system as ‘pinching out the flames of curiosity, creativity, and inventiveness’ and suggests that the current approach is captured in a quote by Shakespeare in *As You Like It*:

*Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school.*

Thomas (2013) highlights the juxtaposition between the schoolboy’s ‘shining morning face’ and the bright eagerness of youth with the whining and unwillingness brought about by the prospect of school.

There is an increasing pressure on schools in recent years to deliver exam results within a narrowing curriculum. Vocational subjects and arts subjects are given less emphasis as there is a drive to increase attainment in the core subjects of English, maths and science. This is often referred to as performativity culture. Schools are held accountable for their results with little regard given to the methods they use to obtain them. The practice of off-rolling is becoming increasingly common, with the media stating that more than a fifth of teachers claim to be aware of the practice (The Independent, 2018). Off-rolling, as mentioned in Chapter 1, contributes to students, who are unlikely to achieve the required grades, being at a higher risk of exclusion, official or otherwise, as schools strive to protect their positions in league tables.

Cole et al. (2019) have conducted a cross-national study comparing school exclusion rates in the four jurisdictions of the UK; England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. They found that practices aimed at reducing school exclusions were more prevalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as to a lesser extent in Wales, than they were in England. This could explain the higher exclusion rate that is seen in England compared to the other jurisdictions of the UK.

### 2.5.1 Impact of school exclusions

The impact of school exclusions is not felt equitably by all students. There are particular groups of students who are more likely to be excluded than others. Boys are three times more likely to be excluded than girls. Students of Black Caribbean heritage are over three times more likely to be excluded than students of other ethnic groups. Children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) are four times more likely to be excluded than those who are not eligible. Children with identified Special Educational Needs (SEN) are seven times more likely to be excluded than children without identified SEN (Gibbs, 2018). One particularly stark statistic states that ‘in 2009-10, if you were a Black African-Caribbean boy with special needs and eligible for free school meals you were 168 times more likely to be permanently excluded from a state-funded school than a White girl without special needs from a middle class family’ (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2012, p.9).

Daniels, Thompson and Tawell (2019) argue that policy changes in England, designed to push schools towards excellence, have actually led to there being a perverse incentive for schools to not meet the needs of students with special educational needs. This then means that these students are at a higher risk of exclusion from school. Daniels, Thompson and Tawell’s (2019) study identified five key drivers behind the increasing number of school exclusions from English schools. These were: policy changes; school governance; school culture and ethos; accountability, performativity and marketization; and increasing demands, reduced capacity and financial pressures.

Gibbs (2018) discusses the rising rate of school exclusions and the implications this has for the role of educational psychologists in school. He highlights how schools are ‘being turned into commercial enterprises accountable to shareholders – not the local community’ (Gibbs, 2018, p.86). This, among other factors, is leading to the dehumanisation of education and the increasing removal of students from mainstream education. Gibbs (2018, p.86) argues that ‘only by reaffirming teachers’ sense of creativity, autonomy and agency can education cease

to be a mechanistic exercise in social engineering with no fixed goals and rediscover the simpler and more profound purpose of helping people to be human’.

Tillson and Oxley (2020) consider UK school exclusions within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Their work looks at whether the use of school exclusions is compatible with children’s moral rights under the provisions set out in the CRC. Tillson and Oxley (2020) conclude that, whilst exclusion may be necessary in some circumstances and is not inherently against the moral rights of the child, there is wide systemic reform needed in order to ensure that exclusions are used appropriately and only as a last resort in UK schools.

### 2.5.2 Parental experiences of exclusion

Students are not the only ones who are impacted when exclusion from school occurs. Parents also experience this situation, often with negative impacts. This can include emotional impacts such as feeling responsible for their child’s behaviour, as well as practical impacts such as having to take time off work to care for their child while they are not in school and the potential associated loss of earnings.

Embeita (2019) conducted a study exploring school exclusions from the perspective of parents, with the aim of identifying the factors in the parent-school relationship that facilitated reintegration to secondary education following permanent exclusion. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyse semi-structured interviews conducted with a sample of three parents. The study identified three C’s of reintegration: Communication, Collaboration, and the school’s Commitment to reintegration (Embeita, 2019). These aspects were seen as fundamental to the success of the student’s reintegration. Findings suggested that parental commitment to the success of the reintegration increased in line with the perceived commitment of the school. Embeita (2019) suggests that for communication and collaboration to occur, there must be open exchanges between the school and parents. However, ‘schools’ and families’ boundaries can become particularly resistant during exclusions, as interactions around problems with children are often framed by conflictive communication’ (Embeita, 2019, p.19).

Embeita (2019) found that the parent-school relationship was affected by exclusion, but the parent-child relationship was also affected. Parents tended to either align themselves with the school or with their child. The stronger the alliance with one, the more conflict there appears to be with the other. Parents’ experience of time was also a key theme that arose from this

study. Embeita (2019) found that parents experienced exclusion and reintegration as interconnected and could not discuss one without referring to the other. ‘They could not separate past exclusions from present reintegration attempts, as their hope and urgency for reintegration opportunities to work was informed by regret at missed past opportunities’ (Embeita, 2019, p.27). Parents experienced their interactions with the excluding schools as disempowering and intimidating. The study suggests that parents welcome the opportunity for support for external professionals in these situations, to help them make their voices heard (Embeita, 2019). Embeita (2019) also asserts that parents can be viewed by schools as ‘problems’, and there can be an expectation that parents should follow schools’ guidance even if they disagree. If parents then challenge this, they become seen as ‘hard to reach’, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion (Embeita, 2019).

### 2.5.3 Reintegration following exclusion

When students return to school following a period of exclusion, it is necessary for there to be some form of reintegration into the school community. At its simplest, this just means the student is allowed back on the school site and they go to their normal lessons. However, for reintegration to be effective, there is often more support required to enable the student to make a successful return to school life. Griffiths (2020) conducted a thematic analysis of factors promoting the inclusion of previously excluded children. The overarching themes that were found by Griffiths’ (2020) study were: teaching, learning and staff, pupil and friendships, and pupil self-perception and identity. Thomas (2015) conducted a previous study which identified three factors for successful reintegration after exclusion. These were parental support, time-out provision, and school ethos.

Griffiths (2020) highlights research by Farrell and Tsakalidou (1999) which suggested that reintegration was most likely to be successful for children between 11 to 13 years old. The most highly ranked common barriers to successful reintegration, according to headteachers in Farrell and Tsakalidou (1999), were: children being ‘too disturbed’ for mainstream education, lack of available staff to offer support, and pupils finding mainstream learning difficult. Griffiths (2020) suggests that there needs to be a solution focussed approach to think about what the inverse of these barriers would look like.

Griffiths (2020, p.14) offers a framework for a key adult to work with a previously excluded child ‘to plan a smooth, proactive, and solution-oriented transition together based on the factors promoting a successful re-inclusion’. Part of this is a checklist questionnaire which could be

used as a structured and practical way for a child and adult to work together to reflect on previous behaviour and consider what support measures are needed to ensure that reintegration can be successful. Cooper et al. (2000) suggests that schools have a pre-occupation with systems and policies which can overshadow the importance of idiographic experiences. This pre-occupation can have a negative effect on children's experiences in school. Griffiths (2020, p.9) states that 'exclusion is clearly severely damaging to mental health'. This will be discussed further in a later section of this chapter, which will consider the research around mental health in schools.

#### 2.5.4 Current Covid-19 pandemic

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the periods of school closure in 2020-2021 raises concerns about heightened risks of exclusion as schools re-open. Students have experienced a national trauma and many have had to deal with difficult home circumstances without their usual support network of school and peers. Daniels, Thompson, Porter, Tawell and Emery (2020) conducted research into the school exclusion risks after the Covid-19 pandemic. They highlighted a number of recurring themes including: the importance of robust reintegration and re-engagement plans, having a flexible and responsive curriculum, and ensuring good collaboration and communication between services. They placed emphasis on schools being proactive and making time to listen to the voices of children, young people and their families.

Certain groups of students were identified by Daniels et al. (2020) as potentially being more at risk of exclusion from school, due to disruptive behaviour, during the current Covid-19 pandemic and potentially in the aftermath of this period. These groups include: students who prefer learning at home and may find it difficult to return to the routine of school, students who may be suffering from feelings of depression and isolation due to the time away from their school community, and students who have been completely out of routine during the lockdown period and have not attempted any learning activities since schools closed.

Students may experience an adverse impact on their mental health as a result of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The outcomes of this are not easy to predict as this is a situation that is unprecedented. With mental health already being an important topic in schools, the next section considers this topic in more detail.



## **2.6 Mental health in schools**

The role of schools in mental health is becoming increasingly prominent. It is estimated that 1 in 10 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder, which works out at about 3 children in every classroom (Young Minds, 2018). Yet at the same time, support for mental health difficulties is becoming increasingly hard to access, particularly in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic. For example, the average waiting time for a first appointment with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) was around 6 months and almost 10 months until treatment began (Young Minds, 2018). Thresholds for referrals for support are also being raised, with CAMHS turning away almost a quarter of children referred to them on the basis of stringent criteria (Young Minds, 2018). Due to Covid-19 restrictions, some support services have also had to be delivered online, which may not be accessible for all young people.

Government guidance has been developed to support schools in managing the emerging mental health crisis among children and young people. ‘Mental health and behaviour in schools’ (Department for Education, 2018) is intended to guide schools on how they can support students whose mental health problems manifest themselves in behaviour.

It needs to be considered how school exclusion can impact on the mental health of children and young people. It is also worth exploring what the impact is on teachers who are imposing these punishments and how teachers feel about behaviour management systems in schools. Farouk (2014) explored how teachers’ self-understanding changes when they move from working in mainstream schools to special school education. Her study specifically focussed on teachers who had moved to work in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), which caters for students who have been, or are at risk of being, permanently excluded from mainstream school. The findings of the study suggested that the teachers chose to leave their roles in mainstream education because they wanted to engage in ‘more creative and personally engaging professional practice with a stronger moral purpose’ (Farouk, 2014, p.19). The relationships that they built with the students at the PRU brought about substantial change in their self-understanding.

### 2.6.1 Teacher stress

Kyriacou (2001) suggests that teacher stress is rising, and this has continued to escalate over the years (Jerrim, Sims and Taylor, 2020). This situation is leading to issues in recruiting and retaining teachers. In 2016 in England 50,110 teachers left the profession and only 47,490 new teachers became qualified (Gibbs, 2018). Moore et al’s (2019) report also suggests that undesirable student behaviour in the classroom can lead to stress, burnout, and ultimately

teachers leaving the profession, as well as deterring those who may have been considering teaching as a profession.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has added further difficulties for teachers to face in their profession. In the initial period of school closure in March 2020, teachers talked about an initial period of uncertainty and being extremely worried about the most vulnerable students (Kim and Asbury, 2020). Kim, Oxley and Asbury (2021) conducted a longitudinal qualitative trajectory analysis, examining 24 primary and secondary school teachers' mental health and well-being (MHWB) experiences across three time points (April to November 2020). The findings of this study indicated that teachers' MHWB appeared to have declined throughout this period, particularly for primary school senior leaders. Six job demands were highlighted as contributing negatively to teachers' MHWB. These were: uncertainty, workload, negative perception of the profession, concern for others' well-being, health struggles, and multiple roles. A potential limitation of this study is the small sample size of only 24 teachers, which is a small proportion of the overall teacher population.

Mental health challenges for teachers in turn create challenges for recruiting and retaining individuals in the profession. Adera and Bullock (2010) suggest that there are particular difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers in Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) settings. Using surveys and focus groups, they explored the reasons for the high teacher turnover in EBD special schools in the United States of America (USA). They found that factors within and outside the classroom both contributed to teachers choosing to move away from working in EBD schools. Stress factors within the classroom included: diverse skills and abilities among students; challenging behaviours; and inconsistent school expectations. Stress factors outside the classroom included: lack of collaboration; lack of parental involvement; and ambiguity over roles and responsibilities (Adera and Bullock, 2010).

While it is probable that these stress factors will also be found in a mainstream school environment, they are likely to be exacerbated in an EBD school as the student cohort is already more challenging than is typically found within a mainstream school. Adera and Bullock (2010) suggest that to improve teacher retention within EBD schools: parental involvement and collaboration between families and the school should be promoted; educators should work together; and sensitivity training for educators may support them to be more empathic towards the students and families they work with.

Armstrong and Hallet (2012) conducted a UK based study into the impact of undesirable behaviour on teacher welfare and efficacy. They collected written accounts by 150 teachers and conducted a phenomenographic analysis. The findings of the study indicated that Educational Psychologists (EPs) have an important role to play in supporting the teachers of children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). This recommendation is based on the benefits of approaches which place the emphasis on relationships within school rather than focussing on the undesirable behaviour itself (Armstrong and Hallet, 2012).

Chong and Ng (2011) made a comparison of strategies used to manage behaviour by teachers in mainstream schools and by teachers in specialised EBD schools. The study was based in Hong Kong and involved focus groups to gather qualitative data which was then analysed by Nvivo. The study concludes that it is imperative to focus on teachers' professional development to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and teaching methods to deal with behaviour problems effectively in the classroom (Chong and Ng, 2011).

The Carter Review (Carter, 2015) recommended that behaviour management should be prioritised within Initial Teacher Training (ITT) programmes. The review stated that the most effective programmes were those that were underpinned by a deeper understanding of behavioural issues. It recommends that trainees should have a grounding in child development, which includes an understanding of mental health difficulties, as this is an important basis for understanding student behaviour. The review also highlighted that evidence suggests that teachers who have a good understanding of children's emotional development and the impact of trauma and loss, are more likely to be confident and effective in providing a safe setting for students, including those who are most vulnerable (Carter, 2015).

## **2.7 Alternative approaches to behaviour management**

Despite the general reliance on systems of rewards and punishments for behaviour management in schools, there are alternative approaches that can be adopted. There is a variety of different approaches, but in this section six of these approaches will be discussed in detail, namely: Restorative Approaches, Collaborative Problem Solving, Growth mindset; Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (PBIS), and Attachment-based strategies. These six approaches were chosen as they are relatively well known within the education sector, even if they may not always be known by the same name. They are also approaches that the researcher is familiar with through her professional experiences. Each of the six approaches will be discussed in turn, grounding the theory within relevant literature.

The six approaches described below, along with other similar approaches, all have one factor in common. Unlike the traditional system of rewards and punishments, these approaches all include an element of working collaboratively with the students whose behaviour is posing a challenge in school. They have a focus on positive reinforcement instead of punitive responses; they are proactive rather than reactive, and they champion collaboration over top-down decision-making (Oxley and Holden, 2021).

Collaboration and allowing students to be involved in how their school community is run is one way for them to feel that they have a stake in that community. Listening to the students' voice can be an important tool in achieving this aim. However, too often student voice is only given superficial consideration by senior leaders in schools.

These alternative approaches reflect an orientation towards social justice that is absent from a punitive system. Four key aspects of social justice are: dignity, access, equity, and participation. Oxley and Holden (2021) argue that alternative approaches, such as those discussed in this chapter, are in-line with these socially-just principles. Students are treated with respect and dignity because these approaches avoid punitive responses. They aim to minimise exclusionary decisions and therefore this allows the student to continue to access their educational provision. Each student is treated as a holistic individual, promoting equity and reducing group-based disparities. Participation is at the core of these alternative approaches, ensuring that the student is involved in collaborative problem-solving (Oxley and Holden, 2021). This way of approaching behaviour management is in sharp contrast to the more usual punitive responses.

Mills, McGregor, Baroutsis, Te Riele and Hayes (2016) discuss Fraser's conceptions of social justice, which take account of issues of distribution (economic injustices), issues of recognition (cultural injustices), and issues of representation (political injustices). Mills et al. (2016) argue that Fraser's framework cannot adequately explain the complex concept of socially just education. It does not, for example, take into consideration the affective sphere, which is concerned with the quality of relationships, care and support available to students within their school. In Mills et al's (2016) study, teachers in alternative education settings were found to be strongly committed to the social and emotional well-being of their students, with affective justice being a key concern. Students in the study indicated that the lack of affective justice in their mainstream schools, for example significant support structures and respectful caring relationships was an important factor in their move to alternative education settings.

The alternative approaches explored in this chapter all offer opportunities for affective justice to be considered. The following sections intend to offer the reader a sense of the central importance of support, respect, and relationships to these alternative approaches. The first approach that will be examined is restorative approaches, also referred to as Restorative Practice.

### 2.7.1 Restorative approaches

Restorative Practice is an evidence-based approach to promoting positive behaviour within the school and the wider community (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). The main principles of Restorative Practice are based on building and maintaining relationships, with the aim to repair any harm that has been caused. All parties are involved in agreeing a way forward when an incident of undesirable behaviour occurs.

As human beings, we are all influenced by the relationships we have with those around us. Research in the area of Restorative Practice (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013) suggests that most people want to do the right thing most of the time. Yet the main underpinning reason for this is generally not fear of legal or institutional consequences. Instead it is the morals and values that people have internalised from those around them, combined with the discomfort caused by the feelings that are evoked when we damage our relationships with others.

A restorative approach builds emotional awareness as it involves talking about feelings. This is a skill that is rarely taught in the school curriculum and one that not all students will experience in their home environment (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). Participating in this approach to conflict resolution at school can therefore provide students with the opportunity to learn an important life skill (Oxley and Holden, 2021).

Restorative Practice originated in the criminal justice system, as an alternative to an ineffective punitive regime. It has already been implemented in some English schools with successful outcomes being seen on both social and academic measures. These include a decrease in school exclusions, a reduction in persistent absenteeism, and an increase in achievement for English and Maths (Flanagan, 2014; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013).

Acosta et al. (2019) conducted an evaluation of RP as a whole school intervention designed to build a supportive environment. The study gathered self-reports from students, which suggested that their experience of RP had improved the school climate, connectedness, peer attachment, social skills, and reduced cyberbullying victimisation. Stowe (2016) investigated

the impact of RP implementation in the classroom. Findings suggested that introducing RP did improve relationships, promoted empathy and encouraged teachers and students to work together. Stowe (2016) suggests that participants also gained a sense of ownership over their own behaviour. However, Stowe (2016) also cautions that the implementation of RP is a process that necessitates repeated, structured and reflective engagement, in order to be successful. Bevington (2015) undertook an appreciative enquiry approach to evaluate the implantation and impact of RP from perspective of staff at an inner-London primary school. The findings highlighted the importance of congruence between the values, practice and outcomes, as well as between members of the school community.

Restorative Practice in schools can be implemented in a variety of ways. It is important to ensure that the students are able to participate as fully as possible in an age appropriate process. Depending on the behaviour that is being addressed, a spectrum of responses can be offered. These can range from a full restorative conference for a serious incident, such as an assault, to a collaborative empathic conversation facilitated by a teacher between friends that have had a minor falling out. The more formal the response, the more preparation will be necessary and the more skilled the facilitator will need to be (Oxley and Holden, 2021).

Abdelnoor (2007) suggests that, when managed moves are used as an alternative to permanent exclusion, these should be used in conjunction with a restorative conference. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, a managed move is when a child, who is at risk of permanent exclusion, is offered a place at another mainstream school before getting to the point of actually being permanently excluded. Repairing harm that has been caused at the original school, through a restorative conference, can encourage a positive end to the student's placement there and help to make the move more likely to be successful.

Implementation science, which is the study of strategies to promote the uptake of interventions, is key to using restorative approaches as the practitioner is essentially the intervention. Ensuring that school staff receive high quality training in this approach before implementation is essential.

There is not a unanimous view that restorative approaches are beneficial or effective. An article published in the Times Educational Supplement (TES) (Seith, 2019) suggested that a non-punitive approach to behaviour is often ineffective and teachers in Scotland felt that Restorative Practice in schools was leading to rising levels of indiscipline. However, the article then goes on to say that teachers felt that they lack the training and time to implement Restorative Practice

properly. This is an important differentiation, between an approach being deemed ineffective and an approach not being implemented properly. Any approach that is implemented without appropriate time and resources risks being labelled as ineffective. Taking a Restorative Approach is more time consuming than traditional responses to undesirable behaviour, such as issuing a detention. However, in the longer term, if Restorative Practice is implemented properly, with a whole school commitment, it is more effective at reducing school exclusions and creating long-term behaviour change than more punitive responses (Flanagan, 2014; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013).

The next section will examine Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, another alternative approach which is perhaps less well known than Restorative Practice but shares some similar characteristics.

### 2.7.2 Collaborative and Proactive Solutions

The Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach has many factors in common with Restorative Practice. Both approaches are collaborative, solution focussed, and place an emphasis on relationships and community building (Greene, 2008). Collaborative and Proactive Solutions focuses on working with the student to find creative and mutually beneficial ways to resolve an issue. This approach originally went by the name Collaborative Problem Solving. A change in name was made necessary in 2013, following a lawsuit over intellectual property rights. Another program continues to exist with the name Collaborative Problem Solving, but this differs from Greene's approach (Oxley and Holden, 2021).

The underlying premise of this Collaborative and Proactive Solutions approach is that students who display undesirable behaviour lack important thinking skills. This causes them difficulty in areas such as (Greene, 2008, p. 7):

*...regulating one's emotions, considering the outcome of one's actions before one acts, understanding how one's behaviour is affecting other people, having the words to let people know something's bothering you, and responding to changes in plan in a flexible manner.*

In this approach there is a focus on the dissonance between the child's characteristics and the characteristics of their wider environment, such as their parents, teachers, and peer group. Greene suggests that challenging behaviour occurs when the demands of the environment exceed the child's capacity to respond in an adaptive manner (Greene, 2010). Collaborative

and Proactive Solutions highlights the lagging cognitive skills that drive the incidents of challenging behaviour.

Greene (2008) proposes that the response to a student's challenging behaviour can either be an adult-centred solution, a collaborative problem solving opportunity, or an adjustment of expectations. This last option, adjusting expectations, is not a solution that would often work in a school environment where there are certain expectations that students need to meet in order to maintain a safe and orderly learning community. The adult centred solution may not be effective as the child's viewpoint has not been considered in this case and it may not resolve the difficulties that are leading to the behaviour. A helpful anecdote that the researcher uses in her professional role, supporting teachers with behaviour management, to illustrate the issue with adult centred solutions, is a story about two children who were arguing over an orange. An adult attempts to resolve the situation. In the absence of a second orange, the adult decides to cut the orange in half and give half to each child. In theory, this appears a fair and reasonable resolution. However, the children continue to argue. The adult then asks the children about their needs in regards to the orange. It transpires that one child wants the orange skin for a collage they are making in art class and the other child want the orange segments to make orange juice. Having listened to the viewpoints of the children involved, the adult can now help them to problem solve in this situation and try to come up with a mutually beneficial agreement, with one child having the orange skin and the other having the segments.

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions suggests that the most effective response to challenging behaviour is to see this as a collaborative problem solving opportunity. Greene (2008) refers to this as 'Plan B'. The 'proactive' part of the name of this approach is important as Greene does not suggest trying to have a discussion with the student about their behaviour at the time it occurs. This approach is intended to be utilised when there are repeated patterns of behaviour that can be anticipated and there is a need to proactively work towards breaking this pattern.

Greene's approach takes a three step structure. Firstly, the student is given the opportunity to voice their perception of the situation and the adult is encouraged to show empathy for their view point. This is followed by the concern being defined and discussed between both parties. Finally, the adult offers an invitation to the student for them to work together to develop potential solutions. Greene acknowledges that the perfect solution may not be found straight away. It is likely that there will need to be more than one meeting between the adult and student to discuss progress and adaptations (Greene, 2008). This process in itself is valuable as it will



help the student to build and maintain a relationship with a positive adult role model, as well as teaching them that it is okay to make mistakes and make changes as a result.

Collaborative and Proactive Solutions is implemented in many schools in the United States and in several European countries, including a small number of schools in England (Oxley and Holden, 2021). Greene and Winkler (2019) recently conducted a review which summarised 11 empirical studies, including three randomised controlled studies and additional studies that evaluated aspects of the model. These studies support the effectiveness of this approach in schools, as well as with families and in therapeutic facilities. Greene and Winkler (2019) found that implementing Collaborative and Proactive Solutions in schools resulted in dramatic reductions in detentions and exclusions.

The next section will provide an overview of the theory of Growth mindset. Whilst the theory is wide-ranging and not focussed solely on managing challenging behaviour, the principles offer a foundation for a behaviour management system that considers the child's holistic development.

### 2.7.3 Growth mindset

Growth mindset is a theory, developed by Dweck (2012), which suggests that praising intelligence and ability is detrimental to the fostering of self-esteem and may jeopardise students' chances of success. Instead, Dweck argues that teachers and parents should praise effort in students and encourage them to develop a Growth mindset. As opposed to a Fixed mindset, where people believe that talents and abilities are fixed or static, a Growth mindset suggests that, even if an individual cannot achieve something straight away, with perseverance one can improve one's own abilities through effort and hard work. Growth mindset is a language and culture when needs to be adopted by both staff and students in the school, to create a positive school community.

The principles underlying this theory suggest that a person's progress is not fixed on a set trajectory and that they can change their situation through their own efforts. This can be a helpful way to think about challenging behaviour as it avoids the student being labelled as a 'naughty' child. However, it is also worth referring back to Greene's (2008) philosophy that children do well if they can. Taking this into consideration, a student who has a repeating pattern of challenging behaviour is likely to need support from others to make a change.

It could be argued that Growth mindset may not be seen as a direct alternative approach to behaviour management in the same way as the other approaches mentioned in this thesis. However, the principle of people being able to change and develop is an important one when attempting to modify behaviour. A fixed mindset suggests little opportunity for behavioural change, in the same way as it potentially limits academic growth.

Growth mindset seeks to improve young people's self-belief about their intelligence and ability to achieve. This could be helpful in avoiding challenging behaviour where the behaviour stems from a fear of failure or anxiety about engaging in school work. Cook (2015) found that there were links between Growth mindset and feelings of shame. This has important implications for school behaviour policies, particularly when shame is used as part of the response to challenging behaviour. Cook's (2015) research found a negative correlation between Growth mindset and daily shame intensity, and a positive correlation between Growth mindset and daily pride intensity. Cook (2015) also found that a Growth mindset predicted increased perceived academic competence and this in turn predicted reduced shame and increased pride. This has implications for a reduction in challenging behaviour.

Many schools have already adopted a Growth mindset philosophy. As a whole school approach, it would be useful to apply this to a behaviour management approach as well as thinking about it in regard to academic competence. However, it follows that students who feel more academically competent and enabled by school culture will be more likely to engage with school work, rather than disruptive behaviour. Again this refers back to Greene's (2008) point that children do well if they can.

There are many resources available for schools who want to consider implementing a Growth mindset philosophy. A simple Google search for 'Growth mindset in schools' returns over 28 million results (7 March 2021). Many of these are schools promoting the success that they have had using Growth mindset, or resource websites offering support to schools who want to learn more about applying this approach. However, there is some criticism of the Growth mindset theory. Didau (2016) questions whether Growth mindset is a pseudoscience as the research supporting the improvements in schools is not rigorous enough in his opinion. He suggests that inborn ability matters and that it is harmful to suggest that those who fail were simply not trying hard enough.

The next section considers Glasser's (1985) Choice Theory. Although this is a theory rather than a practical system of behaviour management, the ideas within this theory offer a new way of thinking about behaviour and how this is influenced by unmet needs.

#### 2.7.4 Choice theory

Choice Theory was first developed by William Glasser (1985). The theory states that all behaviour is a choice designed to meet the inherent needs of power, belonging and fun. Choice Theory promotes collaborative learning and describes 'learning teams' (Glasser, 1985). The original book by Glasser (1985) describing Choice Theory can now be seen as rather dated in its suggestion that depression and dyslexia are also a behavioural choice. But the basis of the theory is sound in how it relates to meeting the needs of students so that they choose to engage in learning.

In the researcher's professional role, Choice Theory is used as part of the professional development programme offered to teachers in school. An analogy is used to explain this theory which talks about the children and the teachers each carrying around a suitcase of clothes. Each set of clothes represents a way of interacting with others. For example, a nice summer T-shirt might represent a pleasant and friendly attitude, and a smart business jacket could be a professional manner. The teachers, as adults who are in a professional role with often many years of life experience, have many different clothes in their suitcases from which to choose, so they can be in control of how they react to a child's behaviour. However, some children may not have had the opportunity to pack certain clothes into their suitcase. If they have not been exposed to people responding to others in a calm and polite manner, they may not have learnt these particular skills. Some children may only have dirty ragged clothes in their suitcase, representing a challenging way of responding to their teachers.

What this analogy is intended to suggest to the teacher is that they have a choice of how they respond to a child's challenging behaviour, whereas the child perhaps does not know another way of behaving. So the most appropriate teacher's response to the child, rather than a punishment, would be an opportunity to learn a different way to behave. This can be achieved through teachers demonstrating positive behaviour, for example avoiding shouting at the students, but also through teachers working collaboratively with the student to teach other ways of behaving. This increases the variety of different clothes that a student has in their suitcase and allows them more choice and control over their own behaviour.

Hewitson (2015) used the basis of Choice Theory to develop a theory of learning intelligence or Learning Quotient (LQ). He refers to four principles in his theory, which align closely with those of Glasser's Choice Theory. Hewitson (2015) uses the acronym 'Please Be Child Friendly' to help teachers remember the four principles:

1. Power – No one likes to feel powerless and to have no voice. Please acknowledge me.
2. Belonging – Get to know me and help me belong to your learning community.
3. Choice – Give me choices and help me make the right ones.
4. Fun – Help me see the fun in achievement and celebrate it with me.

The next section will consider Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support, also known as PBIS. This alternative approach is quite widely used in the United States.

### 2.7.5 Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support

Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support (PBIS) is a whole-school approach which aims to offer a non-curricular universal programme. PBIS is designed to adapt the school environment through systems promoting positive behaviour in both students and staff (Oxley and Holden, 2021). Behavioural, social learning, and organisational behaviour principles underpin the theoretical approach (Lewis and Sugai, 1999).

Bradshaw, Koth, Bevans et al. (2008) identify seven fundamental features of PBIS, namely:

1. a leadership team who commit to implementing the programme
2. a behaviour support coach for assistance on site
3. the establishment of positively-framed behavioural expectations
4. defining and teaching these expectations
5. establishing a reward system for positive behaviour
6. an agreed upon system for responding to behavioural violations
7. a system to collect and analyse disciplinary data

There are three prevention tiers contained within the PBIS model. The primary tier is universal. As the core of the PBIS approach, this is applied to all students. The secondary tier aims to support targeted groups of students who need additional intervention. The third tier is the most intensive support within the PBIS model. This is an individualised programme, with goals related to both academic and behavioural support. This tier of support is the most resource intensive. The tiered system means that students can be supported on a continuum depending on need (Oxley and Holden, 2021).

PBIS is used by more than 26,000 schools in the United States (Centre on PBIS, 2019). It has seen more than 20 years of financial support from the US Department of Education. This has led to PBIS having a large evidence base including descriptive, evaluative, and experimental studies (Horner and Sugai, 2015). Reinke, Herman and Stormont (2013) conducted a study of observations of classroom management strategies in 33 elementary schools in the United States that had implemented PBIS. They found that teachers' fidelity to the PBIS model was lacking. Whilst the programme prescribes four positive interactions to every negative interaction with students, they found that rates of reprimand were higher than rates of praise. This raises the issue of fidelity, which is essential in order for findings to be generalisable.

Bradshaw et al. (2009) surveyed more than 2500 school staff in the United States and conducted a longitudinal, randomised controlled trial, involving 37 elementary schools. They found that the PBIS programme had a significant positive effect on reports of the schools' organisational health, resource influence, and staff affiliation. This has implications for an increase in positive behaviour.

By providing opportunities for the child's environment to be adapted to promote more positive behaviour, PBIS moves away from focussing solely on the individual's behaviour. It also places more emphasis on how those around the child can change their own behaviour. This type of approach allows PBIS to align more closely with the principles of social justice than a more traditional punitive approach to managing behaviour in school.

The next section will consider how knowledge of attachment theory can be related to strategies to be used in the classroom.

#### 2.7.6 Attachment-based strategies

Teacher training does not generally teach trainees about the effect that trauma and loss can have on student behaviour (Bombèr, 2007). Yet in most classrooms there are likely to be students who have suffered trauma, loss or abuse, resulting in an insecure attachment style (Ainsworth, 1969; cited in Geddes, 2006). Without appropriate training, it can be difficult for school staff to fully understand the behaviour of students with attachment difficulties. This can lead to unnecessary punishments which could be avoided by modifying the learning environment to take account of students with insecure attachment styles.

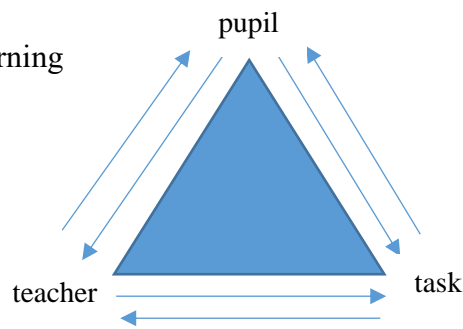
In the 1950s, John Bowlby first developed attachment theory during his research into the relational experiences of infants (Geddes, 2006). Research suggests that early attachment

relationships between the child and their primary caregiver(s) have an impact on relationships throughout the lifespan. Holmes (2014) describes how infants develop an internal working model of attachment, which then acts as a blueprint for future relationships, for example with Nursery staff. Building on Bowlby's work, studies by Ainsworth (1969; cited in Geddes, 2006) and Main and Solomon (1986) identified four distinct attachment styles: secure; insecure-ambivalent; insecure-avoidant; and insecure-disorganised. Bombèr (2007, p.26) describes attachment styles as 'our pattern of relating to 'significant others''. As such, each style has implications for how students will behave and learn in the school environment.

Research suggests that between fifty-five to sixty-five percent of the population develop a secure attachment style (Hong and Park, 2012; Howe, 1999, cited in Bombèr, 2007). These students are able to manage well at school by engaging with their learning and building positive relationships with teachers and peers. However, thirty-five to forty-five percent of the population are thought to develop an insecure attachment style. Around ten to twenty percent are likely to present with an insecure-avoidant style, leading to a reluctance to accept help with learning, as well as difficulties building and maintaining relationships (Bombèr, 2007). Another ten to twenty percent are identified with an insecure-ambivalent style, resulting in a desire to hold the attention of the teacher at the cost of the rest of the classroom and an increased possibility of school refusal (Bombèr, 2007). Finally, around five percent are thought to form an insecure-disorganised attachment style (Hong and Park, 2012). Students with an insecure-disorganised attachment style are often the most challenging and need the most support. Their behaviour can be construed as unpredictable and contradictory. This attachment style generally results from severe neglect or trauma in a chaotic early environment (Bombèr, 2007). These students are most likely to be at risk of school exclusion due to erratic and disruptive behaviour at school. This undesirable behaviour can be interpreted as an expression of acute anxiety.

While Moore et al. (2019) acknowledge in their report that many teachers recognise the importance of teacher-student relationships, they also highlight that there is not a clear definition within the research literature of the key features of effective teacher-student relationships. They particularly highlight a lack of research studies in secondary schools and a need for further research in this area. Geddes (2006) offers a model relating attachment to learning, which she terms the learning triangle.

Figure 1: Geddes' Learning Triangle (2006, p.54)



Geddes (2006) describes how the educational experience requires a capacity to relate to the teacher, as well as the presence of the learning task. For students with a secure attachment, there is a two way relationship between themselves and the teacher, and also between themselves and the learning task. The teacher's role is to facilitate the task and engage the student in finding out about something that was previously unknown or not understood. There is a balance struck between engagement and support with the teacher, and involvement in the task. For students with an avoidant attachment style, there is a disconnect between the student and the teacher. That side of the triangle is essentially missing for these students. The student tends to avoid the relationship with the teacher and instead directs their attention solely to the task. According to Geddes (2006), the relationship with the teacher is full of uncertainty about the availability of acceptance and support. For the teacher, this focus solely on the task can be perceived as the student ignoring their attempts to help them in their learning.

Geddes (2006) suggests that teachers can more effectively support students with an avoidant attachment style by understanding that the relationship between the student and teacher can only be made safe by the presence of the task. Concrete structured activity can be used to reduce the feeling of threat. This type of task primarily engages the left brain functions which can help to keep strong feelings under control. The presence of another child can also have a moderating effect on the intensity of the relationship with the teacher. Thus, working in pairs or small groups may enable these students to feel more able to accept support and moderate their behaviour in class.

At the other end of the attachment spectrum, for students with ambivalent attachment, the connection between teacher and student is the only side of the triangle that exists for them. The student's preoccupation with the relationship with the teacher may leave the task ignored. For teachers, this type of attention-seeking behaviour can be perceived as irritating and intrusive.

But it is important that the teacher remains as the adult in charge. Geddes (2006) suggests it can be helpful to reframe this as the child having an anxious dependence, with a need to control the significant adult who has not been reliably present in earlier life experiences.

Activities that involve turn taking can be helpful, as they model the experience of there being two separate people working alongside each other rather than merging as one. A timer can also be a useful tool to moderate anxiety for short periods. The teacher may even wish to introduce a special transitional object which the student can use to take the place of the teacher for a little while. For example, the teacher giving the student the object and asking them to look after it for them. In this way, the student is also reassured that the teacher will return. Geddes (2006) emphasises that reliable and consistent adult support is essential for students with ambivalent attachment style.

Finally, the minority of students with a disorganised attachment style find difficulty in relating to both the teacher and the learning task. Both the relationship with another and the task itself are perceived as threatening to these students. The relationship with the teacher is filled with uncertainty and is already contaminated before it begins by the unreliability of the student's early attachment figures. On the other hand, the task itself threatens the student's already brittle sense of self-competence. Geddes (2006) recommends that for these students, a collaborative, consistent and committed professional network is needed which can work with them on a long-term programme of interventions.

Lee (2003) summarises criticisms of attachment theory. Harris (1998; cited in Lee, 2003) argues that attachment theory places too much emphasis on the parents' role in children's development. He proposes that peers also have a significant influence on a child's personality, as well as the influence of the child's wider environment. Field (1996; cited in Lee, 2003) asserts that attachment theory has several limitations. One limitation suggested by Field is that the theory focusses on the attachment behaviours with the primary caregiver. However, other attachments are not necessarily characterised by the same type of behaviours. Field also suggests that attachment theory makes an assumption that the mother is the primary attachment figure, when there are also likely to be other people in the child's life, for example, the father or a sibling, who have similarly important attachment relationships with the child at the same time.

Attachment-aware schools (Rose and Gilbert, 2017; Attachment Lead Network, n.d.; Attachment Research Community, n.d.) are schools where there is a whole staff responsibility



and understanding of the impact of attachment needs on students' behaviour. Attachment-aware schools provide specific support for developmental vulnerabilities, including executive functioning, regulation, and psychological development. All of these areas of development can be adversely impacted by attachment issues. However, critics (Hayes, 2014) have raised concerns that a focus on attachment may distract teachers from acquiring knowledge which is required to teach a subject-based curriculum.

Rose, McGuire-Snieckus, Gilbert and McInnes (2019) reported on the Attachment Aware Schools (AAS) project, which was a targeted and collaborative intervention between academics and school-based practitioners. The aim of the AAS project was to promote awareness of attachment among educational practitioners, in relation to student behaviour and learning. Rose et al's (2019) study included over 200 participants from 40 schools in the UK. The findings of the study suggested that there were significant improvements in the students' academic achievements in reading, writing and maths, following the intervention. There were also significant decreases in sanctions, exclusions, and overall difficulties. Whilst this study was on a relatively small scale, the positive findings suggest that this is an area that needs further exploration as it may offer important benefits for many students.

Noor (2011) offers a qualitative exploration of the experiences of a group of secondary school students who engaged with a therapeutic service in school. The students reported valuing the space to express and explore their worries. Noor's (2011) discussion of the experiences of these students highlights the value of case study work in this area of research, as each individual's experience is unique and different.

The next section considers behaviour management in schools in an international context.

## **2.8 Behaviour management in an international context**

It is not only in England that behaviourist principles underpin school behaviour management systems. A study based in Australia, particularly looking at the experience of Indigenous students (Mackie, MacLennan and Shipway, 2017), argued that approaches to school discipline rooted in Behaviourism should be rejected. One of the key issues that this study seeks to investigate is why interventionist behaviour management systems, based on behaviourist principles, are still being applied to the most challenging students who have had multiple school exclusions.

Thomson and Pennacchia (2016) explored behavioural regimes at alternative education settings in England. Alternative education is generally offered to students who have been formally excluded, or are close to formal exclusion, from school. Thomson and Pennacchia (2016) found that many of the settings implemented highly behaviourist systems. This is despite these systems already having failed to change the behaviour of these students in mainstream education.

In a US based study, teachers mainly attributed student misbehaviour to ‘unknown or home factors’ (Cothran, Kulinna and Garrahy, 2009). D’Angelo and Zemanick (2009) describe an alternative education programme in Pennsylvania which has seen success with students who were struggling in mainstream education. The students attended what was known as ‘twilight school’. This programme ran from 3 – 7pm on weekdays and the students were also required to find some form of employment for 20 hours per week. As well as academic lessons, the students also attended weekly group counselling sessions.

In 19 states in the US, corporal punishment is still legal in state schools (Holden, 2015). This practice has been banned in British state schools since 1986. Gershoff and Font (2016) state that over 160,000 children are subject to corporal punishment in US state schools each year. Strauss (2001) defines corporal punishment as the use of physical force intended to cause a child to experience pain and thus correct their misbehaviour. Whilst this controversial practice may ensure short-term compliance, there is evidence that, in the long-term, corporal punishment is associated with poor learning outcomes, significant risk of physical injury, and links with future mental ill-health (Gershoff, 2017). Hand (2019) suggests that the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment has not been empirically established, only that there is no positive association between corporal punishment and internalisation of morals. He concludes that it is not self-evident that the smacking of children is educationally ineffective and that the empirical evidence available is not strong enough to settle the matter (Hand, 2019). Gershoff (2017, p.8) argues that arguments about the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment on changing students’ behaviour should be irrelevant as the practice is ‘a form of violence that violates children’s rights’ and therefore should be banned regardless of whether it is effective or not.

Three countries were chosen to investigate behaviour management practices in more detail in this study: Scotland, the Netherlands, and Bhutan. The reasons for selecting these countries are discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology.

### 2.8.1 Scotland

Despite being geographically and economically similar, Scotland and England have a vastly different approach to exclusions. Scotland has a much lower rate of exclusions from school than England.

Daniels, Thompson and Tawell (2019b) consider how devolution across the United Kingdom (UK) has led to different jurisdictions developing different practices in terms of exclusions. This has meant the UK has moved away from having a shared set of cultural and historical values and beliefs in this area. The policy changes experienced in England, that have created perverse incentives for certain groups of students to be at higher risk of exclusion, were not experienced in the same way in Scotland.

McCluskey, Cole, Daniels, Thompson and Tawell (2019) drew on the findings of the first cross-national study of school exclusion in the four UK jurisdictions, to conduct a detailed analysis of the policy context in Scotland. The latest exclusion figures in Scotland, at the time of this article, showed a record low of only 5 permanent exclusion cases in 2016/17. This sits in stark contrast to England's exclusion figures. Fixed Term exclusions in Scotland are also on a downward trajectory, heading in the opposite direction to those in England which are consistently rising each year. McCluskey et al. (2019) found that schools in Scotland tend to subscribe to an ethos of prevention and that there was clear collaboration on policy between schools and wider agencies. Participants in their study remarked on the shift in Scottish schools towards a deeper understanding of the complexity of students' lives and the needs of vulnerable students in schools. Continued dissonance between policy and practice was also highlighted, but in general the approach taken by Scotland appears to have been effective in reducing the number of students excluded from school.

The next section will consider the school system in the Netherlands.

### 2.8.2 The Netherlands

Continental European countries generally have a lower rate of school exclusion than England. A recent UNICEF report (2013) suggested that well-being and education for Dutch children was rated as being the highest quality in Europe. The Dutch school system looks very different to that of England. Education is compulsory in the Netherlands between the ages of 5 and 16 years. Children usually start school at the age of 4 and receive 8 years of elementary education. At the end of this period, the students take an exam. Based on the results, teachers make a

recommendation about which level of secondary education would be most suitable for each individual child. There are typically four levels of secondary education. Children who thrive on the more vocational options enter a VMBO (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) school. For children who are best suited to follow an academic route, they will either attend a HAVO (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*), which offers a higher general secondary education, or a VWO (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*), which offers a pre-university education. Children who scored particularly high scores may attend a gymnasium, which provides the full VWO curriculum as well as Latin and Ancient Greek.

Students can change between different levels as they progress through their secondary education. For example, if they start off at a HAVO school, they may then progress to a VWO school. This means that students still have the potential to achieve the highest level of education regardless of where they begin at secondary level. This could be particularly beneficial to students who may go through a period of being unmotivated and disengaged with education, as they would still have the opportunity to progress if they later have the desire to do so.

Exclusion statistics for 2016-17 show a stark difference between the exclusion rate in England and in the Netherlands. In this year, the permanent exclusion rate for England was 0.2% compared to only 0.06% in the Netherlands. The difference between the Fixed Term exclusions rate was even higher, with the Netherlands at 0.47% and England at 9.4% (Department for Education, 2018; Inspectorate of Education, 2018).

The Inspectorate of Education (2019) discusses the state of education in the Netherlands for vulnerable students. This includes students who have complex behavioural difficulties, as well as those with diagnosed learning difficulties and disabilities. They highlight that there is a limited overview of groups of vulnerable students in the Netherlands, particularly those who drop out of school early. The report clearly states that all children have the right to a good education.

*Inclusive education means every child gets an education that matches his or her abilities and qualities. By law, all children have the right to a good education, even those who need extra support. The law makes schools responsible for ensuring that this is the case.* (Inspectorate of Education, 2019, p.39)

The report suggests that, despite the low rate of exclusion in the Netherlands, vulnerable students often find limited employment prospects upon leaving school. The Inspectorate of Education says that “the question of whether our education system succeeds in developing the

talents of our vulnerable students remains unanswered. Sometimes, the conditions for doing so are unfavourable” (2019, p.42).

Despite the differences in their education systems and school exclusion rates, England, Scotland and the Netherlands are all reasonably similar Western European countries. The next section moves further afield to discuss the education system in Bhutan and their unique concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

### 2.8.3 Bhutan

Bhutan is a small kingdom situated in the Himalayas. It is to the south of China and the north of India. The majority of the population practice Buddhism and, as such, Buddhist principles are strongly rooted in Bhutan’s culture (Zangmo, 2015).

Bhutan has a policy of educating students holistically to increase their measure of Gross National Happiness (GNH), rather than seeking to raise the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Bhutan’s education system is rooted in its monasteries. It is only recently, in the last few decades, that there has been a move away from monastic education and corporal punishment. From the 1960’s onwards, Bhutan is now introducing a more Western style of education system (Zangmo, 2015). This has the potential to raise issues, as well as opportunities, for both teachers and students. One of the advantages that Bhutan has is the chance to learn from the best practice of other progressive education systems, choosing the practices that fit with the country’s goal of GNH. However, they also have the freedom of rejecting practices that have been shown to be ineffective yet are too embedded in Western schools and society to easily abandon, such as the reliance on extrinsic motivation for behaviour management.

The concept of GNH is a social construct that was first introduced by the Fourth King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk. The Bhutanese Ministry of Education formalised the incorporation of GNH into the curriculum in 2009 (Zangmo, 2015). GNH values focus on striking a balance between materialistic acquisition and the spiritual well-being of each individual. This is in contrast to GDP, which is solely materialistic and consumer oriented. The philosophy of GNH has meant that spiritual and emotional well-being is brought to the fore as a major measurement of the country’s social and economic development success (Zangmo, 2015).

In the English school system, education is often presented as a means to an end. That end is to get a job and start to make an economic contribution to the country. Zangmo (2015, p.16) suggests that ‘the present model of western, urban-centred school-based education is focussed and successful in turning children into efficient corporate human resources rather than curious and open-minded adults’.

Bhutan is attempting to reframe education and provide a more meaningful curriculum. As well as considering the spiritual and emotional well-being of the individual, the GNH infused curriculum also looks at the impact on the local and global community, both for now and for the future (Zangmo, 2015). Schools that follow the GNH philosophy place equal importance on students’ emotional well-being as they do on their academic performance. In contrast to the narrow economic focus of GDP, GNH is measured across nine different domains. These range from psychological welfare and how people use their time, to community vitality and ecological resilience (Tobgay, 2015). There is a strong emphasis within the GNH infused curriculum on collaboration and relationships between people, and on the relationship between people and the environment (Zangmo, 2015).

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory describes how an individual interacts with their environment and the influence that this can have as a child grows and develops (Hampden-Thompson and Galindo, 2017). According to Bronfenbrenner, children are immersed in a number of different environments ranging from home to school to the wider society. Children’s interactions with all of these environments can have an influence on their development.

Hampden-Thompson and Galindo (2017) explored how families’ perceptions of, and interactions with, schools and teachers can have an impact on children’s educational outcomes. They refer to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, describing children as growing within multiple nested systems of influence, all interacting with one another. This idea appears to link with the principles of GNH, which takes a holistic view of each child and their environment. Hampden-Thompson and Galindo’s (2017) study found that a combination of strong family-school relationships and high levels of school satisfaction are both needed to have a positive impact on a child’s academic achievement. Students who have a high level of school satisfaction and a sense of academic achievement are less likely to present with undesirable behaviour and more likely to feel a sense of belonging at school.

Bhutan’s GNH infused philosophy, and the holistic collaborative approach it brings, is similar to that advocated by many alternative approaches to the traditional punitive way of managing

student behaviour. Managing change on the scale that is being attempted within the Bhutanese education system takes time and it requires commitment from the senior leaders of schools. The influence that senior leaders can have on the overall ethos of their school is significant. This is discussed in more depth in the following section.

## **2.9 School ethos and influence of senior leaders**

Senior school leaders (SSLs) have an impact on the overall school ethos. This is why it is important to understand how their experiences can influence their beliefs about how to manage student behaviour in schools. Bennett's (2017) independent review of behaviour in schools looked closely at the approaches that school leaders can take to encourage a school culture that promotes positive behaviour. The review suggests that leaders should focus on whole school culture rather than considering the practices of individual teachers in isolation.

Nooruddin and Baig (2014) explored the perspectives and viewpoints of teachers and students related to the influence of the headteacher and other senior leaders on Behaviour Management policies, procedures and support mechanisms. They conducted research in a secondary school in Karachi Pakistan. Their findings suggested that 97% of teachers and 83% of students felt that senior leaders had an influence on Behaviour Management policies and practice. Many of the teachers (95%) felt that the senior leaders influenced student behaviour management by providing rewards for positive behaviour rather than through consequences for poor behaviour.

Warin (2017) considered how school leaders can create a caring and nurturing whole school ethos. Her research explores how school leaders can communicate the principle of mutual care and inspire commitment from the whole school community. Warin's (2017) comparative study of seven schools in England, which all use the principle and practices of Nurture Groups, suggested that strong leadership based on deep care and an emphasis on ongoing relationships with children are key factors in moving towards the ideal of a whole school ethos of care.

Farouk (2012) explored the self-conscious emotion of guilt and what it can indicate about teachers' moral purpose and their relationships with their students. A phenomenological approach was taken to explore this through interviews with primary school teachers. The findings of the study demonstrate that teachers' beliefs are underpinned by a strong moral purpose and the relationships they have with their students.

The next section considers the process of change that needs to be undertaken for schools to move away from their current policies and practices.

### 2.9.1 Process of change

De Vries, van de Grify, and Jansen (2014) studied how teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching are related to their continuing professional development (CPD) activities. They found that teachers' willingness to participate in CPD reflects how much knowledge they have about alternative behaviour management approaches. In this instance, alternative behaviour management approaches are defined as those that are not punishment based.

Gibbs and Powell (2012) used questionnaires and factor analysis to investigate teachers' individual and collective beliefs and the relationship with the number of students excluded from school. The findings suggest that there is a need for strategies to develop teachers' beliefs and sense of efficacy in relation to their ability to manage children's behaviour successfully. The study contributes to highlighting the importance of understanding and supporting teachers' beliefs in their collective efficacy. This is particularly relevant to teachers' beliefs in their ability to manage student behaviour successfully.

People often find change difficult. Whether this is encouraging change in an individual student's behaviour or implementing change across a whole school behaviour policy, there are bound to be challenges to be overcome. Barriers to change may include: the time needed to implement a new approach, resources such as funding, staff views and beliefs about how behaviour should be responded to, and parental views on how they would like their children's behaviour to be managed. This is of relevance to the thesis topic as making the move towards implementing an alternative approach to behaviour management would require whole-school change.

### **2.10 Addressing gaps in the literature**

The main aim of this study is to explore why schools in England appear to be reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour. This research addresses a gap in the literature as there is a strong evidence base that suggests that punishment-based systems, including school exclusions, are not effective ways to change student behaviour, yet this is still the system adopted by the majority of schools in England. In addition, there is a growing evidence base supporting the effectiveness of alternative approaches to behaviour management. However, these are not widely adopted within English schools. This study aims to identify the reasons why this is and what the perceived barriers are that are arresting innovation in school behaviour management.



In the context of this study, ‘interventionist approaches’ refers to those approaches that make use of explicit reward and punishment systems. It could be argued that all behaviour management approaches can be classed as interventionist in some form, so it is important to be clear about what the term refers to in this context. It is also worth noting that by focussing on England, this study is not intending to take, what is referred to by Gibbs (2018) as, ‘a narrow nationalistic stance’. The focus on England is because the data available in relation to exclusions are only applicable to England, rather than the UK as a whole. In addition, from exploring practices in Scotland for example, it appears that English schools have a particularly high level of school exclusion and use of interventionist behaviour management.

### 2.10.1 Formulating the research questions

After conducting this literature review, research questions were formulated to address the identified gaps in the literature.

There was some consideration by the researcher about whether to use the terms ‘discipline’ or ‘behaviour management’ in the research questions. The concept of discipline can be interpreted in several different ways and initially this was chosen to be included in the research questions as the researcher wished to leave this open for the participants to respond as they understood the word. The surface meaning of the term discipline is generally taken to be compliance with rules, often those imposed by an institution or higher authority. Yet discipline could also be taken to be associated with academic endeavour, for example the discipline of a particular subject.

A third meaning that could be attributed is that of discipline as self-regulation, being able to regulate one’s own emotions and behaviours to take into account different contexts. In some contexts, discipline will encompass all three meanings. For example, in the case of martial arts training, the subject is undertaking an academic endeavour to learn the rules and ways of their chosen martial art, they understand that they need to comply with the instructions given by their more experienced coach, and they have to have to self-regulation and motivation to persevere with something that may take many years to master (Parkes, 2010).

In his discussion of martial arts as related to the concept of discipline, Parkes (2010, p.76) makes an argument for both the ‘constraining and enabling effects of discipline’. As applied to behaviour management in schools, discipline could be argued to constrain the students in terms of their physical movements in time and space, as well as their conduct throughout the school day. Yet conversely it also enables. Without discipline, it would be impossible to coordinate

the mass education of all students. By complying with the rules of the school as institution, the disciplined student is given the opportunity to learn and gain qualifications which will increase the options available to them in their future career.

The barrier is raised when it becomes apparent that there is a core minority of students who are unable to comply with the institutional rules, lack the self-regulation to moderate their own emotions and behaviour, and see little value in academic endeavour. Often strategies utilising some form of extrinsic motivation, for example school reward schemes offering stickers, certificates, or vouchers, are employed to try and engage these students in education. The success of these schemes depends on what is viewed as a positive outcome. External motivators are very effective at getting people to comply with someone else's requests (Kohn, 1993), so the child offered a tangible reward to stay sitting in their seat for the whole lesson may well be more motivated to do this. But this approach does nothing to help that child develop their self-regulation skills or their intrinsic interest in learning. The question needs to be asked about what form of 'discipline' schools are striving to achieve and what would be most beneficial to these students in preparing them for their future lives. For the core minority of students who have not learnt how to self-regulate their own emotions and behaviour, the offer of a tangible reward may even increase future difficulties when these students leave school and enter the world of work where the same level of encouragement and support is unlikely to continue to be available.

However, feedback from pilot discussions with school staff suggested that 'behaviour management' was the more commonly-used term. The term 'discipline' when used in relation to school behaviour had negative connotations, producing images of the archetypal Victorian teacher administering corporal punishment to terrified students. In addition, anecdotally, based on the researcher's professional experience working in schools, it could be argued that it is not a word generally used within the education profession in modern times.

The decision was made by the researcher to use the term 'behaviour management' in the formulation of the research questions. An overarching research question was decided upon, as detailed in the following section.

### 2.10.2 Conclusion of literature review

This literature review has identified gaps in the literature on behaviour management and different approaches that can be implemented in schools. Critiques of the behaviourist roots of the current predominant behaviour management system in English schools suggest that this is

not an effective system for all students. The effects of rewards and punishment on student behaviour have been discussed. Findings suggest that rewards for positive behaviour, whilst often preferable to a punitive response for undesirable behaviour, can be demotivating for students. The negative effects of punishment, in particular the toxicity of the use of shame, have also been discussed. The impact of school exclusions extends beyond that of the individual student, with ripples having an impact on parents, the rest of the school community, and society as a whole. The research suggests that school exclusion can have an impact on a student's long-term life prospects.

Mental health is a timely topic in schools, particularly due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. This applies to both students and teachers. Teacher mental health is especially key with the current crisis in teacher recruitment and retention in English schools. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has added to the difficulties teachers are facing as a profession (Kim and Asbury, 2020).

Alternative approaches to behaviour management tend to focus on collaborative work and have more of a focus on empathy, than traditional punitive responses. This literature review has explored six of the more well-known alternative approaches, namely: Restorative Practice, Collaborative and Proactive Solutions, Growth Mindset, Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Intervention and Support, and Attachment-based strategies. Evidence bases for the different approaches vary, with some being more extensively researched than others.

Comparisons between the education systems and the usual approach to behaviour management used in English schools compared to schools in Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan have been considered, looking at similarities and differences.

The importance of the whole school ethos on the way student behaviour is managed has been explored. The influence of SSLs on the school ethos has been highlighted. Barriers and opportunities within the process of change have also been discussed.

Following this review of the literature, this study will explore why punitive approaches are still being used as the default approach in many English schools, leaving schools reluctant to use alternative approaches. There is an expectation that SSLs are likely to look favourably on alternative approaches that promise to deliver positive student behaviour. However, there is likely to be a balance needed between the effectiveness of the approach and the amount of resources that are needed to implement it, both in terms of finances and time.

Anticipated barriers to adopting alternative approaches include: schools being wary of deviating from Ofsted's focus on clearly regimented behaviour policies, lack of knowledge about alternative approaches on behalf of the senior leaders and staff, and a lack of time and resources which would be required to implement a new approach.

### 2.10.3 Research questions

The main research question (RQ) for this study is:

- Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?

This has been split into three sub-questions to make the project clearer. The three sub-research questions which this study aims to answer are:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?
- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

This chapter has provided an overview of the relevant research literature, identifying gaps and giving rise to the formulation of research questions. The next chapter will now describe the methodology that will be used for this research.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology adopted for the present study which focuses on the value of rich qualitative data and embracing individual experience. This study is a timely one as behaviour management in schools is a topic rarely out of the media (Lightfoot, 2020; Sellgren, 2020; Carlin, 2019). There may also be implications for student behaviour as schools return after pandemic lockdowns.

Anecdotally from her professional experience, the researcher has found that it is also a topic that generates strong opinions from the public, as well as professionals working within the education sector. Moore et al. (2019) highlight the fact that the majority of people in the education sector tend to have a view on what behaviour management is, the type of approach that should be used, and an idea that there should be more being done. Given this multitude of opinions from a diverse range of stakeholders and outside observers, it is unsurprising that there is little consensus around how undesirable behaviour should be managed in schools. Therefore, personal experience is important to capture in undertaking this study.

Considering the experiences, perceptions and beliefs of senior school leaders (SSLs) enables an insight into the impact that the experiences of individuals can have on the approach taken to whole-school Behaviour Management policies. SSLs have the ability to shape behaviour policies and the ethos of the school as a whole. Their individual experiences will have an impact on how they choose to do this. For example, a positive experience of working with Restorative Practice may make an individual SSL more likely to promote a restorative ethos in their school rather than a punitive one.

#### 3.0.1 Research design

A mixed method approach was taken to answering the research questions posed by this study. A number of data collection methods were employed to answer each of the research questions (Appendix A). Data were collected during the period between May 2015 and July 2018. This was a longer period than initially anticipated as the researcher took ten months' maternity leave during 2017. The timeline for the collection of data using different methods can be seen in Appendix B.

The main aspect of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with senior leaders in English schools. Fourteen participants were recruited from mainstream primary (n=3) and

secondary schools (n=5), Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) (n=3), special schools (n=1) and independent schools (n=2). These interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), an idiographic approach which will be described in more detail later in this chapter. Although a similar approach to thematic analysis, IPA was chosen rather than thematic analysis because the framework for an IPA analysis lends itself to a more thorough examination of each individual case than could be achieved by using thematic analysis. IPA studies usually include only a small sample of participants. This is to enable the researcher to focus on revealing something about the experience of each individual involved in the study through conducting an in-depth analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009).

It was decided that qualitative data would be best suited to answer the research question about senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions, as this explores concepts that are not easily translated into quantitative data or statistical analysis. The researcher felt that experience is something that is best explored through rich in-depth data analysis and individual cases. This study considered the experiences of those who are employed in senior positions in schools and have the power to influence the way in which undesirable student behaviour is responded to. Through this exploration, it was intended that a light would be shone on this particular part of the systemic structure and in doing so, this would assist us in illuminating the whole. Identifying common themes among the motivations, attitudes, and barriers perceived by 'decision-makers' in schools will not only offer suggestions to overcome or challenge more persistent barriers to change but will also open the door to the opportunity for good practice to be identified, with the potential for this to be disseminated and embraced by others.

A pilot study was conducted at one school before beginning the main data collection phase. The aim of this was to evaluate the proposed methods of data collection. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

In addition, data were also collected through online surveys using the survey tool, Qualtrics. An online survey was sent by email to headteachers at a selection of mainstream primary (n=150) and secondary (n=150) schools, as well as all PRUs in England listed on the Ofsted website at the time of sending the survey (n=252) (Ofsted, 2017). The purpose of this was to gauge the general level of knowledge held by SSLs about alternative behaviour management approaches. It also aimed to gain an indication of the prevailing attitude towards these alternative approaches, as well as identifying perceived barriers to change. The response rate was 14.33% (n=43) for the mainstream secondary and primary school survey and 33.33%

(n=84) for the PRU survey. The survey data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

An international comparison, exploring behaviour management approaches in countries outside of England, was conducted. The three countries chosen were Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan. The reason for selecting these countries is described in more detail later in this chapter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SSLs in Scotland (n=5) and school leaders, teachers and academics in the Netherlands (n=5). These interviews were analysed using IPA, in the same way as the interviews from English school leaders.

Due to difficulties recruiting suitable participants in Bhutan, it was not possible to conduct interviews for this study. Instead an online survey using Qualtrics was completed by SSLs at schools in Bhutan (n=4). These data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

The final part of the study involved a case study approach being taken to investigate students' perceptions of the behaviour management system at their school. An independent preparatory school approached the researcher with a valuable opportunity for collaboration. The Deputy Headteacher wished to find out more about how the students perceived the way in which undesirable behaviour was managed in the school. The researcher felt that this was a valuable opportunity to gather data which could support the aim of this study, as well as a chance to have a meaningful impact with this research within the school itself. It is acknowledged that an independent preparatory school is a different type of setting to a mainstream state funded school, but the researcher felt that the methods of behaviour management that were being used were based on similar principles. It is possible that the data could be different from students at an independent preparatory school to that of a mainstream state funded school, as their experience is of a school that generally has ready funding available and a supportive parent community. However, this could equally be said of the difference between a well-resourced mainstream school in an affluent area with supportive families, compared to one that was struggling with funding in a deprived area where parents are not supportive of the importance of education. To clarify, these are examples and the researcher is not suggesting that all schools in deprived areas are underfunded or have unsupportive parent communities. However, the point to be made here is that this is a case study and as such, there will always be limitations and differences between different cases that could have been chosen. The researcher chose to include this school as it was a good opportunity to gather data on the views of students with

guaranteed access from a gate keeper, as the Deputy Head. Focus groups were carried out with the students (n=24) and these were analysed using thematic analysis.

Each of the data collection methods used in this study has been briefly described. The following sections of this chapter will now discuss each in turn in more detail.

### **3.1 Interviews**

Fourteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with SSLs in mainstream primary and secondary schools, independent schools, PRUs, and special schools. The interviews took between 20 minutes and 1 hour each. The exact role of each SSL who participated in the research varied from school to school. Participant job titles included Headteacher, Executive Principal, Deputy Headteacher, and Teacher in Charge, among others. The key criteria for selection as an interview participant was that their current position, or past role (if no longer working directly in a school environment), involved making decisions about the behaviour management approach adopted within the school, whether that was at a strategic level or as a day-to-day management role.

The interviews were analysed using IPA, which was chosen as it is an approach that examines how people make sense of their life experiences (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). It was intended that this research project would provide an insight into how SSLs' past experiences and held beliefs influence their approach to behaviour management decisions. The idiographic nature of IPA is ideal for focussing on each individual case. It enables an examination of the many elements that will have an influence over the general ethos of each school leader, as well as on their key decisions such as whether or not to exclude students from the school. Allowing the interviews to flow as the participant talks and reflects on their experiences enabled overarching themes to be identified by the researcher from the data during analysis without the constraint of trying to fit them into an existing framework.

Whilst there was an interview schedule with suggested questions and prompts (Appendix C), this was used as a guide rather than a rigid structure for the interview. IPA recognises that the researcher can only access the participant's experience through the participant's own account of it and therefore the sense that the researcher makes of the data is 'second order' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). It is, of necessity, interpretative as the researcher attempts to make meaning from the participant's attempts to make meaning from their own experiences and their perceptions of these experiences.



### 3.1.1 Access and informed consent

Participants were recruited through networking at conferences, existing professional links, and contact from potential participants following publications by the researcher. Where the interviews took place in the school, access to the school was facilitated by the participants themselves, as they were all SSLs and had the authority to allow this. On one occasion, the interview took place outside of the school and the researcher met with the participant in a university room. This was for the convenience of the participant.

All participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix D) before taking part in the interview. The study was fully explained to all participants and they had the opportunity to ask questions before and after the interview. It was made clear to all that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. None of the participants chose to withdraw from the study.

### 3.1.2 Participants and their schools

Fourteen participants were recruited from eleven different schools. Three of the schools were mainstream secondary schools, three were mainstream primary schools, two were secondary PRUs, one was a special school, and two were independent schools.

To clarify the use of the term ‘special school’, special schools in the UK cater for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Special schools with students aged 11 years and older can specialise in 1 of 4 areas of Special Educational Need: Communication and interaction; Cognition and learning; Social, emotional and mental health; and Sensory and physical needs (Gov.uk, 2019).

Each school was allocated a code to identify them in a way that kept the names of the schools anonymous. The table below (Table 2) gives further details of the participating schools. All of these details were correct at the time of the interviews taking place. It is recognised that in the intervening time some of these details may have changed, such as the number of students on roll, whether a school is an academy or Local Authority (LA) funded, and the Ofsted rating. The details were all taken from publicly available sources, including the schools’ own websites and the Ofsted website.

**Table 2: Details of participating schools**

School code	Type of school	Age range (years)	Number of students on roll	Mixed or single gender	General location	Ofsted rating	Academy status
S1	Mainstream secondary	11-16	1200	Mixed	South England	Good	Academy
S2	Mainstream secondary	11-18	1325	Mixed	North England	Requires improvement	LA maintained
S3	Mainstream secondary	11-18	1120	Boys only	South England	Outstanding	Academy
P1	Mainstream primary	3-11	304	Mixed	North England	Good	Community
P2	Mainstream primary	3-11	465	Mixed	South England	Good	LA maintained
P3	Mainstream primary	3-11	570	Mixed	North England	Good	Academy
A1	Pupil Referral Unit	14-16	91	Mixed	South England	Good	LA maintained
A2	Pupil Referral Unit	14-16	62	Mixed	North England	Good	LA maintained
I1	Independent Preparatory	8-13	355	Mixed	North England	Not applicable	Independent
I2	Independent senior	13-19	570	Mixed	North England	Not applicable	Independent
SS1	Special school	2-19	185	Mixed	South England	Good	LA maintained

The schools that were included in this research were selected due to the individual participants being employed in these settings. However, it was ensured that the sample included a mixture of schools from different locations, of different sizes and types, with varying Ofsted ratings and academy statuses. This meant that views were being gathered from a heterogeneous sample, rather than all the schools sharing a particular characteristic in common.

Ten of the participants were male and four were female. All participants were allocated a fictional name to ensure anonymity while being able to refer to the participants in an easily recognised way. It was felt that fictional names were more appropriate than using numerical codes when dealing with individual participants. The table below (Table 3) gives further details of individual participants. Again, all of these details were correct at the time of the interviews taking place and it is recognised that some details may have changed since then, such as participants' changing to an alternative role, moving to another school, or retiring. These details were given by the participants themselves. Each participant was asked to fill in a brief demographics questionnaire at the time of their interview.

**Table 3: Details of individual interview participants**

Month of interview	Fictional participant name	Current job role	School code	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range (years)	Qualified Teacher Status?	Years working in education	Years in current role
May 2015	Oliver	Consultant	n/a	Male	No answer	51-60	Yes	36-40	1-5
June 2015	Thomas	Deputy Headteacher	S2	Male	White British	51-60	Yes	31-35	6-10
June 2015	Henry	Headteacher	S2	Male	White	31-40	Yes	16-20	Less than 1
June 2015	Jessica	Teacher in Charge	A1	Female	White British	Over 60	Yes	16-20	11-15
October 2015	Amelia	Deputy Headteacher	P1	Female	White British	41-50	Yes	11-15	1-5
November 2015	Sophie	Headteacher	P2	Female	White British	51-60	Yes	36-40	1-5
January 2016	Daniel	Executive Principal	P3	Male	White British	41-50	Yes	21-25	1-5
January 2016	Rosie	Headteacher	A2	Female	White British	41-50	Yes	16-20	1-5
January 2016	Charles	Lead Behaviour Officer	A2	Male	White British	21-30	No	11-15	1-5
January 2016	George	Headmaster	I1	Male	No answer	41-50	Yes	21-25	6-10
February 2016	James	Headmaster	S3	Male	No answer	31-40	Yes	16-20	1-5
April 2016	William	Headmaster	I2	Male	British	41-50	No	21-25	6-10
April 2016	Joseph	Deputy Headteacher	S1	Male	White British	51-60	Yes	26-30	6-10
November 2018	Edward	Headteacher	SS1	Male	White British	41-50	Yes	21-25	Less than 1

### 3.1.3 Content analysis

A content analysis of the Behaviour Management policies of the participating schools was conducted. As the criteria for the interview participants being included in this study involved having significant responsibility for the Behaviour Management policy at their school, the researcher felt that it would be of interest to investigate how far the content and language of these policies were consistent with the interview discussions. A clear overlap between the content of the policy and the content of the interview would indicate that the values of the senior leader were being embedded within the school via the policy process.

While senior leaders have a significant influence on the ethos of a school, the written behaviour policy of the school, and the language used within this policy, is also likely to have an impact on how staff manage challenging behaviour. This is explored through a brief content analysis of the Behaviour Management policies of a selection of schools (n=8). These schools are the workplaces of the English school interview participants. The selection comprises three mainstream primary schools, three mainstream secondary schools, and two PRUs.

The Behaviour Management policy documents were all publicly available on the school websites. The independent schools and the special school, who had participants involved in the interviews, are not included in this content analysis as their behaviour policies were not publicly available. The researcher decided to work with documents that were freely accessible to the public, rather than specifically requesting information from the schools.

The content analysis explored how the policies use language in relation to behaviour management so that it can be considered whether this corresponded with how the senior leaders at the school talked about their experiences and beliefs in their interviews. The content of the policies, in addition to the language used within them, was analysed thematically to highlight the approach that each school advocated when dealing with challenging behaviour. An inductive analysis was conducted on each policy individually, with key words being noted. The identified themes were then compared across the group to consider similarities and differences between schools.

### 3.1.4 Transcription and analysis

All the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. This gave the researcher the opportunity to listen closely to the interviews on numerous occasions and become familiar with the data.

As a result of the pilot study, although all the interviews in the main data collection phase were focussed on the same themes, the questions asked and the order in which they were discussed varied between participants depending on the direction in which they took the interview. A limitation of this is that the participants' answers cannot be compared alongside each other. However, this is not the aim of IPA methodology. Each interview was analysed in-depth on its own merit and the emerging themes from each interview were compared across the clusters of schools.

Each of the interviews was analysed using IPA, which is described in detail in the following section.

### **3.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)**

IPA was chosen as the most suitable approach to analysis of the individual interviews as the intention was to examine how SSLs make sense of their experiences of different behaviour management systems. This chimes with the intention of IPA, stated by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), to examine how people make sense of their life experiences. The nature of IPA enables an idiographic focus to be held on each individual case. This provides the opportunity to explore the many different factors which have an influence over the key decisions of each SSL and the general school ethos they seek to promote in their setting.

IPA requires the researcher to work at multiple levels of constructing and clustering emergent themes (Embeita, 2019). When working with multiple cases, intra-case themes are first developed through exploratory comments. Pattern recognition then enables the identification of inter-case themes which are common across multiple interviews. The researcher then combines the data with their interpretation of it, in order to produce a coherent narrative situated within the wider context (Embeita, 2019).

There are three main theoretical underpinnings to the IPA methodology; phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Oxley, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). These will each be examined in turn in the following sections.

### 3.2.1 Epistemology

IPA is not constrained within one particular epistemological position. Gil-Rodriguez and Hefferon (2015) suggest practicing an ‘epistemological openness’, allowing individual researchers to make a decision about which is the most appropriate stance to take. The epistemological position taken in this study is that of the critical realistic stance.

This position was taken as it was felt that this fitted with the ‘double hermeneutic’ lenses, acknowledged by IPA, where the experience itself is first interpreted by the participant and then filtered through the further interpretation of the researcher. The critical realist position accepts and acknowledges that this process is taking place. However, this position also recognises that the interpretation of the experience is actually linked to the objective reality of the experience. This is an important distinction between the epistemological position of critical realism and contextual constructivism, which are the two positions most commonly taken by IPA studies (Oxley, 2016). In contrast to critical realism, contextual constructivism takes the stance that there is no objective reality and all experience is perceived subjectively.

### 3.2.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology was first developed by Husserl in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was focussed on the philosophical study of ‘being’ (Gil-Rodriguez and Hefferon, 2015). Today the term ‘phenomenology’ refers to both a philosophical movement and a range of research methods (Oxley, 2016). Smith et al. (2009, p. 12) highlight the emphasis which Husserl placed on engaging directly with phenomena, arguing that we should ‘go back to the things themselves’. In order to achieve this, Husserl developed steps, which he referred to as ‘reductions’, involving the researcher ‘bracketing’ their preconceptions and pre-existing knowledge to attempt to get to the core essence of a phenomenon (Gil-Rodriguez and Hefferon, 2015).

Husserl describes the way in which the researcher is enabled to adopt a ‘phenomenological attitude’ requiring a ‘reflective move’:

*Focussing our experiencing gaze on our own psychic life necessarily takes place as reflection, as a turning about of a glance which had previously been directed elsewhere. Every experience can be subject to such reflection, as can indeed every manner in which*

*we occupy ourselves with any real or ideal objects – for instance, thinking, or in the modes of feeling and will, valuing and striving.* (Husserl, 1927; cited in Smith et al., 2009, p.12).

It is recognised that putting aside one's own interpretation of the world is not easy, making it difficult to apply Husserl's 'reductions' in a practical sense (Oxley, 2016). Heidegger argues that it is not possible to achieve the reductions at all as we always draw our understanding of the world from our own position. He suggested that the closest we can get to understanding the essence of a phenomenon is through interpretation (Smith et al., 2009).

'Heidegger's work expressing phenomenology as explicitly interpretative with deep connections to hermeneutics is key to IPA, which, as the name suggests, is an interpretative and phenomenological approach' (Oxley, 2016, p. 56). IPA aims to translate the core ideas from different philosophical perspectives on phenomenology into a practical research methodology (Oxley, 2016). Therefore, it does not attempt to achieve the reductions suggested by Husserl but instead focusses on capturing the lived experience of specific individuals (Gil-Rodriguez and Hefferon, 2015).

### 3.2.3 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutic phenomenology differs from Husserl's reductions as it recognises that the researcher's understanding of the world is inextricably linked to the way in which they interpret the participants' experiences. This means that it is essential for the researcher to take a continually reflective attitude, acknowledging that their own pre-existing knowledge and preconceptions will be actively brought to the research process (Oxley, 2016).

One of the difficulties with this is that the researcher may not be able to immediately recognise or articulate their own preconceptions. Smith et al. (2009, p.25) describes the moment when a researcher is confronted with something different to their own preconception, leading to a moment of surprise, as a 'more enlivened form of bracketing'. Throughout the IPA analysis, this is a cyclical process whereby the researcher continues to uncover their preconceptions as they increase their understanding through encounters with the phenomenon they are examining. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that this is a process that can only ever be partially completed.

The relationship between the researcher and the participant recounting their experiences is complex, as the researcher may not become aware of their preconceptions until they begin to

interpret the data. It is important for the researcher to remain open to the idea of uncovering further preconceptions throughout the IPA process (Oxley, 2016). Smith et al. (2009) describe the relationship, in which the researcher discovers challenges to their preconceptions as they engage with the data, as the hermeneutic circle.

As the researcher for this study also works as a professional in the education sector, there is acknowledgement of the challenges that this dual role may create. The researcher knew some of the schools involved in the study in her professional capacity, whereas others were not known prior to their participation in the study. This is discussed further in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion.

At the core of IPA is an intention to understand the whole by looking at the part, but in order to understand the part the researcher also needs to look closely at the whole (Smith et al., 2009). ‘The whole can, in this case, be defined as the researcher’s ongoing biography and the part as the researcher’s encounter with the participant’ (Oxley, 2016, p.57). Smith et al. (2009) suggest that the interpretation offered by the researcher may shed light on an aspect of the experience which the participant does not or cannot explicitly share. Oxley (2016) describes how the phenomenon may be seen as hidden within the participant’s account and only given the opportunity to emerge through the immersion of the researcher in the data. The researcher then has the responsibility of writing the phenomenon into a coherent narrative.

#### 3.2.4 Idiography

An idiographic approach is central to the IPA methodology, which emphasises the importance of the individual case and the experiences of each individual. Generally, IPA studies focus on a small sample of participants, as in this study which includes only 14 interview participants in the main data collection phase from English schools. The participants for IPA studies must be drawn from a homogenous ‘expert group’ which makes them particularly well placed to answer the research questions (Gil-Rodriguez and Hefferon, 2015). In this study, all the interview participants are SSLs who have a significant influence on the behaviour policies implemented in their schools.

Traditionally in Psychology, a nomothetic approach tends to be taken with the aim of establishing a generalisable claim. In contrast IPA is focussed on understanding the individual and the particular details of their experiences. Smith (2004), the key developer of the IPA methodology,



does not advocate the pursuit of generalisation, instead arguing that each case has intrinsic value in its own right. However, returning to the idea of examining the part to fully understand the whole, findings from IPA studies can potentially be used to illuminate findings from existing nomothetic research (Oxley, 2016). Although not generalisable, individual cases are valuable as they present the opportunity to examine each case in depth. Within the context of this research, a nomethic approach would miss the intricacy of each individual's experience and how this has come to shape their views on behaviour management. By discovering the complexities and layers of each individual's views, this research will assist us in fully understanding existing and future nomethic research in the same field.

### 3.2.5 Limitations of IPA

The most obvious limitation of IPA is the small sample size and lack of generalisability. However, this need not be a significant concern as long as this is recognised and acknowledged by the researcher. The intention of the interviews conducted with the SSLs is not to generalise to all school leaders, but to examine their individual experiences and explore the factors that influence the development of the school ethos they seek to promote within their setting. The other data collection methods used within this study add breadth to the data gathered, complementing the depth gained through the insight of the IPA analysis.

Paley (2017) critiques IPA as a methodology, arguing that it has not been subjected to detailed critical analysis and that phenomenology in general has a tradition of discouraging critics to ask questions. Paley (2017) offers suggestions for an alternative way of conducting phenomenology as qualitative research, but this leads the researcher away from undertaking IPA and becomes another method of its own. Paley's main concern with IPA is what he perceives as the ambiguity over how IPA analysis is carried out. However, IPA researchers are generally transparent in how they reach their findings and Smith et al. (2009) give a clear introduction to the IPA methodology for those new to the field. For this study, the researcher has attempted to clearly explain the IPA methodology in this chapter and attempts to achieve transparency in how the findings were reached in the results chapter later in this thesis.

The next section will give an overview of the online survey, which gathered views from SSLs about behaviour management approaches.

### **3.3 Online survey**

#### **3.3.1 Survey design**

It was decided to use an online survey to gather a wide range of views from SSLs about alternative behaviour management approaches. The purpose of the survey was to gauge the general level of knowledge that SSLs held about alternative approaches, as well as gaining an indication of the prevailing attitude towards these and the perceived barriers to change. Conducting the survey online offered a number of advantages over a telephone survey. Online surveys are less time consuming than telephone surveys as well as enabling the participants to respond at a time convenient to them rather than being interrupted by a telephone call (Evans and Mathur, 2005). The disadvantages are that online surveys do not allow for the personal interaction that would take place during a telephone survey, but as the questions being asked were standardised to allow for easy comparison, this was not felt to be necessary. Online surveys also offer a number of advantages over mail surveys, such as being less expensive and less time consuming. It is much easier to collate the results as these are automatically gathered by Qualtrics, rather than having to rely on participants returning their completed paper questionnaires. It allows a greater degree of control over the order in which participants see the questions and can ensure that the responses are completely anonymous (Evans and Mathur, 2005).

The same survey questions were used for mainstream schools and for PRUs so that the results could be easily compared. Appendix E shows the questions that were included in the survey for the current study.

#### **3.3.2 Participants and responses**

The researcher initially attempted to send the online survey by email to all Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in England (n=287). The email addresses were taken from the Ofsted website. Of the 287 emails, 34 were undeliverable or bounced back. This was due to the correct email addresses being unobtainable despite attempts to check these on the school website and to contact the school. It is possible that some PRUs may have closed down since their last Ofsted report. This was ascertained to be the case for one of the settings with an unobtainable email address. Delivery was successful to 252 PRUs.

The initial email with the survey link was sent on 22 November 2016 and the survey remained open until 21 December 2016. However, the researcher only received 11 (4.3%) responses out of the 252. This may have been due to the time of year as the time leading up to the Christmas break can be very busy for schools. Two further attempts were made to increase the response rate over the academic year 2016/17, with a second email being sent in January 2017 and a third in July 2017. Overall, 84 participants, out of the 252 reached by email, completed the survey. This increased the response rate to 33.33%.

The online survey was also sent by email to selected mainstream primary (n=150) and secondary (n=150) schools. Responses were received from 21 primary schools and 17 secondary schools. In addition, responses were received from five other participants who worked in alternative settings; namely, middle schools, Free Schools, and Voluntary Aided primary schools. The email addresses were taken from the Ofsted website. The schools that had been inspected by Ofsted most recently, as of June 2017 when the mailing list was compiled, were selected for each sector. Initially an email was sent to each school in July 2017 and the survey remained open for two weeks, with a reminder being sent to each school after one week. However, this resulted in a low response rate of only 8% (n=24). In an attempt to increase the response rate, a further email was sent to each school in July 2018 and the survey was open for a further two weeks, with a reminder sent after one week. Overall the researcher received 43 responses, which was a response rate of 14.33%.

The link to the online survey was sent as a personalised email to the headteacher of the school. Where possible, the email was sent to the headteacher's email address but in some cases this was not available and the email was sent to the main school email address with a request to forward it on to the headteacher. To try and increase the response rate, a reminder email was sent to all potential participants one week before the survey was closed.

### 3.3.3 Analysis

The survey results were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to examine descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Where the survey responses lent themselves to numerical categorisation, descriptive statistics were used to present the results. For answers that were open-ended and qualitative in nature, the data were analysed using thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This qualitative analysis related specifically to open-ended questions on participants' beliefs about the effectiveness of their school behaviour policy. The

researcher reviewed the qualitative data, initially making a note of key words that indicated a positive belief or negative belief about the behaviour policy and then seeking patterns within the data. Themes were identified based on positive or negative beliefs about the effectiveness of participants' school behaviour policy. For example, consistency was a recurrent theme across participants. This was either mentioned in a positive light, that staff and behaviour management were consistent, or from a negative aspect, that staff and therefore behaviour management were inconsistent. Initially key words were noted, such as consistency and inconsistency. A pattern of recurrence was identified and the differences in the negative and positive beliefs were highlighted within the theme of consistency.

The next section of this chapter will now move on to describe how the study has incorporated an international comparison, looking at behaviour management approaches used in schools in countries other than England.

### **3.4 International comparison**

This part of the study involved an international comparison to explore behaviour management approaches used in schools in countries other than England. The three countries chosen were Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan. Each of these will be discussed in turn in this section. The aim of these three case studies was to explore how alternative approaches are used in an international context so that it may be possible to suggest how English schools could benefit from adopting and adapting best practice from other contexts.

#### **3.4.1 Scotland**

Scotland was chosen as it is in close geographical proximity to England and similar economically, yet the number of school exclusions is significantly lower in Scotland than it is in England. Restorative approaches are also implemented more widely in Scottish schools. To explore this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with SSLs in Scotland (n=5). Two of the participants were from mainstream secondary schools, two were from mainstream primary schools, and one was an external education consultant who had worked closely with a number of schools in Scotland to implement restorative approaches. All participants were required to sign a consent form before taking part in the interview (Appendix D). These interviews were analysed using IPA, in the same way as the interviews with the English SSLs.

### 3.4.2 The Netherlands

It was also decided to include a case study of school leaders and teachers in the Netherlands. In a recent report by UNICEF (2013), it was suggested that well-being and education for Dutch children was rated the highest in Europe. In general, there are low levels of school exclusions across continental European countries in comparison with the number of school exclusions occurring each year in English schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school leaders, teachers and academics in the Netherlands (n=5). All interviews were conducted in English and no translation was needed. All participants were required to sign a consent form before taking part in the interview, which was conducted in person (Appendix D). The participants came from a diverse range of backgrounds; one was a headteacher at a secondary school, one was a teacher at a special school for students with behavioural difficulties, one was currently working in Higher Education and talked about her experiences as a school student in the Netherlands, one was an *orthopedagogue* who works with a range of therapeutic interventions in a similar way to an educational psychotherapist in England, and the final participant was an academic who had conducted research in a similar area on behaviour management in schools. Four of the interviews were carried out in person, as were all the other interviews in this study. However, it was necessary for one of the interviews to be carried out over Skype due to participant availability. This was the interview with the headteacher at the secondary school. The interviews were all analysed using IPA, in the same way as the interviews for the English and Scottish SSLs.

### 3.4.3 Bhutan

Bhutan was chosen for a case study because the country has an interesting policy of educating holistically for Gross National Happiness (GNH), rather than seeking to increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As a country, the education system has only moved away from monastic education and corporal punishment in the last few decades. They are now seeking to implement a more Western style education which has raised issues for both teachers and students, but they have the opportunity to learn from the best practice of other progressive education systems without the burden of a system of extrinsic motivation already being embedded in schools and society.

Due to difficulties recruiting suitable participants in Bhutan, it was not possible to conduct interviews for this study. Instead an online survey using Qualtrics was sent to SSLs at schools in Bhutan (n=14). There were four responses (28.6%). The email addresses were taken from the

website for the Ministry of Education for the Royal Government of Bhutan. The survey was conducted in English and no translation was necessary. The link to the online survey was sent in a personalised email on 10 January 2017 and the survey remained open until 17 February 2017. A reminder was sent by email one week before the survey was due to close. Two responses were received, making a response rate of 14.3%. In an attempt to increase the response rate, a further email was sent on 25 June 2017 and the survey remained open until 9 July 2017. Two further responses were received, making a total of four participants with a response rate of 28.6%.

The questions included in the survey can be seen in Appendix F. The data from the completed survey were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, as described earlier in this chapter for the analysis of the online survey sent to English schools.

The next section will describe how the researcher explored student perceptions of behaviour management by conducting focus groups at a case study school.

### **3.5 Student perceptions of behaviour management**

#### 3.5.1 School context

The school involved in this case study was an independent day and boarding preparatory school in Northern England for boys and girls aged 8 – 13 years old. There were 350 students on roll. The school was last inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in 2014. At that time, 31 students were boarders and the rest were day students. There were 15 students identified as having SEN and 8 students who had English as an Additional Language. The ISI report states that all requirements were met in full for the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

Focus groups were conducted to gain student perceptions on their current behaviour management system. It was decided to conduct focus groups as a way of obtaining the students' view in-depth. Focus groups were chosen instead of individual interviews as this enabled more students to be involved in the case study within the time available, thus ensuring that there was the potential for a wider range of views.

It is recognised that there are clear limitations in the use of a case study. Focus groups at one school will not be generalisable to students' perceptions of behaviour management in all schools. It cannot be said that one school alone can represent the perceptions of all students in all schools with all

behaviour management systems. However, to gain a representative sample of student views would be a large-scale undertaking and that is not the main focus of this piece of research. It is also recognised that as the case study school is an independent school, the data cannot necessarily be said to apply to state schools. Indeed, it cannot even be said to represent other independent schools, although there are likely to be more similarities between the case study school and other independent schools, for example in terms of increased funding, than may be present in state schools. However, rather than attempting to acquire generalisable data, this part of the research was intended to give some insight into how these students perceive the behaviour management systems at their school. As well as being a sample of convenience, the case study school used a system of rewards and punishments, in combination with some use of restorative approaches and mentoring. This appeared to be an appropriate mixture of systems to get students' opinions on. It was felt that a case study approach would give the opportunity for an in-depth insight into that particular school and would be in keeping with the IPA approach taken to the senior leader interviews.

### 3.5.2 Access and informed consent

Access to the school was facilitated by the Deputy Headteacher, who contacted the researcher with an opportunity for collaborative work. The school wished to gather information about the students' perspective on the current behaviour management system implemented in the school.

The Deputy Headteacher gave informed consent on behalf of the school (Appendix G). Consent forms were sent to the parents of all potential participants (Appendix H), which needed to be signed before a student could participate. The implications for participation in the study were explained to all potential participants and they were then asked if they would like to volunteer to participate in a focus group. The students who wished to volunteer were asked to sign a consent form themselves (Appendix I), in addition to the consent given by their parents and the school.

### 3.5.3 Focus groups

In collaboration with the Deputy Headteacher, it was decided to conduct one focus group per year group. This gave five focus groups in total. It was intended that each of the five focus groups would contain between five to eight students, as this was a manageable number. However, there was only

one participant from Year 8 who volunteered to take part, so this student was invited to join the Year 7 focus group. This meant that in the end, four focus groups were conducted.

To recruit participants for the focus groups, the Deputy Headteacher asked for volunteers from one mentor group from each house. The school is split into 5 houses of about 75 students in each house, from all 5 year groups. Each house is then sub-divided into 7 mentor groups, which also contains students from all year groups. Each mentor group, consisting of about 12-13 students, is then assigned to one member of staff, who mentors that group of students throughout their time at the school. They meet with the students two times per term to discuss their progress. The Deputy Headteacher chose one mentor group from each house, trying to get a balance of gender and year group across the whole section. He felt that selecting students in this way made it easier to explain to the students how they had been randomly chosen without causing the students or their parents undue alarm that the selection may have been targeted in any particular way.

In total, 60 students were invited to participate in the focus groups. The expectation was that not all of these students would wish to volunteer. It is acknowledged that by asking for participants to volunteer, there is the potential for selection bias. However, taking into account the balance of power between students and adults, it was felt that this method avoided students feeling that they had no choice about participating. Table 4 describes the composition of each focus group.

**Table 4: Focus group participants**

<b>Focus group</b>	<b>Age range (years)</b>	<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>Number of boys</b>	<b>Number of girls</b>
Year 4	8 – 9	7	3	4
Year 5	9 – 10	5	2	3
Year 6	10 – 11	5	3	2
Year 7 and 8	11 -13	7	4	3

The limitations of the focus groups comprising of self-selected participants are acknowledged by the researcher. It is recognised that it is unlikely that students who display persistently disruptive behaviour will volunteer to take part and that this leaves open the potential for selection bias. However, it was agreed by the school and the researcher that this was the most appropriate and fair way to select participants.



Each of the focus groups took around 20 minutes to conduct. It is recognised that the focus groups could have taken place over a longer period. However, the school felt that 20 minutes was an appropriate length of time for the students to be away from their lessons. The focus groups were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher.

Some examples of questions asked include:

- What sort of things do you get rewards for in school?
- How do you feel when you get a merit or an EP (Expectation Point) in school?
- How fair do you think the system is at your school and is there anything you would change about it?

Once transcribed, the data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, as per Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher sought for themes emerging from the data by closely reading the transcripts and noting key words and phrases. After this initial exploratory reading, the researcher sought to give the emerging themes code names and to then begin clustering similar themes together to identify two or three over-arching themes.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

The study was approved by the University of York Ethics Committee prior to any data being collected. All interview and focus group participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and asked to give informed consent by signing a consent form. Briefing the focus group participants was done at an age-appropriate level and informed consent for the focus groups was obtained from the students themselves, their parents, and the Deputy Headteacher of their school.

Participants were told how long the interview or focus group was expected to last and how it would be conducted, for example in person or remotely. They were told that the interview or focus group would be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. It was made clear that participants had the right to withdraw for the research at any time before the interview process or during the interview or focus group itself, without the need to give a reason. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw their data within one week following the interview, again without needing to give a reason. This would be prior to data being anonymised and analysed, after which it would have been more difficult to withdraw. Participants were informed that they could choose not to answer any question or discuss any topic if they did not wish to. However, no participants chose to withdraw from the study. After the interviews and focus groups, participants had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions about the study and to take part in a debrief conversation.

Survey participants were asked to read an explanation about the study and to click on a button to continue if they were happy to proceed and felt that they had been fully informed about the study and how their data would be used. All participants were provided with the University of York Ethics Committee Chair's email address and the researcher's email address in case they had any questions following their participation.

Data were stored in electronic form with password protection on a secure university drive. All data were anonymised and participants are referred to throughout this thesis by fictional names. Participants were informed that their anonymised data may be used in published material which would be publicly available, for example peer reviewed journal articles. It was not anticipated that the questions for this study would be particularly emotive or distressing for participants. However, it is acknowledged by the researcher that there is the potential for this to occur, for example if a headteacher participant had experienced having to make a difficult decision about excluding a student, or if a student participant had been given a sanction at school and felt upset when talking

about it. If this were to occur, the researcher would have signposted the participant to appropriate support. However, this did not occur in this study.

The next chapter gives a detailed description and evaluation of the pilot study that was conducted prior to the main data collection phase.

## **CHAPTER 4: PILOT STUDY**

### **4.0 Introduction**

A pilot study was carried out with the aim of evaluating the methods of data collection for the main study. This chapter describes the methods that were used and provides a summary of the findings. As a result of the pilot study, there were some changes made to the methods used for the main data collection phase. This chapter ends with an evaluation of the pilot study, discussing the changes that were made and the reasons for these changes.

### **4.1 Method**

The pilot study took place in the summer term 2015 at a mainstream secondary school in an urban location in southern England. The researcher had professional contact with staff at the school, so this school was chosen to take part in the pilot study as a convenience sample. The school is a mixed-gender school for students aged between 11 and 16 years with approximately 1000 students on roll. At the time of the pilot study, the school had a ‘Good’ Ofsted rating. The Ofsted report states that the school has an average number of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and an average number of students eligible for Pupil Premium funding, but an above average number of students who speak English as an additional language.

The pilot study consisted of one male interview participant and six survey participants from the same school. These participants were recruited through the researcher’s professional connections with the school. The survey participants were all staff at the school. The interview participant will be referred to by the fictional name of ‘Michael’ for ease of reading. Michael is aged between 50 – 59 years old. He has worked in education for 29 years and at the time of the interview had been in a senior leadership position for the last eight years. He was employed as a Deputy Head with responsibility for the school’s Behaviour Policy and overseeing behaviour management, including exclusions, across the whole school. He had worked at the school for the past 19 years. The researcher invited Michael to take part in the pilot study as he was a senior school leader who presented as having strong views on the way that behaviour should be managed in school. Michael gave informed consent to take part in the pilot study. The interview with Michael was conducted in May 2015 and lasted for approximately one hour.

The questions for the interview (Appendix J) were developed from the research questions and were linked with Kelchterman's framework of teacher self-understanding (2009). Kelchterman's framework suggests that teachers develop a personal interpretative framework, which consists of 'a set of cognitions, of mental representations that operates as a lens through which teachers look at their job, give meaning to it and act in it' (Kelchterman, 2009, p. 260). Teachers' self-understanding of themselves as teachers will have an impact on their beliefs and perceptions of the different aspects of teaching, including behaviour management. The framework encompasses different characteristics of teacher self-understanding, namely self-image, job motivation, future orientation, task perception, and self-esteem (Kelchterman, 2009).

Examples of interview questions asked include:

- What do you feel are the reasons for including punishments in a school behaviour policy?
- What are your views on school exclusions?
- What do you believe is the purpose of education?

Prior to the pilot study, the interview questions were pre-piloted with a teacher from a different school to ensure that they were clear and understandable. This teacher was recruited through the researcher's professional connections. In addition, Michael took part in a pre-interview survey to gather his initial views on behaviour management (Appendix K). The answers to this survey were used to tailor the interview questions to explore concepts further. The interview was conducted in an informal semi-structured style. It was audio recorded on a voice recorder and later transcribed by the researcher (Appendix M) for analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

In line with IPA, the researcher began data analysis by reading the transcript several times in depth before beginning to make exploratory notes on the content of the interview. This exploration was structured around three levels of analysis: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. Descriptive comments highlight at face value the aspects of the interview that appear to be important to the participant (Smith, 2009). Linguistic comments focus on the participant's use of language and conceptual comments take a more interrogative form, particularly where an interesting feature of the interview may prompt further questions (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Following the

exploratory coding, emergent themes were identified. Appendix M includes an extract of the table which maps these exploratory comments and emergent themes alongside the transcript.

There were initially 22 emergent themes, which were then organised into eight thematic clusters. These clusters were then abstracted or subsumed into three superordinate themes, which will be described in the following 'Findings' section. The process of this analysis can be seen in Appendix M.

The six survey respondents were all classroom teachers, who had completed the anonymous online questionnaire originally sent to all teaching staff at the pilot school following the interview with Michael. Demographic information was not gathered for survey participants. While it was realised with hindsight that this would have been helpful, the survey participants were anonymous so could not be contacted. It was made clear that it was voluntary to take part. Completion of the survey indicated consent to use the data. The six responses to the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics.

The questions asked in the survey can be seen in Appendix N. Examples include:

- On a scale from 0-10, how effective do you believe the behaviour management system is in your school?
- Please suggest three key words which you feel best describe the ethos and culture of your school.
- What preventative measures does your school use to reduce Fixed Term Exclusions?

## **4.2 Findings**

### 4.2.1 Pre-interview survey

The pre-interview survey indicated that Michael has a high level of confidence in the effectiveness of the current behaviour management system in place at his school. This is to be expected as Michael has had a significant amount of input into shaping the behaviour management system as well as holding responsibility for drawing up the school Behaviour Policy. This is likely to be a key contributory factor in Michael's assumptions about what works well in behaviour management. The strength of Michael's assumptions about what works are likely to be related, to some extent, to the amount of time and effort that he has put into establishing the current system.

This could potentially make it difficult for Michael to consider the effectiveness of the system in an objective manner because he has invested time and energy into establishing the current system used in the school.

Michael comments that the underlying reasons for the perceived level of effectiveness of the current behaviour management system are: an emphasis on rewards, an emphasis on the importance of realising potential, a systematic and clear process, consistency among staff, and a lack of dependence on 'behaviour experts'. He says that a good indication of the effectiveness of the school Behaviour Management policy is that behaviour is not a 'huge topic of conversation amongst staff'. When asked to describe the ethos of the school in three words, Michael chose: 'Potential, expectations, and happy'. He suggested that the effectiveness of behaviour management in his school could be improved by increasing the emphasis on a 'thirst for knowledge' through improving teaching. He also felt that the school behaviour policy could be improved by more cross-references to the Teaching and Learning policy. He states that what works particularly well is that everyone knows the principle that no-one has the right to disrupt the learning of others.

Fixed Term Exclusions are when a student is not allowed to attend school for a fixed period of time, usually between one to five days. Michael confirmed that his school does use Fixed Term Exclusions as a punishment, but he perceived that this was used, on average, less than once per month. This is a good indicator of reality, on the assumption that Michael is giving truthful answers, as he is the member of senior leadership team responsible for managing exclusions, so he should be aware of such occurrences. This is slightly below the national average of 3 Fixed Term exclusions per month. This figure is based on there being 125,000 students who received a fixed period exclusion in a single academic year with 3268 secondary schools in England (Department for Education, 2016). Michael states that he finds Fixed Term Exclusions to be neither effective nor ineffective and lists several preventative measures that the school takes to try and prevent Fixed Term Exclusions from occurring. These include: support from tutors and Heads of Houses, internal exclusion, 1:1 support, and improving teaching.

Michael suggests that in his opinion, the main reasons behind student misbehaviour in school are: poor curriculum and teaching, a lack of aspirations and high expectations, a lack of support from home, and societal change. He believes that students are in conscious control of their behaviour most of the time. He indicates that he believes the rewards and punishments schemes in place in

the school to be very effective and says that this is evidenced by talking to students. Michael added the further comment that ‘everyone must follow a systematic policy in a school so that all students can realise their potential’.

#### 4.2.2 Interview

There were three superordinate themes identified from the interview data. These were: Aspirations, Relationships, and Importance of structure. The theme of Aspirations is supported by the data gathered from the pre-interview survey, as Michael mentioned ‘potential’ as being one of the words he would use to describe the school ethos. His additional comment refers to students realising their potential through everyone following a systematic policy, which also links with the theme about the importance of a structured behaviour management system. Each of the three subordinate themes will be subsequently examined in turn.

##### *4.2.2.1 Theme 1: Aspirations*

This theme comprises three emergent theme clusters: Aspirations, Purpose of education, and Teaching and behaviour. It covers aspirations for the school, for the students, for Michael himself, and for society in general. A major component of this theme is achievement, making choices, and overcoming barriers.

Michael clearly has a desire to support students to reach their academic potential, as this is something that he mentions several times throughout the interview, as illustrated by these quotes:

*I think first of all the whole purpose of behaviour management is to support students in realising their potential otherwise there’s no point in doing it.*

*We talk about the importance of realising potential, it being a happy welcoming place. (in reference to the school ethos)*

*What I want is for all the kids to do really well and to realise their potential.*

He appears to have little faith in the effectiveness of exclusions as a means of changing student behaviour, which supports the indication in the pre-interview survey that he finds Fixed Term Exclusions to be neither effective nor ineffective. In the interview he said of exclusions ...*whether it changes that much in terms of behaviour I’m not sure*. He talks about the preventative methods the school uses to try and prevent exclusions occurring, both in the interview and in the pre-



interview survey. He acknowledges the positive work that has been done but shows a desire for further improvement.

*We've got, I don't think enough, but certainly a good tradition of sort of working with students one to one. I just think we need to revisit how effective that is.*

Michael recognises that there is a strong link between teaching and behaviour. He suggests that behaviour management systems should always be linked to teaching and learning. He also suggests that when talking to a student about difficulties, it is more appropriate to talk about their learning than about their behaviour. This appears to be a positive recognition as it focuses on what the student can gain from school, rather than talking solely about complying and behavioural expectations.

*I think once you start talking to a child about behaviour... the expectations are down for the child already, you know, your behaviour is poor, we should be talking about this is really, your learning, there's a real impact on your learning here is I think a more appropriate way to talk about it.*

Quality teaching is important to Michael and he believes that ensuring quality teaching will encourage positive behaviour, stating that *Generally poor behaviour, generally, I've always believed this, comes from poor teaching, generally.* The repetition of the word 'generally' suggests that Michael is trying to qualify his statement, to ensure that it is known that the comment is not directed at any individual or institution in particular. This is likely to be because the comment is potentially controversial, as it appears to suggest that teachers could be to blame for poor behaviour by not teaching lessons of a high enough quality. At a later point in the interview he returns to this, saying *A lot of bad behaviour I have to deal with I think if the teacher had acted slightly differently (trails off).*

Michael believes that education gives young people choices and that this is why it is so important for them to engage with their education. He talks about better GCSE results widening young people's options in life and about how education gives you more choice over your life. This is most likely related to Michael's own experiences as he says that *Education has given me quite a lot of choice in my life* and talks about how he was the first person in his family to go to university.

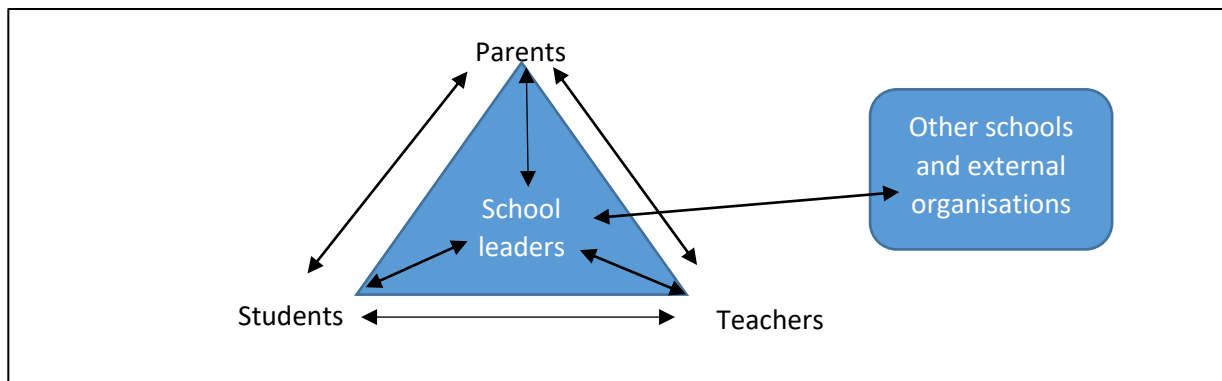
He expresses a desire to support ...kids who are perhaps from a similar background to me who could really benefit from sort of more education in their life.

Michael talks about the ideal way for a school to be run would be to provide ...a style of learning that suited every individual, which may well be more like the way which university works. However, he acknowledges that this not likely to be possible in the near future ...because of the way in which schools are organised and safeguarding, that's a long way down the line if we can get to that.

#### 4.2.2.2 Theme 2: Relationships

This superordinate theme encompasses an intricate web of relationships; between school leaders and staff, between teachers and students, between the school and parents, between different schools, and between students and their families. It includes three emergent theme clusters: External links, Relationships, and School organisation.

**Figure 2: Network of relationships identified in Michael's interview**



Michael recognises the importance of ensuring that staff feel supported by the leadership team and suggests that if staff are well supported, they are more able to support the students well.

*It's really important to give staff a sort of support mechanism and I actually think that is really important too because if staff confidence is undermined, that's bad for the kids.*

He talks about his own experience as a new teacher and about how he was supported by his PGCE mentor to build his own confidence as a teacher. Michael talks with respect about his PGCE mentor, describing him several times as *transformational*. Michael suggests that he wants to replicate the good experience that he had for his own staff now, saying in regard to teacher confidence that *You have to have people who support you in that*. He also highlights the importance

of good management in being able to create change towards a better behaviour management system, stating *Senior management or whoever's in charge of it has to convince them that it's the best way forward and they have to give a little bit and if they don't it won't work*. This indicates that Michael recognises that relationships have to be built between management and staff for positive behavioural change to occur in a school, rather than trying to impose systems and procedures on people who are reluctant to engage with them.

Building relationships with the students is also highlighted by Michael.

*Teachers need to have a rapport with children as well, I think that's very, very important.*

The emphasis placed on this comment by the repetition of 'very' indicates that this is an issue of particular significance to Michael. Throughout the interview, he makes several references to the importance of liking the students in order to teach well. He says, *I remember my PGCE students saying to me, 'Do you know Michael there are still some people in teaching who don't like kids?', and I think if you don't like kids you will struggle*.

While Michael talks throughout the interview about the importance of a structured system, he also emphasises the importance of the pastoral work that takes place alongside the systems of rewards and punishments.

*So as much as I talked about the fairly regimented way in which our behaviour policy works, there's a hell of a lot of work goes on by form tutors and Heads of House, in our new house system, which I think is a much more effective pastoral support network, so that sort of level of work is very important first of all.*

The importance of building relationships with external agents is also recognised. Michael talks with enthusiasm about the rewards system he has implemented in his school. One of the points he highlights is that *...it's great because it links in with parents as well*. He recognises that having parents engaged with the school system is essential to ensuring that any behaviour management system is effective.

The influence of other schools is also important, and this appears to have impacted on Michael's approach to behaviour management. He talks about other schools and how *If you look at most schools that have improved dramatically, they have done it by ...having a regimentally rigid*

*behaviour system*. This leads on to the final theme which focusses on the importance to Michael of having a structured behaviour management system.

#### 4.2.2.3 Theme 3: Importance of structure

A strong theme throughout the interview was based around structure and consistency in behaviour management. This superordinate theme subsumes two emergent theme clusters: Motivation and Structured behaviour management system.

Michael strongly advocates for the use of explicit reward systems in his school. It appears that this is something that Michael has put extensive effort into and he talks about it with enthusiasm, saying:

*I think the more kids get rewarded the better, so I think generally you want a system where most people have got the chance of some sort of tangible reward.*

He tells an anecdote about how he has used the principle of extrinsic motivation to encourage his own child to work hard towards their GCSE exams with the promise of monetary rewards. While acknowledging that his child may have achieved these grades without the added incentive, he sees value in using extrinsic motivation nonetheless as he believes that it is good for people to be rewarded for their efforts.

*She probably would have got those I'm sure, I'm not saying that was the thing, but I think it's okay and a decent reward I think is good.*

The reward scheme that Michael set up in his school was designed to give every child the opportunity to gain some form of reward over the course of each year. The rewards were in the form of gift vouchers for local stores. He stated, *I'm really proud of that work that we did, I think it was really brilliant*. However, the scheme has since changed due to the financial cost of purchasing the gift vouchers and Michael does not appear to be happy with the changes that have been implemented. He appears to distance himself from the changes, saying *I personally, I wasn't in charge of it then, I personally think the previous system was better*, hinting at disapproval of the changes and perhaps some sense of resentment that someone else has changed the system he worked so hard to implement throughout the school.

Michael highlights the importance of consistency among staff when managing behaviour, recognising that without this it is unlikely to be a successful system.

*I think as well the importance of sanctions where everyone does the same thing is really important, you could have loads of different sanctions, but you wouldn't get anywhere.*

Consistency across time is also important, ensuring that students and staff are all familiar with the behaviour management system and procedures. Michael says that the rewards system in particular ...has been in play here for 8, 9, no, more than that, 10, 11 years. He believes that the visibility of the behaviour management structure is important and that all the students at his school are aware of how the system works.

*I think kids are very clear, I think kids will say 'oh behaviour's really strict'.*

Having clear boundaries in place is emphasised and this is compared to experiences in life in general.

*I think that sometimes in life, not just in school, drawing a line in the sand somewhere on some things is actually rather important for us as people.*

Michael talks about how Fixed Term Exclusions are used in his school in order to reinforce these boundaries, but he is clear that this punishment is only used as a last resort, repeating 'very' to stress how extreme the example of poor behaviour would need to be to warrant an exclusion.

*I suppose that we really only use Fixed Term Exclusions here as a real last resort if someone's behaviour has been very, very poor.*

It is interesting to note that Michael's use of language suggests that his perspective on behaviour management is mainly education-oriented. He makes little reference to the more psychological implications for students' socio-emotional development and well-being. For example, he does not talk about their need for boundaries, the effect of stress or anxiety on students and staff, or issues around self-esteem, resilience, and self-identity.

It may simply be that the course of interview did not turn towards the topic of the psychological implications of behaviour management. However, it suggests that Michael sees behaviour in quite constrained terms within the particular context of education. A broader socio-emotional focus on behaviour could be argued to clash with the structured behaviour management system that Michael

advocates. The behaviourist framework, that punishments and rewards are built upon, places an emphasis on compliance, rather than the under-lying reasons behind behaviour. Where punishment and reward system seem to be effective, there is still a lack of consideration of the psychological impact of this style of behaviour management.

#### 4.2.3 Staff survey

Six members of school staff in Michael's school responded to the survey. All of the respondents were classroom teachers, but five of them indicated that they also held middle management roles, such as Head of Department.

When asked about the effectiveness of their current school Behaviour Management policy, they all indicated that the current behaviour management system was effective. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being completely effective and 1 being not at all effective, all the respondents rated the current Behaviour Management policy to be between 5 and 9, with an average rating of 7.14. The outstanding recurrent theme, in the reasons given for why they thought the policy was effective, was the school culture changing over time meaning that fewer behaviour issues arise.

A key suggestion for improving the behaviour policy was to have more emphasis on follow-up after punishments had been issued so that punishments were put in place promptly and parents informed in a timely manner. It was also suggested that the policy could be made shorter as it had too many options. Despite this comment, all of the respondents felt that they knew the school's Behaviour Policy well. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 knowing the policy extremely well and 1 not knowing the policy at all, all the respondents gave a rating between 7 and 9, with the average rating being 8.17.

When asked to describe the ethos of the school in three words, the words that were used most often were 'community' and 'potential'. Michael also used the word 'potential' in his description of the school ethos which suggests that enabling students' to reach their potential is a value that is strongly encouraged throughout the school. In the following word cloud (Figure 3), the font size represents how often the words were used by participants in describing the ethos of their school. The larger the font, the more frequently that word occurred in participants' answers to this question.

**Figure 3: Word cloud showing the words used by staff to describe the school ethos**



All of the respondents were aware of the use of rewards for positive behaviour. They all stated that this was either ‘somewhat effective’ or ‘effective’. However, a theme among the comments for this section emerged as to students not always getting the rewards their teachers felt they deserved due to time constraints and not having enough time in class to give the rewards.

All of the respondents were aware that their school used Fixed Term Exclusions as a punishment. However, there was some variation in the perception of how often these were used, ranging from less than once a month to once a week. All of the respondents indicated some knowledge of the range of preventative methods that were used to try and prevent exclusions occurring. Respondents’ perceptions of whether Fixed Term Exclusions were effective ranged from ineffective to very effective, with 50% selecting ‘somewhat effective’.

There was a wide variety of reasons suggested for student misbehaviour in school, with the most common being boredom and issues outside of school, such as parenting and home environment. The majority of respondents (n=5, 83.3%) felt that students were in conscious control of their behaviour ‘most of the time’. Only one respondent (16.7%) differed from this opinion and felt that students were in conscious control of their behaviour ‘some of the time’.

Most of the respondents (n=5, 83.3%) felt that they were sufficiently supported in managing student misbehaviour. However, one respondent (16.7%) did not feel that they had access to

suitable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities and suggested that online courses that could be completed during the school holidays would be helpful.

One respondent commented that more support is needed at home to improve behaviour in school. This concurs with Michael's suggestion that one of the main reasons for poor behaviour in school is lack of support from home. Another respondent stated that *The biggest issue with poor behaviour of students is the inconsistency of staff*. This was an issue that Michael talked about. However, Michael's perception was that the consistent implementation of the behaviour management system by staff was one of the reasons for its effectiveness. This conflict of opinions suggests that communication between the senior leadership team and classroom teachers could potentially be improved.

### **4.3 Evaluation of pilot study and implications for main study**

The pilot study was a valuable exercise as it gave an opportunity to consider the suitability of the data collection tools. There were several points of learning that emerged from conducting this study.

In general, the interview process went smoothly, and it is felt that this resulted in interesting and relevant findings. The analysis of the interview data were more time-consuming than had been anticipated, so the timeline for completion of the main study was adjusted to allow for this. It was decided that there was no discernible additional benefit from linking the interview questions to Kelchterman's (2009) framework of teacher self-understanding in this case, as the interview questions are already linked to the research questions. As the aim of the study is to address the research questions, it was felt that this was sufficient. This was particularly the case as the interviews are semi-structured, so the interview schedule may be deviated from depending on the direction taken by the participant in line with IPA principles. Having the freedom to follow the participant's line of thought is an advantage of working within the IPA methodology. The way in which IPA views the participant's experience as key, means that the interviewer needs to be free to follow the participant's line of thought, rather than being restricted by a rigid set of pre-determined questions. Pursuing Kelchterman's framework as a way of structuring the questions was thought likely to have constrained this freedom.



It was also decided not to include the pre-interview survey for interview participants in the main data collection phase. The original intention of the pre-interview survey was to enable the researcher to tailor the questions to the individual participant. In the event, this was not required due to the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview. This flexibility enabled the researcher to adapt and tailor the interview questions during the interview process itself in order to follow the participant's line of thought.

An important learning point concerned the collection of demographic information at the point of data collection. This was not something that was considered in advance by the researcher and it was necessary to contact Michael in retrospect to ask for demographic information. In response to this issue, it was decided that participants in the main data collection phase would be asked for this information before the start of the interview after signing the consent form.

Demographic information was also not collected from the survey participants. As the survey responses were all anonymous, it was not possible to contact participants in retrospect as there was no way of identifying them. To rectify this, it would be possible to include demographic questions in the survey used in the main data collection phase, such as age, gender, and teaching experience. However, there were other concerns regarding this survey as a data collection method which resulted in the decision not to include the survey in the main data collection phase. This was partly due to the fact that not many people completed the survey at the pilot stage and those that did were the people who had voluntarily chosen to do so. This raises the limitations of having a small, self-selected sample which is unlikely to be representative of the views of the whole school staff.

In addition, it was felt that the emphasis of the research needed to be more tightly focussed on the views and perceptions of senior school leaders as individuals in order to be able to answer the research questions posed. For these reasons, the school staff survey was not used in the main data collection phase. Instead it was decided to conduct a content analysis of the Behaviour Management policies of the participating schools. As the criteria for the interview participants included having significant responsibility for the Behaviour Management policy at their school, the researcher felt that it would be of interest to investigate how far the content and language of these policies were consistent with the interview discussions. A clear overlap between the content of the policy and the content of the interview would indicate that the values of the senior leader were being embedded within the school via the policy process.

#### **4.4 Creative ways of presenting research**

As a way of presenting the data from this pilot study in a creative way, the researcher experimented with ideas that diverged from the usual way of presenting academic information. The researcher wanted to think of a way to represent the data in a tangible and visual way, so the researcher knitted a scarf to represent the themes identified in the pilot study. The themes were colour-coded during analysis and the researcher translated this into a simple knitting pattern for the scarf by taking one line of text to be one row of stitches. So, for example, if one line of interview data were focussed on exclusions, which was colour-coded in red, then this would translate as a red row of stitches in the knitting pattern. The result was a colourful scarf which corresponded to the colour-coded data analysis. It served as a talking point at academic conferences when displayed alongside a more traditional academic poster (Appendix O).

The researcher also developed a comic strip to provide a simple and clear explanation of the pilot study (Appendix P). This was displayed at an academic conference with the scarf (Appendix Q). It was another way of thinking creatively about the data collection process and the data itself.

The next chapter presents the results of the interview data gathered from senior school leaders' in English schools. (The researcher hopes that readers are not too disappointed to know that these results are not presented as any form of woolly knitwear!)

# CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS – INTERVIEWS IN ENGLISH SCHOOLS

## 5.0 Introduction

This chapter will examine the results of the interviews conducted in English schools. For clarity, as mentioned earlier, the phrase ‘English schools’ in this thesis refers to schools located in England, excluding schools that follow the English curriculum but are located in other countries, for example international schools. These interviews explored Senior School Leaders’ (SSLs’) views on behaviour management approaches used in schools in England. There were two aims to this part of the study. Firstly, to gain an insight into SSLs’ experiences and perceptions of behaviour management in English schools, and secondly, to identify the perceived barriers as to why alternative approaches are not being more widely implemented in schools across England.

The research questions which this chapter aims to answer are:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders’ experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?

To answer these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen SSLs at schools across England. More detailed information about the participants and the school contexts is provided below and in Chapter 3: Methodology. The interviews were analysed using an IPA approach (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Further detail on this approach is also provided in Chapter 3: Methodology. In brief, IPA involves focussing in-depth on the idiosyncratic experience of each individual participant. This is why the study has a relatively small sample of fourteen participants. Following analysis of each individual interview, common themes were then identified across the participant group. This chapter will discuss these common themes. It will report the results of the interviews and begin to analyse these, followed through in more depth in the discussion in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion, where the findings will be directly related to addressing each of the research question.

All of the fourteen participants interviewed were senior leaders in English schools. This included Headteachers (n=4), Headmasters (n=3), Executive Principal (n=1), Consultant (n=1), Deputy Headteachers (n=3), Lead Behaviour Officer (n=1) and Teacher in Charge (n=1). The criteria for selection was that participants' current job role, or previous job role if no longer working directly in a school, involved making decisions about the behaviour management approach adopted within the school. This could be at a strategic level or in a day-to-day management role. The educational consultant was recently retired from a senior leadership position in a secondary school. All other participants were in current senior leadership positions in schools. Each participant is referred to by a pseudonym in this thesis, thus preserving anonymity whilst maintaining ease of reading. A participant profile table is included in Chapter 3: Methodology (Table 3: Details of individual participants).

The schools included mainstream state secondary schools (n=3), mainstream state primary schools (n=3), independent schools (n=2), special schools (n=1), and Pupil Referral Units (n=2). There were four participants from the mainstream state secondary schools, three from the mainstream state primary schools, two from the independent schools, one from a special school, and three from the Pupil Referral Units (PRU).

The interviews took between 20-60 minutes each. The interviews varied in length depending on the length of the participants' answers. All interviews were conducted in English, so no translation was needed. Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. Participants were provided with information about the study and gave informed consent by signing consent forms. The interviews were then analysed using an IPA approach as described above and in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Before moving on to the findings from the interviews, the next section presents a brief content analysis of the behaviour policies from the participants' schools. This was thought to be important as the participants have all been involved in developing these policies so these documents can give additional insight into their views.

### **5.1 Analysis of school behaviour policies**

A content analysis was conducted on the Behaviour Management policies of each participants' school. As a reminder to the reader, Table 5 displays key information about each school. Each

school was allocated a code to identify them anonymously. All of the details in the table were correct at the time the interviews took place. It is acknowledged that some of these details may have changed in the intervening time, such as the number of students on roll, whether the school is an academy or Local Authority (LA) maintained, and the Ofsted rating. The details in the table were all taken from publicly available sources, including the schools' own websites and the Ofsted website.

**Table 5: Details of participating schools for content analysis**

School code	Type of school	Age range (years)	Number of students on roll	Mixed or single gender	General location	Ofsted rating	Academy status
S1	Mainstream secondary	11-16	1200	Mixed	South England	Good	Academy
S2	Mainstream secondary	11-18	1325	Mixed	North England	Requires improvement	LA maintained
S3	Mainstream secondary	11-18	1120	Boys only	South England	Outstanding	Academy
P1	Mainstream primary	3-11	304	Mixed	North England	Good	Community
P2	Mainstream primary	3-11	465	Mixed	South England	Good	LA maintained
P3	Mainstream primary	3-11	570	Mixed	North England	Good	Academy
A1	Pupil Referral Unit	14-16	91	Mixed	South England	Good	LA maintained
A2	Pupil Referral Unit	14-16	62	Mixed	North England	Good	LA maintained

The titles of the Behaviour Management policies varied between schools. It is of interest to see how the language differs in the choice of title. Table 6 gives details of each policy title. For example, School S3 refers to a Behaviour Code of Conduct. This title gives the impression of a rigid policy laying out how students should conduct themselves. In contrast, School A1 refers to Behaviour for Effective Learning Policy. This suggests more of a focus on how the students should behave in order to learn most effectively. Most of the schools simply call the policy Behaviour Policy.

The policies also differed in length, ranging from 4 pages to 40 pages. The average number of pages for the secondary schools was 21. For primary schools, it was 6 pages, and for PRUs, it was 27 pages. This suggests that secondary schools tend to have more information in their behaviour

policies than primary schools. It was expected that PRUs may have longer behaviour policies, given their focus as schools for challenging students, and this is reflected in the highest average number of pages. It is also of interest to consider whether the length of the school Behaviour Management policy reflects how rigid the approach is that the school takes. For example, a longer policy may mean that the policy is more prescriptive, leaving less room for flexibility and individual adaptations. The Behaviour Management policy of a school should be an accurate reflection of the ethos of that school as it is written by the senior leadership team and reviewed annually by the school governors.

**Table 6: Behaviour policy titles**

<b>School code</b>	<b>Title of Behaviour Policy</b>	<b>Length of Behaviour Policy (pages)</b>
S1	Behaviour Policy	7
S2	Behaviour Management policy	15
S3	Behaviour Code of Conduct	40
P1	Behaviour for Learning Policy	4
P2	Behaviour Policy	8
P3	Behaviour Policy	6
A1	Behaviour for Effective Learning Policy	20
A2	Behaviour Policy	17

The key words that were identified across the eight policies are illustrated in Table 7 below. They have been grouped into six common categories. It is acknowledged that one limitation of this method is that this is a subjective analysis and the researcher has interpreted which words in the policies should be allocated to which category.

**Table 7: Key words identified in behaviour policy content analysis**

<b>Category</b>		<b>No of words</b>
School ethos	calm, caring, civilised, community, consideration, courtesy, fair, friendly, happy, inclusive, ordered, kindness, pride, safe, secure, sensible, unified, warm, welcoming	19
Sanctions and undesirable behaviour	consequence, detentions, discipline, disruption, exclusion, indiscipline, isolation, jeopardise, misbehaviour, negative, punishment, reprimand, risk, sanction, warning, zero-tolerance,	16
Clear structure and expectations	boundaries, clear, comply, consistency, expectations, firm, orderly, responsibility, rules, standards, structure, systematic	12
Alternative approaches to behaviour management	collaborative, communication, encourage, nurture, reflection, relationships, respect, restorative, solution-focus, support, trust	11
Rewards and desirable behaviour	celebration, golden, incentives, motivation, outstanding positive, praise, reward, success	9
Learning	Achievement, engaging, intervention, learning, mentors, monitoring, targets, teaching	8

The majority of key words identified were associated with the description of the school's ethos. They paint a positive picture of the school's vision. The second most common category of key words were those associated with punishments and undesirable behaviour. As a behaviour policy, this is perhaps to be expected as this is the policy that will be consulted when behaviour issues arise. Key words associated with learning are included in the behaviour policies, but this is not explicitly highlighted as a significant part of the policies. This is interesting as it suggests that behaviour is being seen as something separate from learning, rather than positive behaviour being seen as a prerequisite to, and therefore an essential part of, learning.

**Table 8: Frequency of each category of key word in each policy**

Category School	School ethos	Sanctions and undesirable behaviour	Clear structure and expectations	Alternative approaches to behaviour management	Rewards and desirable behaviour	Learning
A1	34	38	56	69	52	179
A2	23	51	32	39	57	87
P1	19	15	36	32	29	18
P2	25	14	33	17	28	9
P3	17	13	13	29	22	15
S1	1	132	8	22	5	21
S2	28	100	59	33	47	31
S3	65	119	73	34	7	35

Table 8, above, illustrates the frequency of each category of key word in each policy. The key words were searched for within each policy. The search included different iterations of each word. For example, the search for the key word ‘reward’ also included: rewards, rewarded, and rewarding, and the search for the key word ‘motivation’ also included: motivate, motivates, motivated, and motivating. Appendix R shows the frequency of each key word in each policy, if the reader wishes to see this in more detail.

There is a striking difference between the frequency that the primary school behaviour policies and the secondary school behaviour policies mention punishments and undesirable behaviour. The primary schools mention this category of key word between 13 – 15 times across the three policies. However, the secondary schools mention this category of key word 100 – 132 across the three policies.

This brief content analysis of the schools’ behaviour policies aims to give some insight into the type of language that is used by the SSLs in their written policies. This can then be considered when analysing the interview data, to explore whether what the SSLs say in their interviews relates with the language used in their school behaviour policies.

The next section presents the results from the interviews and begins to analyse these findings.

## **5.2 Interview findings**

Analysis of the 14 interviews identified some themes that were common across the group. Initial analysis using IPA found 26 codes that commonly occurred across the interview group. These were refined, with similar codes being grouped together as themes. (See Appendix J for interview



question guide and Appendix M for interview extract showing IPA analysis). Final analysis identified seven superordinate themes. These were: Leadership; Community and relationships; Issues with the current system; Collaboration; Flexibility; Clear expectations; and Making choices.

These results are represented in the following diagram (Figure 4). A rainbow was chosen to represent the themes as there were seven of them and they are all interlinked to create an overall representation of senior leaders' views of behaviour management in English schools. (The researcher acknowledges the significance that the symbol of a rainbow has taken on in the UK during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this diagram was designed prior to this occurring and is not intended to be linked.) The themes are presented in order of how frequently they were represented across the interview group as a whole. Leadership is the overarching theme, as this was identified in all of the interviews as a significant element. Community and relationships was also an important theme in all of the interviews.

**Figure 4: Common themes in the English school interview group**



Analysis was also conducted of the interviews in sub-groups of primary schools, secondary schools, state schools, independent schools, mainstream schools, special schools, and PRUs. However, there were almost no findings that were specific to the sub-groups. The themes that were common across the sub-groups were generally the same as those for the group as a whole. The only exception was the theme of 'Issues with the current system'. This was not identified as a theme for either of the independent schools, but it was identified as a theme within all of the other sub-groups. This will be discussed below in the section 5.2.3 Issues with current system. Other than this exception, all the themes were identified across all the interviews and will be discussed in reference to the whole group.

In the following sections, each of the themes identified from the interviews will be discussed in detail. Sub-themes within each overarching theme are identified with sub-headings. Following this, there will be a section discussing the perceived barriers which prevent schools from adopting alternative approaches, as identified in the analysis of the interviews. Sub-themes in this section are also identified with sub-headings.

### 5.2.1 Theme 1: Leadership

Leadership was a significant theme identified in all fourteen interviews. Participants talked about the importance of the senior leadership team being involved in developing and maintaining the school's approach to behaviour management. This is perhaps not a surprising finding as the participants were all talking from the perspective of being a SSL, so leadership was highly likely to feature strongly in their discussions.

#### *a) Whole school ethos*

Developing a whole school ethos appeared to be important to the participants and they talked about the influence that the senior leadership of a school can have on this ethos, as illustrated by these quotes:

*I think what it's about is the climate that you create within a school and within your own individual classroom. (Henry, secondary school)*

*I do think that the whole ethos of the school has a huge impact. (Sophie, primary school)*

This aligns with the current literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.9 'School ethos and influence of senior leaders'. Bennett's (2017) review of behaviour in schools suggested that leaders should focus on whole school culture and the participants appear to recognise the importance of this and taking steps towards it.

One participant felt that senior school leaders have 'a lot' of influence on the ethos of a school and how behaviour is managed. When talking about behaviour management training in his school, he said: *As a leadership team, we want everyone to be positive. (Edward, special school)*

He talked about taking a holistic approach to behaviour management, looking at:

*... the environment, the culture of the staff, the school, the ethos of the school, and then the behaviour training.* (Edward, special school)

Edward raised concerns about the target-driven ethos of many schools and suggested that this has an impact on the approaches taken to manage behaviour. He contrasted the differences between mainstream schools and special schools, in regard to tracking the progress of students. Developing a system to track the progress of students in a special school in a meaningful way is something that Edward was working on in his current role. He talked about the key areas to measure progress in are those:

*... such as behaviour, such as interaction with others, such as following instructions, such as independence.* (Edward, special school)

This is far removed from the focus of mainstream schools on specific academic achievements. Edward stated that:

*If we can put into place a curriculum that leads our pupils to be more independent, to be able to access an unfriendly world, then actually that's brilliant.* (Edward, special school)

As a special school, Edward felt that they are slightly more removed from the target-driven ethos as the monitoring by Ofsted is not as intensive. He suggested that one of the key barriers to effective behaviour management in mainstream schools is *the target-driven nature of what's going on* and a perception that there is no time to devote to anything outside of academic lessons.

In terms of the relationship between staff, and between senior leaders and staff, Edward believes that these relationships are important. Edward recognised the role that he plays as a senior leader in supporting staff and said that he really likes working with staff. He said that as a school:

*We want to grow our staff to be as able as they possibly can to deal with things and make good decisions around behaviour.* (Edward, special school)

b) Moving from mainstream to alternative provision

One participant, Rosie, talked about how she had to learn to develop her own style and strategies when she became a senior leader in a PRU. She found that this was very different from working in mainstream schools.

*Once I came to work in an alternative provision, I sort of got over the initial shock and developed my own style and strategy. I think behaviour management in this school, for example, is just completely different [to mainstream schools].* (Rosie, PRU)

Another participant, Jessica, also related to Rosie's feeling of a culture shock when she made the move from leadership in mainstream school to leadership in a PRU.

*When I moved to a Pupil Referral Unit, it was a real culture shock to be absolutely honest, because the behaviour I found was much more extreme than those young people I'd been working with at [mainstream] school.* (Jessica, PRU)

There are often differences in the ways that mainstream schools and PRUs are managed. For example, PRUs are usually able to be more flexible and offer more bespoke provision than mainstream schools. This is necessary due to the nature of the typical cohort at a PRU and it is made possible because PRUs tend to have much smaller numbers of students compared to a mainstream school.

As mentioned in the literature review, Farouk's (2014) study explored how teachers' self-understanding changed when they moved from working in mainstream schools to working in PRUs. The teachers in this study found that there were substantial differences in working in the two settings and the relationships that they were able to build with students at the PRU brought about changes in their self-understanding. The participants in the current study appear to have shared a similar experience as they have learnt to work within a different framework for managing behaviour.

Edward highlighted relationships between class teachers and their teaching assistants as being key to successful behaviour management:

*One of the key skills of any teacher in a special school is about how they work with the class team they're with, and that is almost more important than anything else because if you can build a good rapport with your class team, then they're supportive, because you can't do it on your own. (Edward, special school)*

Edward explained that in one class there are likely to be between two and five teaching assistants to support students' additional needs. This is different to mainstream classes where often there will not be a teaching assistant in the classroom at all. Therefore, teachers in special schools need to be more able to build positive working relationships with their teaching assistants, a skill which Edward suggested may be less important for mainstream teachers.

c) Being research active

Being research active and a reflective practitioner was seen as an important part of leadership to most of the participants. The following quotes illustrate the importance that the participants placed on being research active and reflective:

*We're very big on research here so every member of staff is expected to take part in action research. (Amelia, primary school)*

*How you handle behaviour is part of critical reflection. (William, independent school)*

*We do have a sort of culture of looking back to see if we did something we shouldn't have done as a staff. (Jessica, PRU)*

George mentions a specific theory, Dweck's Growth mindset, which was discovered by the school through their research activities.

*Our big thing is Growth mindset based on Carol Dweck's research. (George, independent school)*

Growth mindset is now embedded in the culture of this school and is used as an important tool within their behaviour management system, as well as within teaching and learning activities.

A barrier to making changes is often due to lack of awareness of new research, so it is encouraging that SSLs are proactively seeking our relevant research and considering what will be most helpful to share in their school.

d) Leading from the top

Participants felt that change in a school's approach to behaviour management needs to be led by the senior leaders in the school for it to be effective, as suggested by these quotes:

*It has to be led from the top. If the head doesn't say it or doesn't stand up and support it ... you've got no chance. If a head of year is trying to introduce a cultural change, it's not going to happen unless it's got the head's support.* (James, secondary school)

*Obviously it comes from the top down.* (Charles, PRU)

Two participants, William and Jessica, talked about how the senior leader's role is to take a detached stance when there is a need to consider excluding a student. They felt that emotions could influence the decision that is made. William also commented that there will be parties arguing for and against the exclusion and the senior leader should remain neutral.

*I try not to make a decision based entirely on my emotions or how I'm feeling at the time.* (Jessica, PRU)

*I actually try not to bring my own feelings into decisions about [exclusions] because that's just another variable that actually isn't very helpful.* (William, independent school)

*Other people are invested in different ways. House parents will be advocating for the child, parents will be, and you have to be in a slightly more neutral place I suppose.* (William, independent school)

This is an important point to consider as there are often different parties holding different views about how behaviour should be managed. This is especially so when the SSL is dealing with the extreme end of the spectrum of behaviour and considering exclusion from school. Parents are naturally likely to want to defend their child, and different members of staff may attempt to sway the SSLs decision with their differing viewpoints either for or against exclusion.

As discussed in the literature review, Embeita (2019) found that, in the case of exclusions, parents tended to align themselves either with the school or with their child. The relationship with the other was more conflicted depending on how strongly they aligned themselves.

In light of these conflicting viewpoints and when dealing with an emotive topic such as exclusion, it is important for the SSL to be able to consider the matter without emotional involvement that could skew their decision making process.

e) Weighing the interests of stakeholders

Leading on from the discussion of different viewpoints, weighing up the interests of different parties was a theme that occurred throughout several of the interviews. One participant summarises this as:

*You have got to balance [a child at risk of exclusion's] needs against the needs of all the other children in the class and the staff that work with them. (Daniel, primary school)*

Amelia talked about weighing the interests of a student's right to be in the school against the impact of his behaviour on staff and other students.

*I made the difficult decision that he's now going to be taught at home and that's the kind of decision that I have to make in this role. (Amelia, primary school)*

It is the role of the SSLs to protect the interests of both their students and their staff. When considering the extreme end of behaviour management, there are times when these interests are in conflict and a SSL needs to make a decision that will not be popular with one or both parties. Being able to weigh up these interests and decide how best to proceed is a central responsibility for SSLs in school behaviour management.

f) Challenge and change

Allowing staff and students to challenge leadership decisions was considered to be a sign of good leadership by some participants. As stated by Thomas,

*Good leadership is about being open to challenge. (Thomas, secondary school)*

One of the issues that Edward identified in working with staff is that alternative approaches to behaviour management that do not include punishments can:

*... be very contentious and you can have your core group of staff who say they should be excluded for that, they've hurt so and so... (Edward, special school)*

However, Edward said that it is important to work with staff who have these views and looking at the expectations that are set for students.

Edward supports the lead teacher for behaviour in school to facilitate a weekly meeting where staff can attend and discuss a topic of their choice about behaviour management. This is a supportive measure. Edward said that, as a senior leader, the next steps are to look at the data about staff's behaviour management and put some targeted support in place where needed.

Oliver, who has now retired from working directly in schools and works as an educational consultant, reflected on his experience in school where he had found that the attitudes of the senior leadership team as a whole were often too rigid and unwilling to change. He felt that this was often due to being risk averse.

*Doing more of what you've always done is more comfortable than doing something you've never done before, especially in a high-risk situation. (Oliver, secondary school)*

External pressures on schools, for example, from Ofsted, league tables, and parents, mean that behaviour management can become high stakes if a student is persistently disrupting their own and others' learning. To try an alternative approach in a high stakes, high stress situation is a difficult thing for a SSL to do. If it is unsuccessful, the SSL will likely be seen as responsible for the failure by the staff and the rest of the school community. This may explain why Oliver feels that it is more comfortable for SSLs to simply continue using the same approach as they have always done.

This will be discussed more in section 5.3.3 Barrier 3: Risk aversion of senior leaders, as part of the consideration of barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management approaches.



### 5.2.2 Theme 2: Community and relationships

The theme of Community and Relationships was prominent in all fourteen of the interviews.

#### a) Parental involvement

The participants talked about the importance of relationships between the school and parents. Parental involvement with school was seen as crucial to managing persistent undesirable behaviour, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*Make sure that you're engaging the support of parents so that they can try and relay what the school's efforts are as well ... reinforcing the good behaviour.* (William, independent school)

*It's essential to have a parent support advisor in the team because there's always, always, always home issues and the Parent Support Advisor goes and works with the parents.* (Amelia, primary school)

*There's also a key part to play in partnership with parents.* (Daniel, primary school)

It was also acknowledged that although parental involvement is generally seen as positive, parents can struggle to understand why a school is trying an alternative approach, such as a restorative meeting, rather than continuing to use punishments. Sophie explained, in the following quote, that she feels parents may not have a good understanding of restorative meetings and this may lead to them being less supportive of this approach.

*I don't know why the parents really struggle with [restorative meetings]. I think it's because they don't experience those meetings. They think it's just, go and have a chat with the headteacher, and that it's easy.* (Sophie, primary school)

This could be countered by schools communicating about their approach to parents and ensuring that they understand the principles behind it.

George highlights another issue, where parents are not openly critical of the school's approach but instead subtly undermine the school staff in front of their child.

*The problem is not parents not supporting overtly, but ... parents slightly undermining [school staff].* (George, independent school)

This creates a problem where the student feels that the authority of the school staff can be challenged. Whilst this can be useful and appropriate in the right situation, it can also escalate behaviour issues and strain relationships if the challenge is not made in the right way.

*b) Relationships between teachers and students*

Relationships between school staff were also highlighted by some participants, for example by James commenting on the positive relationships in his school:

*The relationships between staff are very, very good.* (James, secondary school)

However, the most important relationship identified by the participants was that between teacher and student, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*That goes back again to that relationship. Knowing what works for each individual student.*  
(Charles, PRU)

*If I've got a member of staff who hasn't got a good relationship with the kids or can't engender a good relationship with the kids, it's pointless them being here.* (Rosie, PRU)

*[Relationships] are massively important. If you don't enjoy a good rapport with the children, then I think your life is going to be pretty hard actually.* (Joseph, secondary school)

*Over a period of time, we get a good relationship going.* (Oliver, secondary school)

Relationships between staff and students are also identified as important by Edward. He suggested that it is important for staff to have positive relationships with students, especially those who are difficult to engage.

*You need really positive relationships, even when those pupils are difficult to reach and sometimes difficult to like. But actually what you've got to do, through every pore in your body, is show that you are caring and like them, and from that you can develop really good relationships and from that you can put into a system of behaviour that leads to them making progress.* (Edward, special school)

The relationship between teacher and student is at the core of behaviour management. The importance of relationships is acknowledged by all the alternative approaches discussed in the

literature review. This is supported by the participants of this study and the way this was highlighted within the data. Relationships are inextricably linked to attachment styles, which was another strand within this theme.

c) Attachment

Attachment was explicitly mentioned by some of the participants, as illustrated by the following quote:

*... particularly looking at attachment and those sorts of difficulties that children have and the approaches to that, is the kind of area that I've spent quite a lot of time working on.*  
(Daniel, primary school)

Daniel talked about attachment and attachment styles quite frequently within his interview. He had previously worked with adoption services so this was an area about which he had extensive knowledge and experience. He had applied this knowledge well to his work as a SSL at this school, considering how attachment may be impacting on the students' behaviour.

Other participants did not have as much knowledge of attachment theory as Daniel. For example, Jessica was a little unsure about what it was, as illustrated by the quote below:

*It's sort of being a young child, sort of neglect at an early age or abandonment ... because of that, the difficulty in making positive relationships.* (Jessica, PRU)

However, she still felt that it was an important aspect to mention and take into account, even without detailed theoretical knowledge.

*Ultimately what these children are crying out for, in my experience, is attachment. Attachment to the adults and the world around them.* (Rosie, PRU)

Rosie felt that attachment was particularly important in the context of a PRU where many of the students may have insecure attachment styles. As mentioned in the literature review, Geddes (2006) highlights the importance of consistent, reliable adult support for those children who have attachment issues. PRUs aim to provide this support and have more capacity to do so than mainstream schools, with PRUs generally having a higher staff to student ratio.

d) School as a community

The idea of the school being a community was strongly represented among the participants, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*I want [all pupils] to be part of this community.* (Henry, secondary school)

*We do [restorative work] quite a lot at the boarding houses because obviously there's a community aspect there.* (William, independent school)

*Why would you want to exclude from your community a child that you made a commitment to when they joined your school?* (Henry, secondary school)

Henry's comment is of interest because he is explicitly saying that SSLs make a commitment to every student in the school and by excluding any one of those students, the SSL would be going against that commitment. The language used by Henry suggests that as a SSL he takes his responsibility and commitment to the students seriously and would be reluctant to make the decision to exclude.

Several participants talked about fostering a sense of belonging to the school community among students, as these quotes show:

*There's no them and us at all. We are all part of the same school.* (Charles, PRU)

*It's about belonging, fun, choice and power.* (Oliver, secondary school)

*I think there is something about that sense of belonging and sense of ownership of where you are.* (Daniel, primary school)

One of the participants, Thomas, talked about showing empathy to students when dealing with incidents of undesirable behaviour.

*If you put yourself in a kiddie's shoes, if I said to you, 'give me your mobile, give it to me now, come on, give it to me', you're going to say 'no, no way, never' ... but somehow we expect kids to do it.* (Thomas, secondary school)

*They're allowed to get it wrong. You got it wrong when you were 15. So did I. Maybe you didn't. But I did.* (Thomas, secondary school)

Thomas talks about his own experiences as a school student and empathises with his students' feelings, for example about having to hand in their mobile phone. This empathy perhaps suggests that Thomas would be more lenient with his students than a SSL who had a different experience as a student themselves. Behaviour that some SSLs would see as unacceptable may be seen by Thomas as being a mistake and therefore the student could be given the opportunity to correct their behaviour, rather than being punished. One model that emphasises this type of approach is Restorative Practice, which is the strand discussed below.

e) Restorative approaches

Restorative approaches was identified by some of the participants. Other participants talked about behaviour management principles that would align with a restorative ethos but were not explicitly named as restorative by the participants. Examples are shown in the following quotes:

*[Restorative approaches] is starting to have an impact, slowly but steadily, on staff. I mean, it's something that I use myself.* (Joseph, secondary school)

*For me, RP [Restorative Practice] is about ... well, it's about restoration isn't it?* (Thomas, secondary school)

*I've described that really, haven't I? I think that's kind of my approach.* (Henry, independent school, talking about Restorative Practice without naming it)

*Restorative justice allows the individual to have a sense of it being off their shoulders after a while, and every child needs to have a chance to move on.* (William, independent school)

Edward had heard of Restorative Approaches and uses these within his school. However, he felt that this is an approach that is used naturally, rather than through a conscious implementation of this approach.

*We do Restorative Justice, bringing people together, working together to find a better way so that everyone gets along fine.* (Edward, special school)

Participants talking about restorative approaches shows that, as SSLs, they have a knowledge of this type of approach. Generally comments about Restorative Practice were positive, suggesting that the principles of the approach align with the SSLs' own values.

### 5.2.3 Theme 3: Issues with current system

Eleven of the fourteen participants talked about Issues with the current education system. The two participants, George and William, who worked at independent schools, did not talk about any particular issues with the current system when talking about behaviour management. This could be due to the independent sector being more well-resourced and less financially stretched than the state school sector in England. It could also be due to independent schools having more autonomy over their own admissions and exclusions. This will be considered further in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion.

#### *a) Disillusionment with the current system*

Several participants expressed disillusionment with the current educational system, describing it as overloaded and ineffective at dealing with undesirable behaviour:

*There's nothing people can do. You think, 'oh, education, social workers will get involved and she'll end up in court'. Nothing. Nobody's interested. So, that child has been out of education for nearly a year now ... nobody's bothered. (Amelia, primary school)*

*You have to have cut-off points because the system is overloaded. (Thomas, secondary school)*

Frustration was expressed by one participant, Oliver, at the limitations of the current system and the reluctance of some SSLs to embrace change. This is also an example of SSLs being risk averse, which is discussed more later on in this chapter.

*The school went into 'Needs to Improve' on its first Ofsted and behaviour was an issue. It was frustrating to sit there with a set of experiences and documented results which said, if you do things slightly differently, you'll get a better result. But I also feel, when careers are on the line, it's safer to do what is seen as the normal procedure rather than doing something risky, something different. (Oliver, secondary school)*

b) Lack of support from external agencies

A lack of support from external agencies to manage persistent behaviour issues was highlighted by participants as a particular problem. Sophie's quote encapsulates this feeling:

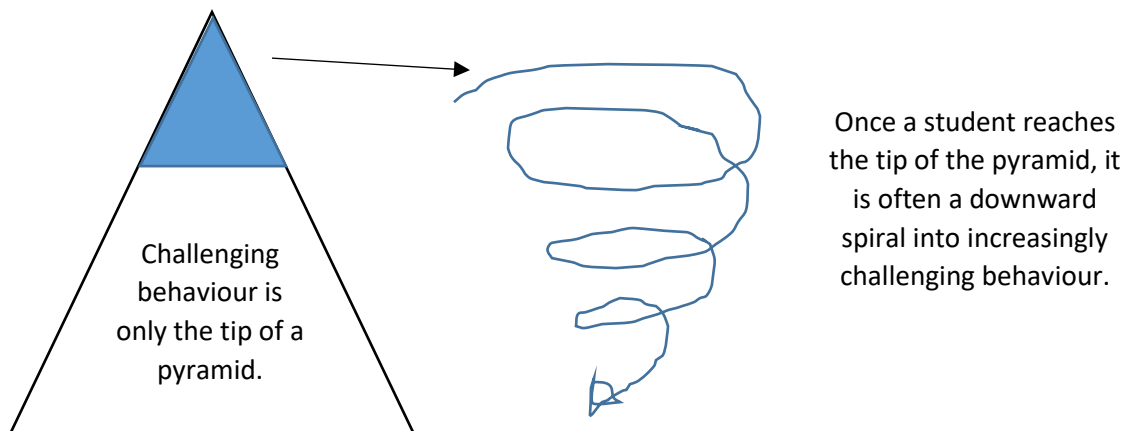
*There are fewer and fewer of these support agencies around. It's hard to get anybody to do anything. It's very much down to the schools. (Sophie, primary school)*

Amelia talked about the threshold for schools to access support from external agencies being too high. She suggested that by the time students' behaviour has reached the level where external professionals (such as mental health services) will offer support, the students' behaviour is already at the stage where it is highly likely to escalate further.

*The overt observable behaviour is the very tip of the pyramid and that's the bit that you see last of all. (Amelia, primary school)*

Figure 5 illustrates how Amelia described behaviour as communication, stating that the observable challenging behaviour is often displayed at a crisis point for a student, when they can no longer contain strong emotions. Amelia felt that by the time a student reaches the threshold for accessing external support, it is often too late and the student's behaviour often follows a downward spiral of escalating severity.

**Figure 5: The pyramid and the spiral: Amelia describes behaviour as communication**



#### 5.2.4 Theme 4: Collaboration

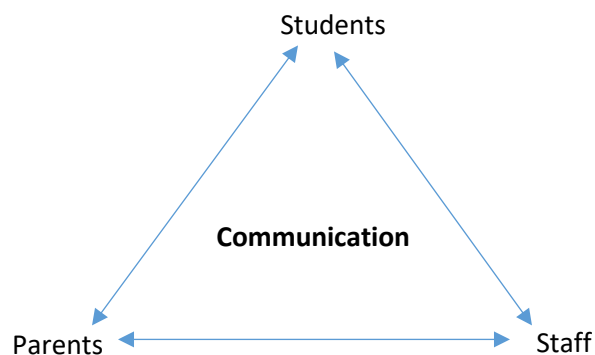
The theme of Collaboration was identified in ten of the fourteen interviews. This is similar, but distinct, from the theme of Community and Relationships. Collaboration encompasses solution-focused approaches to behaviour management, student voice, and communication between all stakeholders.

##### *a) Communication*

William described how important communication is when dealing with a behaviour issue. He talked about how staff need to be communicating with the child and their parents so that parents can then also communicate with their child about behaviour expectations in the school. This triangle of communication is illustrated in Figure 6 and by the following quote:

*It is part of this triangle that if you've had a conversation with this child then there ought to be a sense that the parent understands and can reinforce and pick up that. (William, independent school)*

**Figure 6: William's triangle of communication**



##### *b) Collaboration with students*

Collaborating with students to reach mutually agreeable solutions to behaviour issues was talked about by several participants. Daniel talked about how it is important to make expectations clear to students, but as well as saying what the student is expected to do, Daniel also suggested that it should be made clear what school staff and parents will do to support the student to be successful.



*... lay out the expectation going forward, and the expectations for everybody, so we're expecting the child to not do whatever that was again, parents need to reinforce that at home, and as a school we're going to support you by ... (Daniel, primary school)*

Charles talked about the difference it can make if a student has the opportunity to have an input into the strategies being used to promote positive behaviour. He commented that even if the strategies are the same ones as those that have already been tried, if the student has had the chance to give their input on them, they are more likely to be successful.

*If the young person has had an input into what strategies they think will work, probably what you've already tried, but if they've got an input in it, then it'll work. (Charles, PRU)*

One of the ways identified to collaborate with students was 'student voice'. This often refers to students being represented on school councils, being given some form of responsible role, or having the opportunity to have some input into decisions around the school. Participants felt that this could be useful. However, it had to be done meaningfully, as described by James:

*I have a real problem with a lot of student voice in a lot of schools, which is basically students moaning and whining about things and expecting the teachers to jump to it, or even worse, the patronising situation of giving them a budget of £500 and asking them how they want to spend it. That's not helping to run the school. That's almost making a mockery of the whole thing. What I want them to do is, yes, make valid suggestions about how the school can be improved, and then make those things happen, and the expectation is, if they suggest something that I think is a goer, that I'll only put as much effort in as they do. (James, secondary school)*

One of the participants, William, also talked about how collaboration does not work with all students.

*It doesn't work with somebody who has made a decision about authority, that they feel beyond authority or they feel adults are not worth listening to or the world is against them or they don't feel in control of their own destiny through the normal systems. (William, independent school)*

c) Role models

Role models were talked about as a way of promoting positive behaviour among the students.

*... those older ones really are role models to the younger ones, because they meet with the younger ones three times a day so that softens the edges of the school. (George, independent school)*

*... giving them the responsibility and holding them to it, to have that responsibility of being role models to the younger students. (James, secondary school)*

Both George and James are referring to older students being seen as positive role models to younger students. Teachers can also be seen as role models and Geddes (2006) suggests that this is of particular importance for students with insecure attachments.

d) Collaboration with external services

Collaboration with external services was also talked about as being important in enabling students to access the right support in a timely manner, as illustrated by the quote below:

*We're making sure that our curriculum and our pastoral systems are there to help the child, but also that we're holding other services and agencies to account. If a child's in child protection, or even if they're not, making sure that Social Services are playing their part in helping that child and their needs. (Rosie, PRU)*

The SSLs rely on external services to enable them to give students the right support so collaboration between these external staff and school staff is essential.

Working together is something that Edward mentioned several times throughout his interview. In terms of working together with other schools, he recounted the example of how all the special schools in the local area work together to deliver a consistent behaviour management approach. This was only possible after the Local Authority devolved the responsibility for training to the schools themselves. Edward felt that this was a positive development, as *all the special schools went out and got a couple of people trained and then we started working together and there was not just a whole school culture, but a county-wide promotion. (Edward, special school)*

### 5.2.5 Theme 5: Flexibility

Flexibility was identified as a theme in ten out of the fourteen interviews.

#### a) Flexible expectations

Participants talked about the importance of being able to be more flexible in terms of expectations and environment when working with students who persistently display undesirable behaviour, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*It's not a one size fits all approach. You adapt it to your context, but you also adapt it to the individual child, within parameters. (Daniel, primary school)*

*We're a flexible school and we're very adaptable. If there's something we need to do to make it better, we'll do it. (Charles, PRU)*

*The school has this standard, behaviour expectations, and sometimes teachers feel they have to be black and white about it. (Oliver, secondary school)*

All the participants acknowledge the role of flexibility when dealing with students who display persistently challenging behaviour. An individualised approach may be needed for the most challenging students and, as Daniel states, there is not a one size fits all approach.

#### b) Flexible curriculum

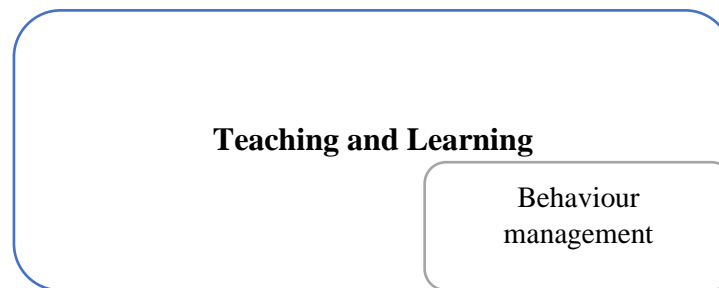
Adapting the curriculum to engage these persistently challenging students was seen as key to effective behaviour management.

*If you don't plan a lesson very carefully, then you can create those pockets and those pockets are then where behaviour will occur. It needs to be that they're coming straight in, and that means that they're sitting down, planner on the desk, bag on the floor, started activity on the board, engaged with learning within seconds... (Henry, secondary school)*

*If you get the curriculum wrong, you can have major issues. (Joseph, secondary school)*

Expanding on this quote, Joseph described his view of behaviour management being part of the overall teaching and learning in a school (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Behaviour management as part of teaching and learning**



c) Differences between mainstream schools and alternative provision

The differences between mainstream schools and both PRUs and independent schools were discussed by participants. The general feeling was that mainstream schools were less able to be flexible in their approach than other settings, as suggested by the following quotes:

*... the opportunity to work with very small groups and actually feel that you could influence the individual student's progress more readily than you can in a mainstream school where, as a subject teacher, you're maybe responsible for 150 young people. (Jessica, PRU)*

*With mainstream, with such a big audience and a lot more staff as well, they're very rigid in how they work ... I think they can be too rigid and too black and white when sometimes there is a grey bit in between which you need to work with. Nothing can be just black and white. That's the issue. (Charles, PRU)*

*If those interventions didn't work, then that was that. The child would be excluded, and it was very rigid. There wasn't much flexibility for individuals. (Rosie, PRU)*

There also appeared to be a difference highlighted between mainstream schools and independent schools, regarding their ability to be flexible. George pointed out that the independent sector tends to have different issues to the mainstream sector.

*In the independent sector, it's different behaviour management on the whole because we tend not to have the same problems. (George, independent school)*

In part this will be due to the higher amount of resources available to independent sector schools.

Oliver talked about how mainstream schools generally require compliance from their students and do not encourage challenge to the teachers.

*A characteristic of the main school environment is compliance without challenge. Most of the really creative, clever, interesting kids I've come across are not always compliant. They will challenge, so they're almost on a hiding to nothing when you say going back into mainstream, as it were. Unless we change that, then we're making it difficult for them.*

(Oliver, secondary school)

This requirement for compliance potentially goes against any aim that a school has with respect to encouraging students to think critically and voice their opinions. In order to achieve a balance between this and ensuring an orderly school environment, it is crucial that schools offer the opportunity for students to raise their concerns and teach them how to do so in an appropriate manner.

Edward placed notable emphasis on the role of flexibility in effectively managing behaviour. He identified this as one of the main differences between behaviour management in special schools and in mainstream schools and suggested that inflexibility can create a barrier to learning.

*Our flexibility towards pupils ... it's stark when you look at mainstream and us, so you can start off with barriers to learning.* (Edward, special school)

Edward recounted some examples of flexibility towards working with students, such as allowing an individual student to move around the classroom freely or allowing an individual student to wear shoes that do not meet uniform requirements. He acknowledged that strategies such as these may be difficult to implement in a mainstream environment, where there are more students in each class and each class has numerous different teachers.

One of the advantages Edward identified of being a special school is that there are a maximum of 185 students in the whole school, which could be a single year group in a large mainstream school. Edward said that, within a special school environment, with 185 students, *there could be 185 different behavioural strategies going on*. He acknowledged that there are some aspects that are the same across the school:

*There'll be cultural things, be nice to your friends, show kind hands, and all those sorts of things.* (Edward, special school)

However, within that there will then be different behaviour strategies to meet each individual student's needs. Edward also suggested that these behaviour strategies may need to change day by day depending whether the student is having a good day or a bad day. He said that this is a *difficult philosophical approach* to explain to staff, particularly those who have *got a very black and white thought on behaviour*.

Ensuring that students are ready for learning is the aim of the flexible approach advocated by Edward:

*If you can't show behaviour for learning, then there's no point asking a child to take part in a serious learning activity.* (Edward, special school)

This is another area that Edward highlighted as being difficult for mainstream schools, suggesting that *mainstream probably ignore that to their detriment* as there is often an insistence that students have to take part in certain activities at certain times.

Ensuring that lessons are engaging is something that Edward also feels is key to promoting positive behaviour:

*If pupils aren't engaged, then they are going to do other things and we can only engage them if the activities are engaging.* (Edward, special school)

This perception puts the onus on the teacher leading the class to ensure that the students remain engaged. This is a potentially controversial view, as it may be that students behave in an undesirable manner even when the teacher is presenting an activity that should be engaging. This could be for a variety of reasons outside of the teacher's control.

#### 5.2.6 Theme 6: Clear expectations

Clear expectations was identified as a theme in ten out of the fourteen interviews.

##### a) Consistency

Consistency was something that was talked about by several participants. Thomas talked about how school, for some students, is a more consistent environment than home and this stability is

important to them, meaning that they will behave in a compliant manner because they want to be accepted there.

*... they'll behave themselves because school is a bloody sanctuary to them. They like the security and the stability that school will give them.* (Thomas, secondary school)

Daniel reinforced this by highlighting that school should provide all children with the same level of care and opportunity.

*It's a consistency thing. All children should be having that same level of care and opportunity.* (Daniel, primary school)

Consistency is also important between staff. Having clear consistent expectations means that all staff can be supportive in a behaviour management role, as mentioned by the following participants:

*Management relies on a whole school and the relationships within it, and everybody working together as a team. Consistency. Those sorts of things that mean that everybody has got a fair chance of being supportive of behaviour management.* (Jessica, PRU)

*One of the issues, certainly here over the years and I believe it's an issue in lots of schools, is this notion of consistency. A consistent approach, which is seen to be fair by staff and by students, which is consistently applied. I think part of the consistency, while it's not necessarily the most important thing, we felt very strongly that having a very simple policy, a very clear policy that all could understand, would help.* (Joseph, secondary school)

*In my first school, the systems for behaviour management had to be very, very, very consistent.* (James, secondary school)

#### b) Rewards and punishments

Rewards were also discussed by several participants. It was generally indicated that these need to be meaningful to be effective in changing behaviour, as suggested by George:

*... what's meaningful for the kids that makes it a big thing at the end of each term.* (George, independent school)

Henry talked about children wanting to succeed. This touches on Greene's (2008) work which suggests that children do well if they can, although Henry does not explicitly mention Greene's work.

*I've never met a child who doesn't really want to succeed. They may struggle to communicate that or to show that, but every young child wants to be successful. They want to do well. They want to receive praise. They want to be recognised and it's often really about finding a way that you can do that.* (Henry, secondary school)

However, one participant, Sophie, felt that neither rewards nor punishments should be used at all where possible. Instead, Sophie advocated for a restorative approach.

*Those children were not intrinsically motivated to behave well ... it wasn't from within. They didn't understand.* (Sophie, primary school)

*I'm an advocate for restorative approaches.* (Sophie, primary school)

Edward spoke in a positive manner about the use of rewards in managing behaviour at school. He described instances where he has used reward schemes successfully to support students with their behaviour. For example:

*One of the post-16 students come to see me on a Monday morning and chooses a hot chocolate that she will get later on if she manages to do what she's asked.* (Edward, special school)

Edward also indicated that he holds a belief that human nature requires reward in order to do anything.

*We work as humans on an intrinsic reward, so I would not be sitting here if I wasn't getting paid because I've got a mortgage and an enjoyment of spending money.* (Edward, special school)

There is a potential contradiction as he talked about intrinsic reward, suggesting that the reward is something internal, such as a sense of achievement. But then he went on to talk about monetary reward for doing a job. This could suggest that there is a lack of clarity of the term 'intrinsic', or it could suggest that the enjoyment that Edward gains from spending the monetary reward is the



intrinsic motivator for him to go to work. Given the enthusiasm with which Edward talked about his job, there is also the implied suggestion that, despite the above comment, monetary reward is not the only reason why Edward is working as a headteacher in a special school.

When talking about punishments, Edward was less positive about these than about reward schemes. He suggested that punishments, if used, need to be appropriate and immediate. To illustrate this, he cited an example where a student does something inappropriate on a Monday and the punishment for this does not occur until the following Friday. Edward talked about the type of punishment that would be appropriate for use in his school and explained how missing any part of the curriculum is unacceptable to him. For example, a child who has behaved in an undesirable way may be told that they are going to miss their swimming lesson as a consequence. Edward felt that this is not an appropriate punishment. He said:

*If you wouldn't make someone miss maths because they'd done something then you should never make them miss anything else on the curriculum, because that's just ridiculous.*

(Edward, special school)

He also raised the point that if swimming on a Friday is the part of the week which that student most looks forward to, and they know on Monday that they are not going to be allowed to take part that week, then there is little to motivate the student to behave for the remainder of the week.

Edward was open in describing how some members of school staff find his approach to punishments problematic. He said that it is quite a difficult philosophical approach to get across to staff.

*A lot of staff have got a very black and white approach to behaviour. It's if they don't do as I say, they're being rude, unruly, naughty.* (Edward, special school)

This can cause some difficulties as Edward said that some members of staff feel that there should always be some sort of punitive measure when a student has become challenging. However, Edward went on to talk about the ways in which he supports staff, as a headteacher, to alter this attitude.

c) Language use

Amelia talked about the difference between discipline and behaviour management. She found the language used to be problematic and felt that discipline referred to something more pervasive than day-to-day management of behaviour. Thomas also talked about the difference between discipline and behaviour management. He suggested that discipline had more negative connotations than behaviour management.

*Discipline is different from behaviour and it's different from codes of conduct and so on. I suppose discipline is about exercising sanctions. (Thomas, secondary school)*

*I don't really like the word discipline. I prefer a more restorative approach because discipline feels like you're imposing ... We cannot physically change behaviours, so discipline to me is a very old-fashioned word and it's a word that I don't use very much at all. I try to avoid using it at all. (Amelia, primary school)*

d) Clear structure

The importance of having a clear structure to the school behaviour management system and to lessons in general, was mentioned by some participants. Having a clear structure helps to set out clear expectations for the students.

*It will come down to how the lessons have been structured, the gaps that have been created in the lesson or children struggling to access the learning. (Henry, secondary school)*

*It's very clear. There's no grey areas in terms of what we want at [this school]. (James, secondary school)*

e) Growth mindset

Growth mindset was talked about by two participants, George and James. George talked about encouraging staff to praise effort over outcome, and James talked about staff using the language of gratitude as opposed to the language of praise.

*Our big thing is Growth mindset, based on Carol Dweck's research ... it changes their whole mindset as to how they approach failure. (George, independent school)*

*Having a Growth mindset isn't about comparing yourself to others. It's about thinking your child can get better at everything if they work a bit harder. (George, independent school)*

*It's been distorted, some of the stuff about Carol Dweck and the Growth mindset brigade, but the key messages of praising effort and changing strategies in order to bring about decent learning outcomes rather than just praising outcomes is something that I do think has become a culture at the school. (James, secondary school)*

### 5.2.7 Theme 7: Making choices

Making choices was identified as a theme in eight out of the fourteen interviews. This theme encompasses ideas such as control, authority, and making mistakes. It was decided to group these together under 'Making choices' as they were all about the choices made either by students themselves or by staff, in terms of how they responded to students' undesirable behaviour.

Oliver talked explicitly about young people making choices, referring to Glasser's Choice Theory (1985).

*There's the choice element Glasser talks about. If I choose to act this way, then there's consequences. You've got to accept those consequences. (Oliver, secondary school)*

#### a) Making mistakes

Making mistakes was talked about by several participants. They acknowledged that young people do often make mistakes with their behaviour and that ideally this should be part of the learning process, as shown in the following quotes:

*It's not about the punishment or the reward. It's about the day to day experience ... having the absolute right people working with the kids so that they're able to help the children buy into that so they can make their mistakes because it means nothing to the kids if I say to them you're losing some points. (Rosie, PRU)*

*I think with a sanction system, you need to realise that people can make a mistake, but then you need to issue the sanction and then I think you need to have an approach where it's a clean slate, a fresh start ... (Henry, secondary school)*

*... then there's just making a mistake. We all make mistakes sometimes, don't we? We all make the wrong choice sometimes.* (Sophie, primary school)

b) Gender differences

George mentioned that he had observed gender differences in behaviour issues.

*Boys are more obviously harder work because the girls, when they have been mean they do it sneakily ... it would look like boys were getting into trouble more. The reality is the girls are probably just sneakier and it's happening in toilets or on social media, so you're less aware of it, whereas the boys tend to shoot themselves in the foot more often.* (George, independent school)

This was not mentioned by other participants, but it is a point of interest that may be worth further investigation in future research.

c) Authority, power and control

Authority, power and control were mentioned in several interviews within the context of behaviour management. Both Thomas and Daniel, as highlighted in the quotes below, mentioned the power imbalance between teacher and student.

*Some people would be surprised at what percentage accuracy of information some people are prepared to act on because they use this authority thing. I'm right, you're wrong. You're the child, I'm the teacher. It's a power imbalance.* (Thomas, secondary school)

*This is about power. It's about authority. It's about power structure. Schools are agents of discipline and control. We like it or not, but they are controlling institutions by and large. You have to have order. You have to have discipline. You walk in straight lines. You wear your uniform. They exercise power and control. That's what they do. It's what they're set up to do and they have to.* (Thomas, secondary school)

Some participants also talked about how masculinity also played a role in students' behaviour, particularly in regard to students' feeling that they needed to behave in an undesirable way to maintain control.

*They want to be tough men. They often have responsibilities that they shouldn't have because they're children ... feeling like they have to be the man of the house and also feeling that they're learning to control women because they've seen others do it, so they often try and control the key people.* (Amelia, primary school)

The power imbalance between teacher and student is a potential trigger point for challenging behaviour. Whilst it is necessary for maintaining the current structure of the school system, for some students this lack of power is unsettling and the only way they know to respond is with challenging behaviour. Daniel articulates this in the quote below:

*... a lot of children's behaviour is about control and my only control is ... you're going to reject me, so my only control is to reject you quickly, so I don't waste time with you.*  
(Daniel, primary school)

The literature review refers to punitive responses being imposed by those who are seen to be in authority and many behaviour management systems aiming to maintain the authority of the teacher. Both Kohn (1993) and Glasser (1985) mention the unequal power differential between students and teachers, and the barriers that this can create to a productive learning environment. Farouk (2010) discusses how this power differential can be a factor involved in how teachers react to misbehaviour in the classroom. Farouk's (2010) findings suggested that teachers are more likely to express their anger towards a child than towards an adult, due to the perception that it is okay to express anger towards a less powerful other.

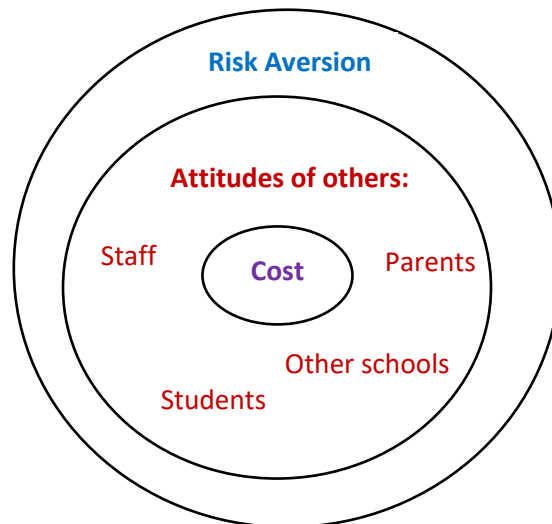
The findings from this study show that authority, power and control were mentioned in several interviews when discussing behaviour management. Participants talked about the power imbalance between teachers and students, and the impact that this has on how teachers respond to undesirable student behaviour. An interesting aspect that was mentioned by some participants was also about how masculinity played a role in students' behaviour. This was particularly in regard to students feeling that they had to behave in undesirable ways in order to maintain control of the situation. The power imbalance between teachers and students can be unsettling for some students and the only way they know to respond is with challenging behaviour, as they struggle to take back some of that power to keep themselves safe.

### 5.3 Barriers to alternative approaches

During the interviews, participants were asked about barriers which they felt were inhibiting schools from implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management. There were three main barriers identified by participants. These barriers were: Cost, Attitudes of others, and Risk aversion. The below section discusses each of these themes in more detail.

Figure 8 illustrates an overview of the themes. Cost is at the core of the issue, with schools struggling with finances, time, and resources. At the periphery of this, the attitudes of others have an impact on whether the senior leaders are willing to try something different. The perceptions of staff, students, parents, and other schools all influence decisions, with staff attitude being the most commonly mentioned factor. Finally, overshadowing these other themes is risk aversion. This theme indicates that senior leaders are generally not willing to take risks by introducing a new approach to behaviour management that is different to other schools. Each of these three themes will be subsequently examined in greater detail.

**Figure 8: Barriers to alternative behaviour management approaches**



### 5.3.1 Barrier 1: Cost

Cost was the most significant barrier to implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management, as identified in the interviews. This relates not only to financial cost, but also to the cost of time and resources. There is also a potential cost to reputation by introducing something new or different, which, if unsuccessful, could lead to difficulties recruiting staff and attracting families to send their children to the school.

#### *a) Financial cost*

Most participants talked about the financial cost of introducing a new approach to managing behaviour, as illustrated by the quotes below:

*I think rewards are a key thing, but rewards can cost money. (Charles, PRU)*

*Who's going to pay for the support? It's always about money. (Amelia, primary school)*

*Well, I guess it's cost. It's very expensive ... What the kids get here is a private school education. (Rosie, PRU)*

This is an expected finding as finances are a major consideration for schools in a time when budgets are overstretched and support is at a premium.

#### *b) Time*

The issue of alternative approaches generally being more time consuming than simply issuing punishments, was also highlighted by several participants, as highlighted by these quotes:

*I think it is quite time-consuming. It's costly because you've got to train people up and you've got to do it properly. (Sophie, primary school)*

*I think it's quite a time-consuming approach, maybe in the first instance, and therefore if you've got lots of things you're dealing with, I think it would be very hard to go down the restorative line. (Joseph, secondary school)*

*You have to resource it right, because it's labour intensive. It's expert intensive as well. (William, independent school)*

Training staff is key to ensuring that alternative approaches are properly implemented. This has a high cost in terms of time at the beginning of the implementation process, but it is essential. However, it may also be a factor in schools being reluctant to commit to trying a different approach.

An additional consideration is that even once staff have completed initial training and a new approach is being implemented, alternative approaches are generally more time consuming than traditional behaviour management based on rewards and punishments. Alternative approaches do not allow schools to see quick results. This type of change takes time and commitment.

#### c) Resources

The cost to wider resources, such as staffing, rooms and transport, was also discussed by participants, as below:

*In a small unit like this, we don't have the staffing or the capabilities to be able to do that.*  
(Jessica, PRU)

*The problem with being a rural school, we've got to facilitate transport. We can pay for taxis and everything.* (Amelia, primary school)

*It depends on the circumstances and the resources you've got as a school.* (Daniel, primary school)

This concern is related to the previous concern about financial cost. If schools do not have access to adequate finances, they cannot invest in the necessary resources that are needed to implement changes within their school.

#### 5.3.2 Barrier 2: Perception and attitudes of others

Attitudes tend to be shaped by perceptions, and the perception and attitudes of others was identified as a significant barrier to schools implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management. The most common theme was the attitude of staff members, but there was also concern about how an alternative approach would be received by parents, students and other schools.

The researcher had expected some of the senior leaders to mention the perception of Ofsted as being a barrier to trying something different. This was because Ofsted inspections are high stakes



for schools, and a less than favourable result can have a long-lasting impact on the school and its reputation. Due to this risk, it appeared likely that schools would tend to stick to approaches that were promoted by Ofsted and Department for Education (DfE) guidance, which are based around rewards and punishments. But this was not identified as one of the common themes in the interviews.

The following sub-sections will discuss each of the sub-themes, namely: the attitude and perception of staff, followed by the attitude and perception of parents, students and other schools in turn.

#### *5.3.2.1 Staff*

Ten out of the fourteen interviews mentioned the attitudes of staff as being a barrier to adopting an alternative behaviour management approach. This appears to be a common theme across the different schools. Amelia's quote below illustrates the issue that SSLs appear to be facing.

*I think one of the main barriers is attitudes of staff. Obviously the headteacher is the key, but it's also about the rest of the staff in the school and what we've come across time and time again, is the classic person who believes that that child is naughty and has chosen behaviours, and I hate it. (Amelia, primary school)*

##### *a) Engaging staff*

Participants felt that it would be difficult to engage staff members with the change to an alternative approach for behaviour management. Some felt that staff members may have a negative attitude towards more collaborative approaches and perceive the change as a challenge to their authority. De Vries, van de Grify, and Jansen (2014) found that teachers' willingness to participate in continuing professional development (CPD) activities reflected on how much knowledge they had of alternative approaches. This underlines the importance of teachers having appropriate training before attempting to implement alternative approaches. Greene (2008) gives an excellent example in his book, *Lost at School*, of how the changes made by one teacher in a school can lead to other staff seeing the success of an alternative approach and also seeking to implement these changes themselves. This shows that starting small is one possible way of moving towards whole school change in a gentle way.

Participants talked about how it can be difficult to engage staff in change in working practices and that staff are not always willing to take part in new initiatives. Staff may be sceptical of another change being brought into the school environment, given the many changes that the education sector has seen over the past few years. James highlights that introducing change in a school is a challenging endeavour.

*I think just persuading a body of staff and ensuring that language is used in an appropriate way is one of the most challenging things you can do. (James, secondary school, talking about the process of introducing a Growth mindset approach in his school)*

Daniel talked about when he started in the senior leadership role at his school. He felt that the change of leader was difficult for staff to deal with. As a result, he refrained from making changes to any systems within the school, including the behaviour management approaches, until he had been in post for several months, as described in this quote:

*There's a lot of people in change, isn't there? So, having a change of leadership is one thing, but having a change in all the behaviour systems at the same time, it causes a lot of disruption. (Daniel, primary school)*

George highlights something in the quote below that several participants raised as an issue; namely that staff did not have a good understanding of the alternative approach and felt that it would be ineffective.

*Staff scepticism [is a barrier], because it sounds like you're going all airy-fairy. It sounds like you're saying academic rigour doesn't matter and as long as you give it a go, that's alright ... and there's the fact that some staff fundamentally don't agree with you. (George, independent school)*

There were concerns that some staff members would have a negative attitude towards alternative behaviour management approaches and would feel that their authority was being challenged by a more collaborative way of working with challenging students. The following quotes give an insight into the participants' discussion of this issue.

*Barriers ... it's about the authority word. It's about the management word, and about the perception that teachers have of their role and what our function is here. Our function is*

*to lower barriers, access learning to kids, focus on learning, focus on creativity ...*  
(Thomas, secondary school)

*... staff's attitude towards not wanting to change but thinking about how good you are at something. There's still always opportunities to improve.* (Charles, PRU)

*I think the staff have got to get over barriers. Staff have got to welcome it. They've got to see it as a positive way of working, and also that they can see how it could work within the school.* (Jessica, PRU)

Staff may not feel confident in implementing a new approach. It may also be an additional source of pressure in an environment that is already stressful for many teachers, as suggested by Oliver:

*Not all teachers are open because it can be seen as a challenge to your authority and that comes down to confidence ... When you're dealing with challenging students, it's exceptionally rewarding, but exceptionally tiring.* (Oliver, secondary school)

#### *b) Staff training*

Availability of training and allocating time for staff to attend training, to help them to fully understand new approaches was another issue that was raised. Participants felt that staff were likely to need training to increase their knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, for example attachment theory. Some SSLs were able to provide training themselves, drawing on their own experiences and connections with other schools. Others arranged for external professionals to visit and support staff with training on specific subjects or issues.

*We're part of the teaching school alliance who run a range of [training], so I've done training [for staff] via them on attachment and other issues around approaches to behaviour management. Utilising the expertise of people like educational psychologists ... we do regular educational psychologist drop-ins for staff, so they can bring issues that they're struggling with.* (Daniel, primary school)

Participants understood the importance of staff being properly trained in order to implement an alternative approach to behaviour management.

*You've got to train people up and you've got to do it properly.* (Sophie, primary school)

Oliver highlighted the importance of teachers being given the opportunity to learn from more experienced teachers as mentors. He feels that this is something that is lacking in current programmes of teacher education.

*I believe passionately that that's one of the elements that's missing now in teacher training ... I've seen over my time, mentoring and coaching, natural teacher mentoring and coaching, diminish. I've seen the staffroom almost disappear in schools and that's where a lot of informal mentoring and coaching went on. (Oliver, secondary school)*

#### c) Staff turnover

Staff turnover was a further issue. Senior leaders found that even if they were able to enable their staff to access training, if that member of staff then moved on to a different place of employment, the school was then left with the need to train another new member of staff.

*Because of the staff changes and because of the transition that we've had this year, we haven't been able to employ permanent staff. We've had supply staff. It's been quite difficult to do [staff development] ... so, staff development, I think, is absolutely key really. (Jessica, PRU)*

Participants emphasised the need to get the right staff in the school, particularly when dealing with the most challenging students.

*It's also ultimately about your staff as well, and their commitment to those young people and how they see the school and how they kind of live those values into being, really. (Henry, secondary school)*

#### 5.3.2.2 Parents

Parental attitudes and perception of the school's approach to behaviour management was mentioned as a barrier in five out of the fourteen interviews.

As highlighted by Sophie, there may be an issue with parents not fully understanding the principles of alternative approaches to behaviour management.

*Actually, a lot of [pupils] would tell you that it's harder to do a restorative meeting than it would be to miss your play time. They understand why that is and they understand why that's a good thing, but it's harder to get across to parents. (Sophie, primary school)*

SSLs have a balance to achieve between the interests of students who need extra support to manage their behaviour and the perceptions of parents of other children who may be concerned about their own child's education being disrupted. Amelia explained that this is a difficult situation for a headteacher to be in.

*I've come across this several times, where the head is lovely, warm, desperate to support the child ... and the parents have just held her to ransom and said 'If this child stays in this school, we're all going to leave', and she's said to me, 'A quarter of my parents will not be here on Monday if this child is still in the school. What am I supposed to do?'* (Amelia, primary school)

a) Getting parents involved

Intergenerational parenting difficulties was mentioned as an issue, particularly in deprived areas. This created a barrier to getting parents involved in the school adopting an alternative way of managing behaviour.

*Sometimes it's a generational thing as well. If you've always lived in this area and your parents weren't great parents and their parents weren't great parents for whatever reason, then you've never seen what good parenting looks like, so how do you know how to do it?* (Daniel, primary school)

Where schools had attempted to embed changes based on Growth mindset, they found that parents were not always on board with these changes and could undermine them.

*I think that trying to get over that barrier is quite challenging because of course a lot of parents do the same, over praise their children.* (James, secondary school)

*There's definitely parents who, on the surface, say one thing to us, but we know they're saying the wrong message to the kids because it's the way they were brought up. My generation were all brought up in fixed mindset schools.* (George, independent school)

b) Pressure from parents

Pressure from parents to maintain a 'traditional' approach to managing behaviour was mentioned by one of the participants from the independent schools. This may be a more significant barrier in

the independent school sector where parents are paying fees for their child's education and may therefore feel more able to exert pressure on the school, as suggested by George:

*Other parents say, 'We're paying 30 grand a year. We don't expect our kid to have their lessons disrupted. What have you done about it?'* (George, independent school)

#### 5.3.2.3 Students

The attitudes of the students, to an alternative way of managing behaviour, was raised as a concern by several participants. Participants felt that not all students would have the ability to be able to engage with an alternative approach, as illustrated by the following quotes:

*The limitations are if a child genuinely, genuinely, genuinely feels beyond contact, the whole process, then obviously it's not going to work.* (William, independent school)

*I'm not absolutely convinced that all of our young people will engage with it at all ... I think the wrong moves at the wrong time, it may not work.* (Jessica, PRU)

*There are some children who cannot do restorative work. As much as you try and teach them empathy, they haven't got empathy and it's really, really, really tricky. But they're just very, very few.* (Sophie, primary school)

#### 5.3.2.4 Other schools

The perception of the school by other schools was also a consideration for some participants. SSLs did not want to risk any damage to their school's reputation in the eye of other SSLs and their schools. One participant, Thomas, felt that there was a perception by other schools that his school did not have challenging students due to them being in a rural location.

*The common perception is that we're a nice little rural comprehensive and we are in lots of ways, but I don't think it means we can't have some difficult kids.* (Thomas, secondary school)

Another participant, Jessica, talked about there being a perception by mainstream schools that PRUs do not manage students' behaviour as strictly as is warranted.

*I think we're very often seen as being too soft with our students ... we're probably perceived as giving in far too much and too easily with our students.* (Jessica, PRU)

### 5.3.3 Barrier 3: Risk aversion of senior leaders

Overshadowing the other barriers to implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management is the sense that senior leaders prefer not to take risks by doing things differently to other schools.

*It's that bit about ... you can always point to 'well, other people do it this way', rather than 'okay, nobody's ever tried it like this before' or 'yes, it's a bit unusual'. So, it's how much risk a leadership team can take. (Oliver, secondary school)*

There is a sense of the challenge of change. This may be due to schools being generally compliant to the current system and any change may be seen as being too disruptive to the status quo. The combination of the other barriers; cost, in terms of finances, time and resources; and the perceptions of others, including staff, students, parents and other schools; create an environment in which risk is not necessarily rewarded. Amelia expressed her opinion that the barriers within the current system are just too many for individual headteachers to overcome.

*I honestly think it's impossible. I really do, and it sounds really negative to say that, but the most emphatic and supportive and devoted of headteachers have to take into account so many different areas ... impact on other children, on staff, on parents, on the budget. It just becomes too much for them, so I think it's impossible. (Amelia, primary school)*

## **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented the results of the fourteen interviews conducted with SSLs in English schools. The research questions which this chapter aimed to answer are:

1. What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
2. What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in English schools?

The results address these questions through the identification of seven overarching themes related to SSLs' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools, addressing research question 1. The themes were also related to SSLs' attitudes towards, and knowledge of, alternative approaches to the interventionist system of behaviour management. The

seven themes were: Leadership, Community and relationships, Issues within the current system, Collaboration, Flexibility, Clear expectations, and Making choices. Barriers, which are perceived as preventing schools from implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management, were also identified addressing research question 2. These barriers were: Cost, Perception of others (including staff, parents, students and other schools), and Risk aversion of senior leaders. Each theme and barrier has been discussed in turn in this chapter, with illustrative quotes included from the interviews.

As a way of presenting some of the key quotes from the interview data, the researcher created an image which depicts a student sat at a school desk (Appendix S). The colours in the image are made up from a repeated selection of written quotes taken from the interviews with the participants of this study. The quotes were chosen as it was felt that they illustrated the positive aspects of the interview data, highlighting the motivation of SSLs to support students who present with challenging behaviour. The picture is titled 'Images of behaviour management' as the researcher hopes that the quotes may offer a new image of behaviour management as being something that is collaborative and supportive. This is opposed to the traditional image of a student sat alone at a school desk in a detention, which the drawing shows.

The implications of the findings presented in this chapter will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion, in relation to the research questions. The following chapter, Chapter 6, presents the results and initial analysis of the online survey conducted with SSLs at mainstream schools and PRUs in England.



## **CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION – ONLINE SURVEY**

### **6.0 Introduction**

An online survey was conducted to gather a wide range of views from senior school leaders (SSLs) about alternative behaviour management approaches. The survey was intended to gauge the general level of knowledge that SSLs held about alternative approaches to behaviour management. It also aims to gain an indication of the prevailing attitudes towards these approaches and the perceived barriers to change.

The data gathered from this survey will help to answer the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?

This chapter will report the results of the online survey and begin to analyse them in a preliminary way. This will be followed through in more depth in the discussion in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion. The same online survey was sent to both the mainstream schools and to the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). This allows the results to be more easily compared. The survey results were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. This chapter presents the results of the surveys sent to the PRUs and the mainstream schools, offering a comparison between the two types of settings.

### **6.1 Online survey results**

#### 6.1.1 Pupil Referral Units

Overall, 84 participants responded to the online survey sent to PRUs. Most of the participants who responded worked at secondary Local Authority (LA) maintained PRUs (n=37, 44.04%). But there were a range of participants from other types of PRUs, as illustrated in the below table (Table 9).

**Table 9: Types of school as stated by participants**

Type of PRU	Participants working at this type of PRU		Type of mainstream school	Participants working at this type of school	
	n	%		n	%
Primary LA maintained	4	4.8	Primary LA maintained	14	32.5
Secondary LA maintained	37	44.0	Secondary LA maintained	6	14.0
Primary Academy	1	1.2	Primary Academy	7	16.3
Secondary Academy	5	5.9	Secondary Academy	11	25.5
Other	32	38.1	Other	3	7.0
No response	5	5.9	No response	2	4.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Participants who selected the ‘Other’ option were given the opportunity to specify the type of PRU they worked at. The ‘Other’ option made up 38.11% of the sample (n =32). Most of these ‘Others’ were PRUs which catered for students across both the secondary and primary age range, so they could not be categorised as either secondary or primary. Other types of PRU included hospital tuition, free schools, and special schools.

#### 6.1.2 Mainstream schools

There were fewer responses from the mainstream school participants than there were from the PRU participants (PRU n=84, mainstream n=43). Overall, 43 participants responded to the online survey sent out to mainstream schools. These comprised of 21 participants (48.83%) working in mainstream primary schools and 17 (39.53%) working in mainstream secondary schools. Of the remaining five participants (11.63%), two did not respond to this question, one worked in a mainstream middle school, one worked in a RC Voluntary Aided primary school, and one worked in a Free School. This participant did not say whether the Free School was a primary or secondary setting.

The mainstream schools were selected based on those schools that had been inspected by Ofsted most recently at the time when the mailing list was compiled (July 2017). The Ofsted website was

used to access this information. The most recent 150 inspected primary schools and the most recent 150 inspected secondary schools were selected to send the survey to.

The mainstream primary and secondary schools were a mixture of Local Authority (LA) maintained and academies, with the exception of the one primary school that was Voluntary Aided. The majority of primary schools were LA maintained and the majority of secondary schools were academies. This is illustrated in the above table (Table 9).

The size of the schools ranged from less than 50 students to over 1500 students, with the majority of schools having between 501 – 1000 students on roll. The primary schools tended to be smaller than the secondary schools and to vary more in terms of the range of different sizes. This is illustrated in the tables in Appendix T. As expected, the secondary schools were generally larger than the primary schools in terms of the number of students on roll. Most secondary schools (n = 10, 58.8%) had between 501 – 1000 students on roll. No secondary schools had less than 50 students on roll. Most primary schools (n = 6, 28.6%) had 401 – 500 students on roll. No primary schools had over 1000 students on roll.

### 6.1.3 Participants’ experience as a senior leader

Most participants in both types of settings had worked in a senior school management role for 10 years or more (PRU participants n = 36, 42.86%, mainstream participants n = 14, 32.6%). The range of experience as a SSL in both settings is shown in the tables below (Table 10).

**Table 10: Number of years that participants have worked in a senior school leadership role**

<b>No of years working in senior school management (PRU participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No of years working in senior school management (mainstream participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 2 years	6	7.1	Less than 2 years	7	16.3
2 – 5 years	16	19.0	2 – 5 years	11	25.5
6 – 9 years	21	25.0	6 – 9 years	9	20.9
10 years or more	36	42.9	10 years or more	14	32.6
No response	5	5.9	No response	2	4.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>100.0</i>

As most participants had worked in senior school management for 10 years or more, this suggests that once people begin working in a senior leadership position in school, they are likely to continue in the same or similar position for a prolonged period of time (or at least the ones who tend to fill in research surveys are). This has implications for potentially implementing changes to behaviour management. Alternative approaches often take time to embed within a school community and it is not easy to demonstrate quick results. However, if SSLs are tending to stay in their position for a number of years, this would mean that they would have the opportunity to make long-term changes and to continue leading this change over their time in the senior leadership role.

### 6.1.4 Perceptions on effectiveness of behaviour management systems

Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of their school behaviour management system from 0 – 10 (0=Very ineffective – 10=Very effective). For the PRU participants, all responses ranged from 6 to 10 on the scale, as illustrated in Table 11 below. The most common selection on the scale was at point 8 (n = 24, 28.57%). For the mainstream participants, all responses ranged

from 4 to 10 on the scale, as illustrated in the table below (Table 12). The most common selection on the scale was at point 9 (n = 13, 30.2%).

It was noted that there was a wider range of opinions on the effectiveness of participants' school behaviour management systems for participants from mainstream schools (ranging from 4 to 10) than for participants from PRUs (ranging from 6 to 10). This could be due to the wider range of settings encompassed by mainstream schools, which means that there will potentially be more factors to be taken into account.

Comments were offered by a total of 59 PRU participants out of the total 84 (70.24%) and a total of 35 mainstream participants out of the total 43 (81.4%), as to why they had selected a particular point on the scale. These comments were analysed using thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006). This enabled the researcher to identify common themes and categorise the comments into groups.

As shown in Tables 11 and 12, the more effective the participants rate their school behaviour management system, the larger the increase in the number of positive themes and the larger the decrease in the number of negative themes mentioned by participants. This would be as expected. The term 'positive' refers to themes that indicate why the participants feel their school behaviour management system is effective. The term 'negative' refers to themes that suggest reasons why the participants feel their school behaviour management system is not as effective as it could be.

According to the survey results, all participants believed that their school behaviour management system was effective to some extent. The PRU participants who believed that their school behaviour management was most effective mentioned Restorative Practice, clear expectations, and consistency as being important factors explaining why they felt that their system was effective. The mainstream participants who believed that their school behaviour management was most effective mentioned clear expectations, concise and structured systems, and consistency as being important factors explaining why they felt that their system was effective. Comments from several participants who had selected point 9 on the scale mentioned involvement from the senior leadership team as a positive aspect. Interestingly this was not commented on by participants, as either a positive or a negative, at any of the lower points on the scale. This suggests that involvement of active senior leaders in the Behaviour Management policy may contribute to the perceived effectiveness of overall school behaviour management. Another notable finding was that

several mainstream participants stated that they felt their school’s behaviour management system was effective overall, but that they felt it needed an element of flexibility to be able to successfully meet the individual needs of the most challenging students.

The negative theme that was most commonly mentioned by participants at both PRUs and mainstream schools was inconsistency among different members of staff. It could perhaps be expected that consistency would be higher among staff in PRUs as they are generally smaller groups and therefore it should be easier to maintain consistency. However, this may be counteracted by the necessity of being flexible in a PRU environment.

**Table 11: Effectiveness of school behaviour management system, as stated by PRU participants [0=very ineffective – 10=very effective]**

Rating (scale of 0 – 10)	n	%	Positive themes	Negative themes
0 – 5	0	0	n/a	n/a
6	2	2.38	None identified	Inconsistency among staff and areas of the school
7	11	13.1	Constant review of strategies; flexibility	Changing dynamics of student groups; inconsistency
8	24	28.57	Consistency; focus on teaching and learning; relational approach; Restorative Practice; working with stakeholders	Inconsistency; increase in the severity of challenging behaviours; lack of multi-agency support; school full beyond capacity
9	19	22.62	Clear expectations and strategies; consistency; evidence-based methods, outstanding teaching; Restorative Practice; simple reward schemes	None identified
10	7	8.33	Clear expectations; focus on the value of education; outstanding Ofsted results	None identified
No response	21	25.0	n/a	n/a
<i>Total</i>	<i>84</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

**Table 12: Effectiveness of school behaviour management system, as stated by mainstream participants [0=very ineffective – 10=very effective]**

Rating (scale of 0 – 10)	n	%	Positive themes	Negative themes
0 – 3	0	0	n/a	n/a
4	1	2.3	n/a	Over reliance on sanctions, over complicated, lack of opportunities for restorative work
5	0	0	n/a	n/a
6	2	4.7	n/a	Large number of students getting multiple/repeated sanctions, lack of consistency, ineffective for the most challenging students
7	8	18.6	Staff training, students engaged in lessons, sanctions appropriate and timely, able to meet individual needs, consistent, clear and simple, nurturing, use of support plans	Exclusions not effective, lack of consistency, emotional involvement from staff
8	11	25.6	Clear, easy to understand, consistent, individual needs met, students engaged in lessons, restorative approaches	Lack of resources to effectively implement strategies
9	13	30.2	Clear structure, consistent, fair and balanced, SLT involvement, concise, staff training, consistency, student involvement	n/a
10	1	2.3	No comment made	No comment made
No response	7	16.3	n/a	n/a
<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>n/a</i>	<i>n/a</i>

### 6.1.5 Suggestions for improvements to behaviour management systems

Participants were also asked for comments on anything that they felt would improve the effectiveness of their school behaviour management system. This was commented on by a total of 53 PRU participants (63.1%) and 27 mainstream participants (62.8%). The predominant theme of the comments was that increased resources and funding would help schools to improve their behaviour management systems. Both types of setting mentioned a need to improve staff numbers and retention of experienced staff. PRU participants also highlighted that increased funding would enable access to more appropriate buildings and spaces for students, both indoors and outdoors. An increase in consistency among staff, better parental support, and improved communication with mainstream schools were also mentioned by PRU participants. Mainstream participants mentioned increased funding would offer ways to support individual student needs. There were also several

comments by mainstream participants that focussed specifically on additional support needed during unstructured times, such as lunchtimes. An increase in consistency among staff, better parental support, and involvement from external agencies (for example, CAMHS) were also common themes in the data from the mainstream survey.

Comments were offered by a total of 58 PRU participants (69%) and 33 mainstream participants (76.7%) on what they felt worked particularly well as part of their school behaviour management system. Common themes among PRU participants included taking a restorative approach, engagement with parents, and appropriate staff training and experience. Mainstream participants highlighted clear expectations and boundaries. Common themes among both types of setting included a focus on positive behaviour and achievements rather than punishments, and consistency across the school.

One difference between the settings was that the PRU participants mentioned restorative approaches fairly often as something that worked well in their schools, but this was not a theme in the data for the mainstream participants. This may be because restorative approaches are used more commonly in PRUs in England than in mainstream schools, rather than it not being a positively received approach in mainstream schools.



### 6.1.6 Implementation of Behaviour Management policies

All participants at both types of setting felt that their Behaviour Management policy was implemented reasonably well in practice. On a scale of 0-10 (where 0=not implemented well in practice and 10=very well implemented), all participants chose points on the scale between 5 to 10 as illustrated in the Table 13.

**Table 13: How well participants feel school Behaviour Management policy is implemented [0=not implemented well in practice - 10=very well implemented]**

How well Behaviour Management policy is implemented in practice, on a scale of 0 – 10 (PRU participants)	n	%	How well Behaviour Management policy is implemented in practice, on a scale of 0 – 10 (mainstream participants)	n	%
0 – 5	0	0	0 – 4	0	0
6	6	9.7	5	1	2.9
7	7	11.3	6	3	8.6
8	26	41.9	7	5	14.3
9	17	27.4	8	11	31.4
10	6	9.7	9	13	37.1
			10	2	5.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>100.0</i>

### 6.1.7 School ethos

Participants were asked to choose three key words which they felt best described the ethos of their school. This was a free choice, so participants could select whichever words they wished without restriction. Some words came up frequently, such as ‘inclusive’, ‘supportive’, and ‘caring’. It is interesting to note that these same three words came up most frequently in responses to this question across both PRUs and mainstream schools. The choice of these words suggests that the participants want their schools to be welcoming environments for all children, including those whose behaviour is challenging. The word clouds below (Figure 9 and Figure 10) illustrate the

words that were used by participants. The more frequently the word was used, the larger the font in which it is represented in the word cloud.

**Figure 9: Word cloud illustrating the words selected by participants to describe the ethos of their school (PRUs)**



**Figure 10: Word cloud illustrating the words selected by participants to describe the ethos of their school (mainstream schools)**



### 6.1.8 Challenging behaviour typology

In order to gain an idea of the types of challenging behaviour that are most commonly seen in PRUs and mainstream schools, participants were asked to state how often they saw specific types of behaviour. 61 PRU participants (72.62%) and 35 mainstream participants (83.3%) responded. Responses are illustrated in the following tables (Table 14 and Table 15). The different types of behaviour are roughly ordered from mild at the top of the list, down to more serious behaviours, such as physical aggression, at the bottom of the list. The most common type of behaviour seen often across both types of settings is distracting others during lessons. The more serious behaviours, such as physical aggression towards students and teachers, are most commonly seen rarely across both types of settings. Using a mobile phone during lessons is the behaviour that is most commonly never seen in class in mainstream schools. Overall most of these behaviours are reported to be seen only rarely in mainstream schools and sometimes in PRUs.

In both groups participants felt that the most extreme behaviours, such as physical aggression, were only rarely seen. This is positive, as it suggests that teachers are not regularly subjected to extreme behaviours and aggression. Media coverage of behaviour in school often focuses on these more serious examples and it can give the impression that this is more common than it actually is. This could be a contributing factor to schools having difficulties recruiting teaching staff.

One consideration to be aware of, in regard to this question, is that the survey was being completed by SSLs. The extent to which senior leaders spend time actually in the classroom will vary between schools, but it is likely to be less time than the average class teacher. This is especially the case in mainstream secondary schools, where there is often a larger staff team and a more rigid hierarchy.

**Table 14: Frequency of different types of challenging behaviour (PRUs)**

Type of behaviour	Frequency of behaviour			
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Distracting others during lessons	1	8	30	22
Being out of their seat during lessons	2	18	28	13
Shouting out in class	4	12	32	13
Refusing to do classwork	0	11	37	13
Using mobile phones during lessons	35	16	7	3
Seeking attention from the teacher at inappropriate times, interrupting the flow of the lesson	1	16	33	11
Passing notes in class	34	25	2	0
Verbal aggression towards other students	4	20	30	7
Verbal aggression/swearing towards teachers	4	17	31	9
Leaving the classroom	1	17	29	14
Damage to property	8	24	24	5
Physical aggression towards other students	10	34	13	4
Physical aggression towards teachers	11	32	13	5

**Table 15: Frequency of different types of challenging behaviour (mainstream schools)**

Type of behaviour	Frequency of behaviour			
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Distracting others during lessons	0	8	19	8
Being out of their seat during lessons	0	18	14	3
Shouting out in class	0	18	15	2
Refusing to do classwork	2	25	7	1
Using mobile phones during lessons	24	9	1	1
Seeking attention from the teacher at inappropriate times, interrupting the flow of the lesson	0	17	16	2
Passing notes in class	11	22	1	1
Verbal aggression towards other students	5	19	9	2
Verbal aggression/swearing towards teachers	7	21	6	1
Leaving the classroom	6	22	6	1
Damage to property	7	24	3	1
Physical aggression towards other students	4	22	8	1
Physical aggression towards teachers	15	17	2	1

### 6.1.9 Rewards and punishments

Almost all participants stated that their school had a rewards scheme in place for promoting positive behaviour. Out of 61 (72.62%) responses to this question from PRU participants, 55 schools (90.16%) had a reward scheme in place. Only 6 PRUs (9.84%) did not have a reward scheme in place. Out of 35 (81.4%) responses to this question from mainstream participants, 33 schools (94.3%) had a reward scheme in place. Only 2 mainstream schools (5.7%) did not have a reward scheme in place.

Of the schools which did have a rewards scheme in place, participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the rewards scheme. The results can be seen in Table 16. Most of the participants stated that the rewards scheme was somewhat effective, effective or very effective.

**Table 16: Effectiveness of reward schemes, as stated by participants**

Effectiveness of reward scheme (PRU participants)	n	%	Effectiveness of reward scheme (mainstream participants)	n	%
Very ineffective	3	5.5	Very ineffective	2	6.3
Ineffective	0	0	Ineffective	0	0
Somewhat ineffective	1	1.8	Somewhat ineffective	2	6.3
Neither effective nor ineffective	0	0	Neither effective nor ineffective	1	3.1
Somewhat effective	12	21.8	Somewhat effective	9	28.1
Effective	26	47.3	Effective	14	43.7
Very effective	13	23.6	Very effective	4	12.5
<i>Total</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Almost all participants stated that their school used punishments to address poor behaviour. Out of 59 PRU participant responses (70.24%) to this question, 53 schools (89.83%) did use punishments and only 6 schools (10.17%) did not. All mainstream participants stated that their schools used punishments to address poor behaviour. However, several mainstream schools (n=5, 11.63%) also mentioned use of Restorative Practice as a way of resolving behaviour issues.

Examples of common punishments stated by participants across both settings include: detentions; time out from lessons; exclusion from school; internal exclusion or isolation; meetings with parents; missing break or lunch time; and loss of privileges. Where schools did implement punishments, participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the punishments (Table 17).

**Table 17: Effectiveness of punishments, as stated by participants**

<b>Effectiveness of punishments (PRU participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Effectiveness of punishments (mainstream participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Very ineffective	1	1.9	Very ineffective	1	2.9
Ineffective	1	1.9	Ineffective	1	2.9
Somewhat ineffective	3	5.7	Somewhat ineffective	3	8.8
Neither effective nor ineffective	0	0	Neither effective nor ineffective	0	0
Somewhat effective	16	30.2	Somewhat effective	5	14.7
Effective	24	45.3	Effective	21	61.8
Very effective	8	15.0	Very effective	3	8.8
<i>Total</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Most of the PRU participants thought punishments were somewhat effective, effective, or very effective (n = 48, 90.57%). This is in comparison to the small number (n = 5, 9.43%) who thought that punishments were somewhat ineffective, ineffective, or very ineffective. This shows a strong trend towards SSLs believing that punishments are effective in changing student behaviour.

Only 3 of the schools did not use either rewards or punishments as part of their behaviour management systems. These were all PRUs. Two of these schools work exclusively with students who have medical needs, rather than being referred for behaviour issues. The responses of the third school suggest that they have a strong focus on Restorative Practice and building relationships, in place of using rewards and punishments.

The researcher considered using cross-tabulations to explore the relationships between participant perceptions of effectiveness of exclusions and effectiveness of rewards. However, it was decided that the low numbers involved would cause the cross-tabulations to lose validity and therefore this was not pursued.

6.1.10 Use of Fixed Term Exclusions

Participants were asked whether their school implements Fixed Term Exclusions as a punishment. Fixed Term Exclusions are where a student is told not to attend school for a fixed period of time, usually between one to five days. This question was responded to by a total of 59 PRU participants (70.24%) and 35 mainstream participants (81.4%). 42 PRU participants (71.19%) and 33 mainstream participants (94.3%) stated that their school did use Fixed Term Exclusions. Only 17 (28.81%) PRU participants and 2 (5.7%) mainstream participants stated that their school did not use this as a punishment. Tables 23 and 24 below shows how often participants stated that Fixed Term Exclusions were used as punishments at their schools.

**Table 18: Frequency of use of Fixed Term Exclusions**

<b>Frequency of use of Fixed Term Exclusions (PRU participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency of use of Fixed Term Exclusions (mainstream participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Never	17	28.8	Never	2	6.0
Less than once a month	22	37.3	Less than once a month	17	51.5
Once a month	4	6.8	Once a month	1	3.0
2 – 3 times a month	7	11.9	2 – 3 times a month	8	24.2
Once a week	1	1.7	Once a week	2	6.0
2 – 3 times a week	6	10.2	2 – 3 times a week	2	6.0
Daily	2	3.4	Daily	1	3.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>100.0</i>

These results suggest that neither PRUs or mainstream schools tend to use Fixed Term Exclusions on a regular basis, with most of the schools which do use them only using them less than once a month. There was a range of responses to a question about effectiveness of Fixed Term Exclusions. Within the PRU data, there was no strong trend for them being considered either effective or ineffective as a punishment. However, within the mainstream school data, most participants stated that they felt Fixed Term Exclusions were ineffective or somewhat ineffective. (See Table 19).



**Table 19: Effectiveness of Fixed Term Exclusions, as stated by participants**

<b>Effectiveness of Fixed Term Exclusions (PRU participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Fixed Term Exclusions (mainstream participants)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Very ineffective	10	17.5	Very ineffective	1	2.9
Ineffective	4	7.0	Ineffective	10	29.4
Somewhat ineffective	12	21.0	Somewhat ineffective	6	17.6
Neither effective nor ineffective	10	17.5	Neither effective nor ineffective	3	8.8
Somewhat effective	18	31.6	Somewhat effective	3	8.8
Effective	2	3.5	Effective	9	26.5
Very effective	1	1.8	Very effective	2	5.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>100.0</i>

6.1.11 Perceptions of whether students choose their behaviour

Participants were asked to think about their most challenging students and to consider whether these students consciously chose to behave in a challenging way. Most responses across both types of settings suggested that they thought that these students were sometimes consciously choosing their behaviour (Table 20).

**Table 20: Participant opinions on whether students consciously choose their challenging behaviour**

<b>Do you think that students consciously chose to behave in a challenging way? (PRUs)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Do you think that students consciously chose to behave in a challenging way? (mainstream)</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Never	3	5.4	Never	2	5.7
Sometimes	47	83.9	Sometimes	29	82.9
Most of the time	4	7.1	Most of the time	4	11.4
All of the time	2	3.6	All of the time	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>56</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>100.0</i>

### 6.1.12 Knowledge of alternative approaches

To gauge participants' knowledge and use of alternative approaches to behaviour management, as opposed to using rewards and punishments, participants were asked about their knowledge of four alternative approaches: restorative approaches, choice theory, attachment-based strategies, and collaborative problem solving. Tables 21 and 22 clearly show that senior leaders in both PRUs and mainstream schools have a good knowledge of alternative approaches to behaviour management and that these are already being used in many schools.

**Table 21: Participant knowledge of alternative approaches to behaviour management (PRUs)**

	<b>Restorative approaches</b>	<b>Choice theory</b>	<b>Attachment-based strategies</b>	<b>Collaborative problem-solving</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>I have never heard of this</b>	1 1.8%	16 28.1%	0 0%	3 5.3%	20
<b>I have heard of this but don't know much about it</b>	3 5.3%	7 12.3%	4 7.0%	6 10.6%	20
<b>I know about this but would not use this approach in my school</b>	3 5.3%	3 5.3%	4 7.0%	4 7.0%	14
<b>I know about this and would like to start using this approach in my school</b>	3 5.3%	4 7.0%	8 14.0%	6 10.5%	21
<b>I know about this and already use this approach in my schools</b>	47 82.5%	27 47.37%	41 71.9%	38 66.7%	153
<b>Total</b>	57 100.0%	57 100.0%	57 100.0%	57 100.0%	229

**Table 22: Participant knowledge of alternative approaches to behaviour management (mainstream schools)**

	<b>Restorative approaches</b>	<b>Choice theory</b>	<b>Attachment-based strategies</b>	<b>Collaborative problem-solving</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>I have never heard of this</b>	3 8.6%	15 42.9%	8 22.9%	6 17.1%	32
<b>I have heard of this but don't know much about it</b>	4 11.4%	1 2.9%	4 11.4%	10 28.6%	19
<b>I know about this but would not use this approach in my school</b>	6 17.1%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	6
<b>I know about this and would like to start using this approach in my school</b>	4 11.4%	3 8.6%	3 8.6%	3 8.6%	13
<b>I know about this and already use this approach in my schools</b>	18 51.4%	16 45.7%	20 57.1%	16 45.7%	70
<b>Total</b>	35 <i>100.0%</i>	35 <i>100.0%</i>	35 <i>100.0%</i>	35 <i>100.0%</i>	140

The results of the mainstream survey also suggest that some senior leaders may not be aware of some alternative approaches to behaviour and this may be why these approaches are not being used in some schools. Through lack of knowledge about these alternative approaches, it is possible that some schools are missing out on vital insights into the underlying reasons behind disruptive behaviour.

Only 6 (17.1%) mainstream participants stated that they knew about restorative approaches but would not implement it in their schools. No participants said that they knew about any of the other approaches but would not implement them. This suggests that there is the motivation in the majority of schools to try alternative approaches in addition to the use of rewards and punishments. Choice Theory was the least well known of the alternative approaches to behaviour management by participants in both the mainstream schools and the PRUs.

### 6.1.13 Summary

The results of this survey give an insight into the views of SSLs on behaviour management systems being used in PRUs, mainstream primary schools and mainstream secondary schools in England. Overall, the results of this survey appear to indicate a positive outlook for behaviour management systems, with schools striving to be inclusive, caring and supportive to their students (as shown in word clouds, Figures 9 and 10).

The majority of schools feel that the behaviour management approach they have in place is effective for their setting. Overall, there appears to be much more of a focus on rewarding positive behaviour, as opposed to implementing punishments for poor behaviour. Most schools do not use Fixed Term Exclusions on a regular basis. There were strong themes of the importance of consistency and clear expectations.

Involvement of senior leaders in whole school behaviour management appears to lead to the perception that the behaviour management system in place is more effective. This suggests that it is important for senior leaders to be actively involved in behaviour management.

While the majority of schools continue to use rewards and punishments as part of their behaviour management systems, there are also many schools using alternative approaches and most schools do not use Fixed Term Exclusions on a regular basis. The survey results indicate that there is the motivation in schools to try alternative approaches to behaviour management. However, there is also the indication that there may be a lack of knowledge among SSLs about some of these approaches. This may explain why these approaches are not being used more widely.

The general impression given by the results of this survey is summarised well by a comment from one survey participant:

*Never give up trying – something can and will work for every youngster.*

## **6.2 Discussion of key findings**

The data gathered from the survey suggest that the approaches used for behaviour management in PRUs and mainstream schools are fairly similar. There were only a few particularly striking differences between the two sets of survey results. This is surprising to some extent, as the researcher expected that there may be a higher prevalence of alternative approaches being used in

PRUs. The students who attend PRUs will most likely have already been involved with the behaviour management system at their mainstream school before referral to the PRU. By virtue of the fact that they have then been referred to alternative educational provision, this suggests that the usual way of approaching behaviour management has not worked for these students. So, it would appear appropriate for a PRU to try alternative ways of managing behaviour. However, this did not appear to be the case overall.

There were more PRUs ( $n = 17$ ) than mainstream schools ( $n = 2$ ) that stated they did not use Fixed Term Exclusions as a punishment. There were also three PRUs that stated that they did not use either rewards or punishments as part of their behaviour management system. Two of these schools work exclusively with students who have medical needs, rather than being referred for behaviour issues, so it may be that they did not see a high prevalence of undesirable behaviour among this cohort of students. The responses of the third school suggest that they have a strong focus on Restorative Practice and building relationships in place of using rewards and punishments.

Another difference between the settings was that the PRU participants mentioned restorative approaches fairly often as something that worked well in their schools, but this was not a theme in the data for the mainstream participants. This may be because restorative approaches are perhaps used more commonly in PRUs in England than in mainstream schools, rather than it not being a positively received approach in mainstream schools.

As a reminder to the reader, the area of research explored in this study is important as challenging behaviour is a key source of stress for teachers. Kyriacou's (2001) research suggested almost 20 years ago that teacher stress was rising, and this situation has continued to escalate (Jerrim, Sims and Taylor, 2020). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has only added to the difficulties teachers are facing (Kim and Asbury, 2020). This is leading to issues for schools in England being able to recruit and retain qualified teachers. For example, in 2016 in England there were more teachers who left the profession than there were new teachers becoming qualified (Gibbs, 2018).

The results from the online survey conducted for this study show that the most common type of undesirable student behaviour, seen in both PRUs and mainstream schools, is distracting others during lessons. For the core minority of students that this study is focussed on, this type of behaviour becomes persistent and tends to lead to an escalating series of consequences. The different types of undesirable student behaviours listed in the survey results (Chapter 6, Tables 17

and 18) impact on teachers and other students to different extents. For example, the most common type of undesirable student behaviour (distracting others during lessons) has an impact not only on the student themselves, but also on the other students who they are distracting from their learning and on the teacher who has to manage this behaviour. Other types of undesirable behaviour, such as leaving the classroom, whilst still needing to be addressed for the sake of the student themselves would have much less of an impact on the other students in the classroom.

The survey results showed that the more extreme types of undesirable behaviour, such as physical aggression, were only seen rarely in both types of settings. This is positive as media coverage of aggressive incidents in schools can sometimes give the impression that teachers are subjected to this type of behaviour on a regular basis. Having a focus in the media on these more extreme types of behaviour, which appear to actually only occur on rare occasions, runs the risk of attention being taken away from the more low level undesirable behaviour that teachers have to manage on a daily basis. The cumulative impact of this type of disruptive behaviour could be a significant contributing factor to teacher stress.

### **6.3 Summary**

This chapter has presented the results of the online survey sent to PRUs and mainstream schools, offering a comparison between the two types of settings. The research questions which this chapter aimed to answer are:

- RQ 1: What are SSLs' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?

The results address these questions by giving an insight into the general level of knowledge that SSLs hold about alternative approaches to behaviour management, as well as the prevailing attitudes towards these and the perceived barriers to change.

The next chapter presents the results of the data gathered in international contexts, namely: Scotland, the Netherlands, and Bhutan. This is discussed as a comparison to the findings from English schools.

# CHAPTER 7: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS – INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

## 7.0 Introduction

This chapter will examine the results of an international comparison, to explore behaviour management approaches used in schools in countries other than England. The aim of this part of the study was to consider how alternative approaches are used in an international context, contributing to the following research question (RQ):

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?

Semi-structured interviews and an online survey were conducted with senior school leaders (SSLs), teachers and academics in an international context. The three countries that were chosen for the international comparison were Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan. The results for each of these will be discussed in this chapter. They will also be discussed further in Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion.

As a reminder to the reader, Scotland was chosen as it is in close geographical proximity to England and similar economically, yet the number of school exclusions is significantly lower in Scotland than it is in England. The Netherlands was selected as well-being and education for Dutch children has been rated the highest in Europe, and there are low levels of school exclusions in this country. Bhutan was chosen for a case study because the country has an interesting policy of educating holistically for Gross National Happiness (GNH), rather than seeking to increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The semi-structured interviews for Scotland and the Netherlands were analysed with an IPA approach (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). This involved focussing in-depth on the idiosyncratic experience of each individual participant. Following analysis of each individual interview, common themes were then able to be identified across the two groups.

As described in Chapter 3: Methodology, IPA requires the researcher to work at multiple levels to construct and cluster identified themes (Embeita, 2019). Intra-case themes are first developed through exploratory comments and then the researcher seeks patterns to suggest inter-case themes

which are common across multiple interviews. The data are then combined with the researcher's interpretation of it to produce a coherent narrative (Embeita, 2019). In contrast to thematic analysis, IPA explicitly recognises the importance of the researcher's interpretation of the data and has more of a focus on the individual's idiographic lived experience.

The online survey for Bhutan was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Where the survey responses lent themselves to numerical categorisation, descriptive statistics were used to present the results. For answers that were qualitative in nature, the data were analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The next sections of this chapter give a brief introduction to each of the countries included in this international comparison.

## **7.1 Scotland**

Scotland was chosen as, in contrast to England, the number of school exclusions is significantly lower. In 2016/17, there were only 5 cases of permanent exclusion recorded in Scotland, compared to 7720 cases recorded in England (McCluskey et al., 2019; Department for Education, 2018). There is also wider implementation of restorative approaches in Scottish schools. In addition, Scotland is in close geographical proximity to England and has a similar economic status.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with SSLs at Scottish schools (n=5). This included two participants from mainstream secondary schools and two participants from mainstream primary schools. The fifth participant was an external education consultant who had worked closely with a number of schools in Scotland to implement restorative approaches. All participants held Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and all the interviews were conducted in June 2016.

To preserve anonymity, the participants will be referred to by fictional names throughout this thesis, detailed in Table 23 below. The demographic information shown in Table 23 was collected via an online questionnaire that participants were asked to complete prior to the interview taking place. One of the limitations of this method was that there were some questions that participants chose not to answer. This is indicated in the table with NR (No Response).



**Table 23: Participant demographics – Scotland (n=5)**

Participant name	Current job role	School code	Type of school	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range (years)	Years working in education	Years in current role
Isla	Headteacher	SP1	Primary	Female	White British	51-60	26-30	6-10
Kirsty	Principal	SP2	Primary	Female	British	21-30	6-10	1-5
Fiona	Deputy Headteacher	SS1	Secondary	Female	White British	51-60	31-35	16-20
Graham	Deputy Headteacher	SS2	Secondary	Male	NR	51-60	31-35	16-20
Gavin	Consultant	n/a	n/a	Male	NR	NR	41-45	NR

The interviews were analysed using IPA, in the same manner as the interviews with the SSLs from the English schools and Dutch schools. Each interview was analysed individually, and then common themes were identified across the interviews.

## 7.2 The Netherlands

In a recent UNICEF report (2013), it was suggested that well-being and education for Dutch children was rated as being the highest quality in Europe. Across continental Europe, there are generally lower numbers of school exclusions per year compared to the numbers in England. In the Netherlands, in 2016/17, the permanent exclusion rate was 0.06%, compared to the permanent exclusion rate in England that year which was 0.2%. There was also a difference in the rate of Fixed Term exclusions, with the Netherlands at 0.47% and England at 9.4% (Department for Education, 2018; Inspectorate of Education, 2018).

As described in Chapter 2: Literature Review, the school system in the Netherlands is quite different to that in England. As a recap for the reader, education is compulsory in the Netherlands between the ages of 5 and 16 years. Children usually start school at the age of 4 and receive 8 years of elementary education. At the end of this period, the students take an exam. Based on the results, teachers make a recommendation about which level of secondary education would be most suitable for each individual child. There are typically four levels of secondary education. Children who thrive on the more vocational options enter a VMBO (*voorbereidend middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*) school. For children who are best suited to follow an academic route, they will either attend a HAVO (*hoger algemeen voortgezet onderwijs*), which offers a higher general secondary education, or a VWO (*voorbereidend wetenschappelijk onderwijs*), which offers a pre-

university education. Children who scored particularly high scores may attend a gymnasium, which provides the full VWO curriculum as well as Latin and Ancient Greek.

Students can change between different levels as they progress through their secondary education. For example, if they start off at a HAVO school, they may then progress to a VWO school. This means that students still have the potential to achieve the highest level of education regardless of where they begin at secondary level.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school leaders, teachers and academics in the Netherlands (n=5). Four of the interviews were conducted by the researcher during a visit to the Netherlands. The fifth interview was carried out over Skype, due to the participant's availability.

The participants were from a diverse range of backgrounds. One was a headteacher at a secondary school. Another was currently working in Higher Education and talked about her experiences as a school student in the Netherlands. A third was a teacher at a special school for students with behavioural difficulties. A fourth was an *orthopedagogue* who works with a range of therapeutic interventions in a similar way to an educational psychotherapist in England. The final participant was an academic who had conducted research in a similar area on behaviour management in schools.

These participants were selected as they all have experience of the school system in the Netherlands, but from different aspects, so it was intended that this would give a broad cross-section of data and experiences. The participant, who was an academic, was included as she has experience working with teachers across a large number of schools in the Netherlands, so it was hoped that the data would reflect this breadth of experience.

The interviews were analysed using IPA, in the same way as the interviews with the senior leaders at schools in England and Scotland. To preserve anonymity, the participants will be referred to by fictional names throughout this thesis, detailed in Table 24 below. The demographic information was gathered by an online questionnaire. A limitation of this, as with the participant information from Scotland, is that some participants did not respond to all the questions. This is indicated in the table with NR (No Response).

**Table 24: Participant demographics – The Netherlands (n=5)**

Participant name	Month of interview	Current job role	Type of school	Gender	Ethnicity	Age range (years)	Years working in education	Years in current role
Noah	October 2016	Headteacher	Secondary	Male	Caucasian	41-50	16-20	1-5
Eva	October 2016	Research Officer	n/a	Female	White other	51-60	6-10	1-5
Mila	August 2016	Teacher	Special	Female	NR	NR	NR	NR
Tess	August 2016	<i>Orthopedagogue</i>	n/a	Female	NR	NR	NR	NR
Zoe	August 2016	Academic	n/a	Female	NR	NR	NR	NR

### 7.3 Bhutan

The researcher decided to gather data from Bhutan, due to the country's interesting policy of educating holistically. Bhutan is a small nation state nestled in the Himalayas. As described in Chapter 2: Literature Review, in Bhutan, Gross National Happiness (GNH) has replaced the measure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as the indicator of the country's well-being. GDP tends to be used as a measure of how well a country is performing, but it is a very narrow measure focussing only on economic activity. In comparison, GNH is measured across nine different domains, ranging from psychological welfare and how people use their time, to community vitality and ecological resilience (Tobgay, 2015). GNH places an emphasis on relationships between people, and also on the relationship between people and the environment.

The aim of the holistic education system in Bhutan is to increase GNH throughout the country, rather than seeking to increase GDP. However, the education system in Bhutan has only relatively recently moved away from monastic education and corporal punishment in the last few decades. Bhutan is now seeking to implement a more Western style of education. While this has raised issues for both teachers and students, it is also an opportunity to learn from the best practice of other progressive education systems without having to navigate a system of extrinsic motivation being already embedded in schools and society.

Bhutan's policy of educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH) offers a new perspective from which to view the education system. GNH emphasises the importance of each individual's

relationships with the environment and with other people. This ideal aligns well with the collaborative nature that many alternative approaches to behaviour management have in common. Whilst acknowledging that the contexts of Bhutan and England are different, there are perhaps some aspects of the GNH infused curriculum that could be successfully brought into English schools, such as the increased emphasis on relationships and interconnectivity between people and their environment. This idea also aligns with the principles of working systemically which many Local Authority school support services now aim to do. It also links back to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, describing children as growing within multiple nested systems of influence, all interacting with each other (Hampden-Thompson and Galindo, 2017).

An online survey was carried out to investigate the views and experiences of SSLs in Bhutan, regarding behaviour management in schools. The researcher initially intended to conduct interviews with SSLs in Bhutan, in line with those conducted in the other countries. However, difficulty recruiting participants for interviews meant that an online survey was a more realistic manner of collecting data.

Participants were recruited by sending emails to schools listed on the website for the Ministry of Education for the Royal Government of Bhutan. Four participants, each from a different school, responded to the survey. This was a 28.6% response rate. The data from these responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

All 4 participants described their fluency in English as either 'very good' or 'fluent'. This was important to ascertain as all of the questions in the survey were in English. They had all worked in schools in Bhutan for at least 6 years, with most having worked in this sector for more than 10 years. All of them were in Senior School Leadership positions, either as a Principal or other management roles. This suggests that the participants all have significant experience working in schools in Bhutan and will have a good understanding of how the behaviour management systems work. The age range of the students at the participants' schools varied, from 6 years old up to 19 years old, so this may mean that the results of the survey cover different behaviour management systems as appropriate to different age groups.

There are limitations to the results of the survey conducted in Bhutan as the sample size was small and the response rate to the survey was quite low at 28.6%. However, the findings do provide

insight into some of the approaches to behaviour management currently being used in individual schools in Bhutan, despite not being generalisable.

The results of the online survey are reported in the following section. The data from Bhutan is presented slightly differently than the data from Scotland and the Netherlands as it was gathered via a survey rather than as interview data. Table 25, below, offers a summary of the results, which are subsequently discussed in more detail.

**Table 25: Results of online survey presented for each participant – Bhutan (n=4)**

	Participant One	Participant Two	Participant Three	Participant Four
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Male	Male	Male
<b>Age</b>	41 – 50 years	41 – 50 years	41 – 50 years	31 – 40 years
<b>Fluency in English</b>	Very good	Fluent	Very good	Very good
<b>Time spent working at schools in Bhutan</b>	More than 10 years	6 – 10 years	More than 10 years	More than 10 years
<b>Job title</b>	Principal	Management	Principal	Vice Principal
<b>Age range of students at current school</b>	14 – 18 years old	5 – 18 years old	6 – 18 years old	14 – 19 years old
<b>Use of punishments</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Use of rewards</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Perceived effectiveness of behaviour management system in current school</b>	Moderately effective	Very effective	Very effective	Very effective
<b>If you could make one change to the way behaviour is managed in your school, what would that be?</b>	<i>“Strengthen parents’ participation in educating our children”</i>	No comment made	<i>“Enhance reward system and involved parents and stakeholders as guest speakers.”</i>	<i>“I would prefer to use more counselling measures than punishment”</i>
<b>Aware of Gross National Happiness (GNH) policy</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Opinion on whether GNH has an influence on how behaviour is managed in schools</b>	Probably yes	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably yes
<b>How GNH has influenced the way behaviour is managed in schools</b>	<i>“Mostly adults are very compassionate when it comes to dealing with difficult children. This is because of the spiritual influence of Bhutanese people. Mind training and mindfulness practices are being implemented in schools which also helps in curving disciplinary problems in the schools.”</i>	<i>“Has been an important factor in eliminating corporal punishment. But not in developing an alternative.”</i>	<i>“Banning corporal punishment is hindering the behaviour management. If the ban of corporal punishment is lifted the behaviour would not be a problem in any of the schools. However, we have minimal of such issues.”</i>	<i>“More citizens think that attaining happiness is dependent on his or her actions to others. The concept of GNH assists in helping students to think that if you cause good the result will be good and if one cause evil the result will be evil.”</i>

## 7.4 Qualitative data analysis

Three themes in common with the English interviews were identified across the interviews and open ended responses to the survey undertaken in Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan. These were: Community and relationships, Clear expectations, and Barriers to change.

One way of thinking about the themes identified in the international data is that the theme of ‘Community and relationships’ is concerned with collaboration and empathy. This theme fits with the principles of the alternative approaches to behaviour management. The theme of ‘Clear expectations’ seems to be focussed on more traditional ideas about behaviour management. This does not mean to imply that there cannot be clear expectations within alternative systems of behaviour management, as this is not the case. However, the theme tended to focus on more rigid ways of managing behaviour, such as ‘traditional’ responses of rewards and punishments. The third theme, ‘Barriers to change’, appears to bridge the gap between these two other themes, suggesting reasons why the change has not yet been made from the clear expectations of reward and punishment based systems, to approaches that rely more on the values of community and relationships. Each theme is discussed in more detail below.

### 7.4.1 Theme 1: Community and relationships

#### *a) Parental involvement and aspirations*

Raising aspirations was also a common theme, related to community and relationships, across participant groups. One participant in Scotland talked about the Scottish Attainment Challenge, for which they had received extra funding to employ an Attainment Co-ordinator to drive forward improvement in numeracy and literacy skills. The participant commented that this helps in:

*... increasing our children’s aspirations, raising their aspirations, helping them be the best they can be. (Kirsty, Scotland)*

By raising aspirations, the belief is that behaviour will then improve as the children will have a sense of achievement and purpose at school.

*When children can see that they’re being successful, that gives them a sense of pride again and it’s going to link back to an improvement in their behaviour. (Kirsty, Scotland)*

Another Scottish participant talked about how some young people do not appear to have any aspirations.

*I think resilience and aspirations, these are things we're seeing more and more with some of the poorer kids, that are just missing and it's very difficult to get them in place.*

(Graham, Scotland)

Parental involvement was seen as key to raising these aspirations. Engaging parents in support strategies when children presented with challenging behaviour was talked about as a key strategy.

*We try very, very hard to be supportive of the parents and we like to keep parents on board as much as possible because it's not going to work without parents' support, so very often we try and contact parents very early in terms of misbehaviour and things going wrong.* (Fiona, Scotland)

Getting parents involved in school life in general was also seen as a positive development. For example, parents being involved in organising the Christmas fair, helping out on school trips, and coming into the classroom to listen to children read.

*We have come a long way with our families' involvement and that's because we're constantly ... just a little drip each time ... trying to bring them into the school.* (Kirsty, Scotland),

A stark difference between the school system in the Netherlands and the school system in England, is that students in the Netherlands appear to have many more opportunities for flexibility. This is particularly true in terms of repeating a year of school. It is rare for a student in an English school to repeat a year, although it does happen in exceptional circumstances. In the Netherlands, it is accepted that sometimes a student needs to repeat a year of school and this has no stigma attached to it.

*There are so many people who have doubled a year at some point in their lives, who are university educated, who have got PhDs, it's not something that is stigmatised.*

(Tess, Netherlands)

This helps to raise aspirations as students are not limited in what they can achieve by reaching the end of compulsory education at the age of 16 as they are in England.



Tess talks about how students may need to repeat a year at school if things have not gone well that year. She acknowledges that sometimes it is the fault of the student but *most of the time there are factors beyond [the student's] control* (Tess, Netherlands).

The secondary school system in the Netherlands also offers flexibility as there are different schools for different levels of study. One of the participants described the system as:

*We have different levels, we have HAVO and we have VWO. VWO is preparing for university and HAVO is a lower level. It's more vocational, more practical.* (Mila, Netherlands)

However, unlike the system of grammar schools and comprehensive schools which was in place in England in the past, in the Netherlands, students are able to move between the different levels with ease. When they take their exams at one level of secondary school, they can choose to continue on to the next level. There is not an expectation that everyone will finish school at the same age.

*If you have the intelligence to do it, it's okay if you're 20 instead of 18. Who cares?* (Mila, Netherlands)

*One of my best friends is a psychologist who decided to go to the lowest level because she wanted to be with her friends when she was 12 ... because she worked hard, [she] went up and up and up and [she] eventually [became] university educated. It didn't matter how long it took. There isn't this pressure for you to reach certain levels by a certain age.* (Tess, Netherlands)

Eva talked about her experience of attending secondary school in the Netherlands.

*If you looked promising in an academic sort of way, you went to the type of school that I went to, and you only really engaged with children who were similar to you. I didn't spend time with children who might become bakers. They just weren't around me. I knew they existed. I met them when I went to my swimming lessons. But at school I didn't meet them at all, so that's a very different experience when it comes to behaviour management, as well as presumably for teachers.* (Eva, Netherlands)

*b) Relationships and rights*

Relationships were highlighted by several of the participants as being important in terms of behaviour management. This includes the relationships between teachers and students, as well as the relationships between staff members.

*Where did that go wrong? You can always pin it down to the relationship. The slight tone that wasn't right and the youngster takes umbrage to that. (Fiona, talking about classroom dynamics, Scotland)*

Having positive relationships throughout the school is suggested by the participants to have a positive impact on the whole school ethos.

*[Staff] really comment on the lovely relationships and the ethos. (Isla, Scotland)*

Developing this ethos is led by the attitude and example of the senior leaders in the school.

*Always at the heart of [the headteacher's] school is relationships. It's all about relationships. (Fiona, Scotland)*

The participants in the Netherlands also placed an emphasis on relationships in behaviour management.

*If the relationship is a happy one, behaviour management is probably not going to be an issue and learning is probably easier. (Eva, Netherlands)*

One participant talked about how students are still too young to be able to understand that even if you do not have a good relationship with a teacher, it does not have to impact on their grade in that subject, as long as they engage with the material being taught.

*It's not the person that is the problem. It is the relationship that is the problem. (Eva, Netherlands)*

Another participant talked about her work as a mentor, where she meets with children individually on a weekly basis, in order to build a positive relationship with them. They talk about *how things are going, how their marks are, if they have been punished a lot... then I talk about how it can go better* (Mila, Netherlands).

A third participant commented that relationships are *an essential part of classroom management* (Zoe, Netherlands). When Zoe was conducting research in a similar area of behaviour management in Dutch schools, she found that most studies *stated that it was so*

*essential for teachers to have a good relationship with their students, because otherwise they won't listen to what you say. If it's in a nice way or not in a nice way, they won't be obliged to do what you want from them (Zoe, Netherlands).*

However, Zoe also commented that there were not many studies that actually did something to improve these relationships. She speculated that this may be because *maybe it's too difficult to actually develop an intervention that focusses on that (Zoe, Netherlands)*. Talking about the importance of the two-way character of effective relationships, Zoe said:

*I think that's really important because how you build relationships with other people is partly the way you formulate things, but it's not only how you formulate it but how the other one interprets it. (Zoe, Netherlands)*

As well as comments about the relationships between teachers and students, one participant also talked about wider relationships, including those between family members, and relationships between families and external professionals. Tess, in her work as an *orthopedagogue*, was developing a methodology for working with families to identify needs and strengths. She talked about how families with complex needs can disengage from working with professionals. This can be a particular issue if too many areas of need are highlighted too soon, before there has been the opportunity for a relationship to be built up between the professional and the family.

*... things like child abuse, if they're brought in too early in a relationship with a professional, then families who you want to remain on board don't stay on board. (Tess, Netherlands)*

The two primary school participants in Scotland talked about being in a 'rights-respecting school', which is an important principle upon which the school communities were built. This ethos intends to support the development of positive, respectful relationships between members of the school community.

*I was very keen to get us on straight away, a rights-respecting school initiative, which we did. (Isla, Scotland)*

*The rights of our children are number one in everything we do. We always put their rights first because if the children's rights aren't being met, they can't learn. (Kirsty, Scotland)*

These two participants were from different primary schools in Scotland, but both followed the ‘rights-respecting’ approach as promoted by Education Scotland and UNICEF. Whilst it appears to be a more common approach in Scotland, there are schools across the UK who follow the ‘rights-respecting schools’ ethos. There are more than 5000 schools across the UK who are currently involved with the Rights-Respecting Schools Award from UNICEF UK (UNICEF, 2020). The researcher has personal experience of a Rights-Respecting school in England, so is aware that this approach is not unique to Scotland. The children are taught the children’s rights, as stated by UNICEF, and these form the basis of the school ethos. The children are also taught that they have to respect other people’s rights. The whole school is encouraged to use rights-respecting language.

One of these participants stated that the school ... *link[s] all behaviour to children’s rights and we teach them to respect those rights. That then gives them a language that they are all sharing, a shared understanding.* (Kirsty, Scotland)

Having this shared understanding of children’s rights extends out of the school environment into the community and home. The school reaches out to parents to teach them about their children’s rights too. One participant said that they have found that the children now actually challenge their families if they feel their rights are not being met.

*We find the children are able to challenge their families if their rights aren’t being met and that’s what we want and they’ll say to them ‘no I have the right to be fed, article 24’* (Kirsty, Scotland)

It is possible that by teaching the children what their rights are, the children may then feel more confident to question difficulties in their home lives. For example, by knowing that they have the right to be fed, the children may be more aware that it is not acceptable for there to be no food in their house and will seek support from parents and teachers, rather than normalising the situation.

### *c) Restorative approaches*

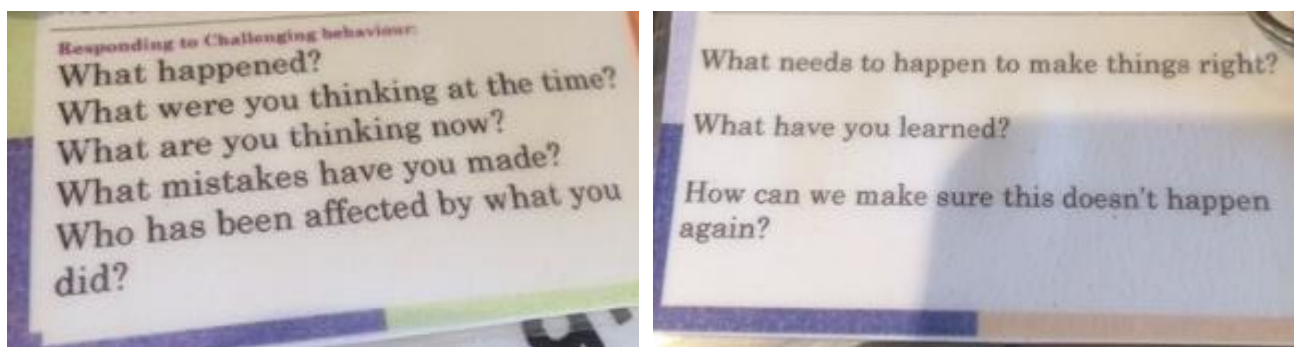
Restorative approaches were a common theme throughout the interviews in Scotland and appear to be a well-embedded approach to behaviour management in the schools that took part in these interviews. There was a sense that these approaches in Scotland were not necessarily seen as ‘alternative’ and rather were seen as a central part of the school’s toolkit for working with persistently challenging students. From the English interview data and from the

researcher's own professional experience, there are indeed some English schools that also use these approaches as part of their toolkit but most still have a predominant reliance on systems of rewards and punishments, with other approaches such as restorative conversations being optional add-ons.

*We are using a restorative approach so where children do get it wrong and make mistakes, the whole school and all the staff have got scripts developed that we would use, so that we know the first question if something's gone wrong is what's happened.*  
(Isla, Scotland)

One of the participants shared the prompt cards that all staff carry to support them in remembering to use restorative questions when responding to challenging behaviour (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Restorative question cards for staff**



The cards show the standard questions that are asked when facilitating a restorative conversation. By having the questions on prompt cards and asking staff to carry these with them, usually on a lanyard with their school identity badge, helps staff to remember to use these questions when managing an incident of undesirable behaviour.

*The Restorative Practice, what happened, how has that made you feel, what do you need to happen to make it better... and do you know what, they'll always be the one to say, 'I did this'. [Students are] very honest. They'll say, 'I did this wrong and this needs to happen'. (Kirsty, Scotland)*

*Generally, in the school, the practice is you try and take a restorative approach right from the beginning. (Fiona, Scotland)*

Sometimes restorative approaches were not named explicitly, but the way in which the participant talked about resolving conflict fits with a restorative philosophy.

*... to support their transitions and to help them manage their own behaviour through reflecting on the responses they've been making when something has gone wrong, when they've felt uncomfortable or angry or have difficult feelings, how to manage that, and it also helped them to understand other children's responses better and to empathise and just to develop that emotional literacy for them. (Isla, Scotland)*

Understanding feelings and emotions was suggested as being important to understanding behaviour. Emotional intelligence is suggested to be key to supporting students to be successful in school.

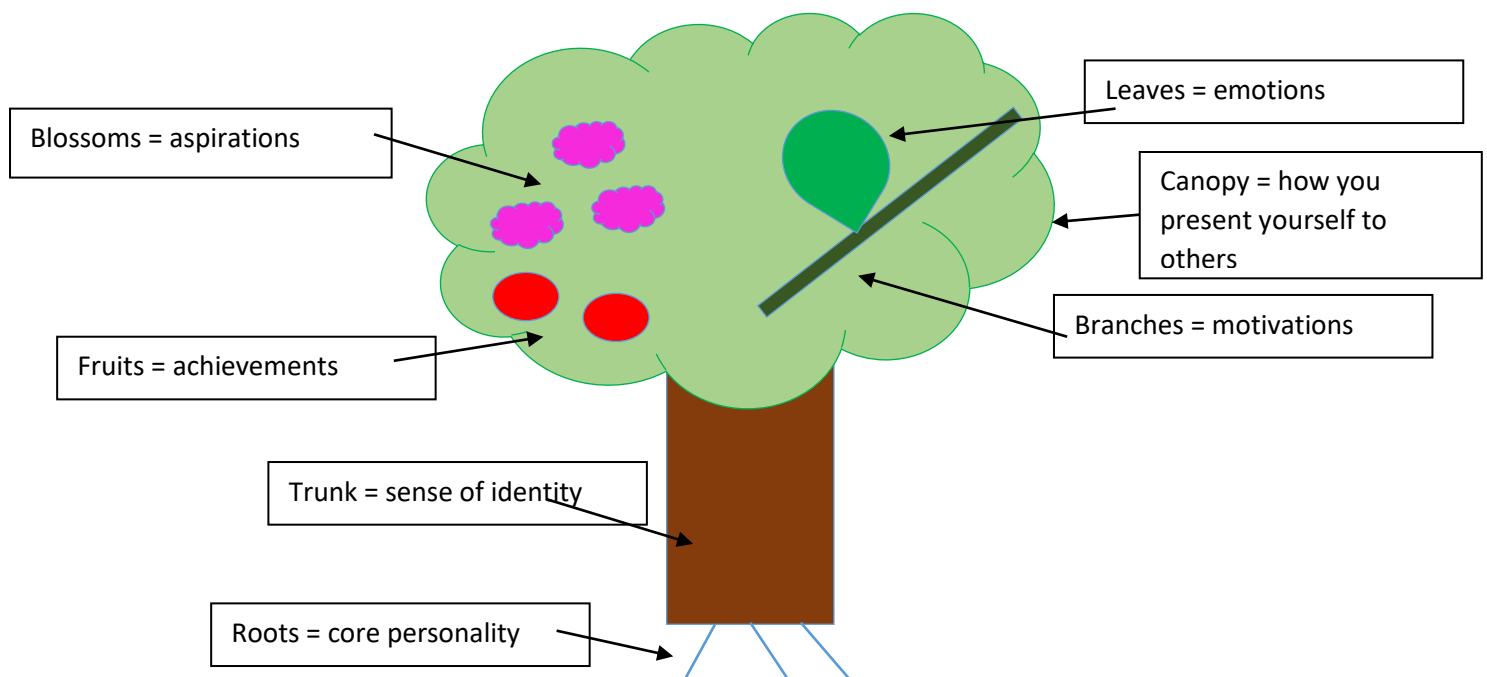
*If you can help them differentiate their emotions, then they have a greater understanding of their sense of self. (Gavin, Scotland)*

*It was all behaviour, whereas now I'm not interested in behaviour. I'm much more interested in emotions, what emotions you're feeling, how you make sense of it, what's your sense of identity. (Gavin, Scotland)*

This quote also hints at the possibility that the type of behaviour management approach taken often depends heavily on staff members' own personalities and values.

One of the Scottish participants, Gavin, describes a model of identity using the metaphor of a tree (Figure 12). Gavin describes the core sense of identity (commonly known in Psychology as the sense of self) as being like the trunk of the tree, the roots are the core personality, and the canopy of leaves is how an individual presents themselves to others. The individual leaves are emotions and the branches of the tree are motivations. Finally, the blossoms of the tree are the aspirations and the fruits are the achievements. Gavin talks about using this model with students to help them to articulate their behaviour, thoughts and emotions.

**Figure 12: Gavin’s model of identity**



#### 7.4.2 Theme 2: Clear expectations

All participants talked about the importance of clear expectations. As with the English schools, this often appears to involve the use of systems of rewards and punishments. It appears that exclusion is an obvious topic to be brought up in an interview about behaviour management. This topic was mentioned in the interviews with the participants from the Netherlands, Scotland and England.

##### *a) Exclusions*

Exclusion is not common practice in Dutch schools. One participant commented that it was *quite a rare thing to occur*, although they had heard of it happening at their own child’s school.

*In my son's class, one of the children had fireworks outside the school and he was dismissed, excluded. (Mila, Netherlands)*

With Fixed Term exclusions, one of the participants explained that students in the Netherlands are still expected to attend school. However, they will generally be working separately from their classmates and may have a longer school day.

*We have to have them in. The only reason you can say a kid can't be in your school is if they are a danger to their environment. (Noah, Netherlands)*

A key difference between exclusion in England and exclusion in the Netherlands, is that in the Netherlands a school must find another educational provision for a student before they can be permanently excluded. One participant commented that this is a good system because *I am responsible for my kids, even the bad ones* (Noah, Netherlands).

*If I think it's unacceptable for a kid to stay in school, I need to make sure that he or she has a new place. (Noah, Netherlands)*

Schools generally have to accept students who apply to them, even if they have displayed undesirable behaviour at their previous school.

*If kids apply to my school, I have to take them. Even if they have a file this big about behaviour, I have to take them. (Noah, Netherlands)*

*Schools are allowed to say, to some extent, we can't handle another student with behaviour problems, but their choices are, to some extent, limited. They have to take at least a few. (Zoe, Netherlands)*

One of the key differences between school policy in England and Scotland that was mentioned by the Scottish participants was in relation to permanent exclusion. Several participants commented that in Scotland exclusions are never permanent.

*Now, in Scotland, exclusion is never a permanent thing really. It tends to be the youngster is excluded for maybe a day, up to 5 days ... (Fiona, Scotland)*

There is also a mention that, in general, Scottish schools attempt to ensure that all students progress to a positive destination post-16, for example attending college or gaining an apprenticeship. However, the participant who talks about this feels that it is difficult to implement this with the minority of students who are extremely difficult to engage.



*How do you get them into a positive destination when they're not willing to engage?*  
(Fiona, Scotland)

The participants from Bhutan did not explicitly mention exclusions. This may be due to a limitation of the survey as there were not questions that specifically asked about exclusions, but rather about punishments in general. The results of the survey suggest that the policy of GNH has had an impact on how behaviour is managed in schools in Bhutan, even though not all respondents agreed about whether this impact was positive or negative.

*b) Rewards and punishment systems*

The behaviour management approaches adopted in Bhutan are relatively similar to those used in English schools, with a combination of rewards systems and punishments being implemented. There is also evidence of some alternative approaches being introduced such as mindfulness and the understanding of consequences. There was a mention of corporal punishment in schools by the participants in Bhutan. This is not something that one would expect to see in a discussion about behaviour management in English schools. This difference is likely to be reflective of the fact that corporal punishment has not been banned from schools in Bhutan for the same length of time as it has been banned in English schools.

Although the participants from schools in Scotland placed notable emphasis on relationships and restorative approaches, there was also evidence showing that the schools also still used rewards and punishments as part of their behaviour management strategies. This was particularly in response to low levels of disruption.

One of the 'rights-respecting' schools used this language for their reward scheme, linking it to respecting the rights of others:

*We've got a rocket and then all the children have to reach for the stars... if they respect the rights and their class teacher has rewarded them for it, they'll put their name on to the star for the right that they've respected ...* (Kirsty, Scotland)

In regard to punishments, the use of exclusions was talked about as well as other lower level punishments. In the 'rights-respecting' school in Scotland, the same rocket design that is used in the reward scheme is also used as a punishment. If a student has not respected someone else's right, then *they move their name to the flame, which is a yellow flame as a warning, and then after that they move their name on to a comedown to earth* (Kirsty). This provides a powerful visual metaphor of the student coming down to earth when they disrespect someone

else's right, whereas when the rights are respected, the student is able to 'reach for the stars.' Kirsty talked about how this approach was considered to be effective in promoting positive behaviour among the students.

The secondary school participants talked about lower level punishments such as an after-school detention. The participants described that at their school an after-school detention consists of a student being asked to stay behind after school and write out lines. The researcher is aware that after-school detentions at other schools are different to this. One participant acknowledged that some people feel that asking students to write lines is not a good idea. However, the participant feels that:

*... it's a way of wasting their time and from that point of view, it can be very effective. They don't like doing that.* (Fiona, Scotland)

Fiona does add that it is important that the punishment exercise is used appropriately. For example, it would not be a suitable punishment if a student had not completed their homework. The participant says that in that case it would be better to spend time with the student helping them to complete the homework *as a kind of supportive detention*, as giving them lines would *exacerbate the situation and make it a lot worse* (Fiona, Scotland).

All of the participants suggest that Fixed Term exclusions are only used as a last resort and are a rare occurrence.

*We have not had many exclusions this year at all. I think you could probably count on one hand the number of exclusions.* (Fiona, Scotland)

*In five and a half years I've never excluded a pupil, not once. Never needed to.* (Isla, Scotland)

One participant in particular felt that exclusions were not helpful in terms of managing challenging behaviour.

*I think it's positively unhelpful and it gives a really weird message of them not being accepted and not being supported. It would only be in a very extreme circumstance that I would even consider it.* (Isla, Scotland)

However, another participant suggested that exclusions can be a useful tool in managing challenging behaviour.

*You've got to be able to give some strong messages to certain individuals and really if there's anything that's blurred with that group of people, they don't get the message.*  
(Graham, Scotland)

*Most young people will accept exclusion if they think it's fair.* (Graham, Scotland)

*Exclusions are not the answer, but I think they've got to be part of the package.*  
(Graham, Scotland)

Two of the participants from Bhutan said that their schools did not use punishments as a response to challenging behaviour but did use rewards as a response to positive behaviour. One participant from Bhutan indicated that their school did use punishments but not rewards, and the remaining participant stated that their school used both punishments and rewards. All of the participants from Bhutan described their school behaviour management systems as 'very effective' or 'moderately effective'. This suggests that, despite the differences in the use of punishments and rewards, all of the participants are generally satisfied with the effectiveness of the behaviour management system at their school.

Participants in the Bhutan survey were asked to identify one change they would make to the way behaviour is managed in their school. Two of the participants commented on strengthening parents' involvement in their children's education. One of the participants who commented on this, also mentioned involving stakeholders as guest speakers and enhancing the reward system. Both of these participants were from schools which implemented rewards systems but not punishments. This suggests that the rewards system is of importance to these schools as a key behaviour management approach, as well as working with the wider school community such as parents and other stakeholders. The participant from the school which used punishments but not rewards, did not make a comment in response to this question. The fourth participant, from the school which uses both rewards and punishments, commented that they would prefer to employ more counselling style approaches rather than resorting to punishments. This suggests that the participant would like their school to change their approach to move away from the use of punishments.

All of the participants from Bhutan were aware of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) policy in Bhutan, as described earlier in this chapter. All participants answered that GNH had 'probably' or 'definitely' had an impact on the way that behaviour is managed in schools. One participant commented that the GNH policy has been important in eliminating corporal punishment from schools, but had not supported them in developing an alternative approach.

Two of the other participants, however, do refer to how GNH has helped them to develop alternative approaches in their schools. One of these participants identifies mind training and mindfulness being used in schools, as well as the spiritual influence of the Bhutanese people. The other participant comments on GNH assisting students, to realise that ‘good’ actions bring positive results and ‘evil’ actions bring negative results.

In contrast, the fourth participant comments that corporal punishment being banned is hindering behaviour management in schools. They feel that if the ban on corporal punishment was lifted, behaviour would not be a problem in any school. As this view differs from that held most of the respondents, it is not possible to say whether this view is widely held across SSLs in Bhutan. However, it is a point of interest that there are still some school leaders in Bhutan, who advocate for the use of corporal punishment in schools.

#### 7.4.3 Theme 3: Barriers to change

All of the participants talked about barriers that had to be overcome in order to implement alternative approaches in their schools. One of the secondary school participants from Scotland talked about how a management restructure had meant that there were fewer student support workers in place than previously. This meant that detentions could no longer be managed by a centralised system and the participant felt that the new system, with detentions being dealt with on a faculty-by-faculty basis, did not work as well as the previous system. Lack of resources appears to be a barrier to managing behaviour in general, as one participant talks about having lost a third of school staff over the last five years. Another participant talked about how a minority of very challenging students require a large amount of resources and change is often difficult to achieve.

*There’s a very small group of people who are soaking up a great deal of resources and I’m not sure it will affect a great deal of change to be perfectly honest. We’re just about achieving parity but not much more. (Graham, Scotland)*

One of the secondary school participants also talked about how staff do not always react positively when the decision is taken not to exclude a challenging student.

*That doesn’t always go down well with staff as you can imagine because they don’t feel supported. (Fiona, Scotland)*

Parental views on alternative approaches are also a potential barrier that needs to be overcome. One of the primary school participants suggested that:

*... it has just taken some time to reassure parents, that they know their child's needs are going to be properly considered. (Isla, Scotland)*

Participants suggested that parents' views of restorative approaches can sometimes be that it is a 'soft' approach and this barrier can be overcome, by *reframing the understanding of what you're doing, so that it's not considered to be a very softly softly approach. (Isla, Scotland)*

Another participant talked about the difficulty of embedding the 'rights-respecting' school ethos throughout the school, explaining that this had taken up to three years to achieve.

*The language was the trickiest bit ... once we got that up and running, then we were on a steam train. (Kirsty, Scotland)*

Participants in the Netherlands mentioned time as a significant barrier to being able to work successfully with the most challenging students.

*It takes time to motivate people. It's real one-on-one intensive. (Tess, Netherlands)*

*[Teachers] are quite busy with teaching load and they are made responsible for all kinds of additional things ... like citizenship education and sexual orientation and ethnic issues, and there are all these additional things they have to do. (Zoe, Netherlands)*

Tess talked about the time it takes to do an in-depth assessment with a family, exploring their needs and strengths.

*It's much easier to work with a list, tick, tick, tick, tick. These symptoms are there. Right, the solution is a standard protocol for dealing with that. That's cheap. That's efficient, short-term. (Tess, Netherlands)*

Zoe talked about difficulties finding schools that were willing to participate in randomised control trials for interventions. She said that these are really hard to conduct in the Netherlands. This makes it difficult to build a robust evidence base for the use of alternative approaches.

*That's partly because our teachers have quite a lot of freedom. They have a lot of autonomy in the classroom and in the schools ... so we can't say you have to implement this. They won't do that. (Zoe, Netherlands)*

## 7.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the results and analysis of an international comparison, to explore behaviour management approaches used in schools in countries other than England, namely: Scotland, the Netherlands, and Bhutan. The aim of this part of the study was to consider how alternative approaches are used in an international context, contributing to the following research question:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?

There were three themes identified as common to the data from English schools, as well as the data from Scotland, the Netherlands and Bhutan. These were: Community and relationships; Clear expectations; and Barriers to change.

The barriers identified from the international data were similar to the barriers identified in the English interview data. It appears likely that things such as cost, and concern about the perceptions of others are fairly universal barriers to change in schools. As the findings from this study suggests that there is some motivation for change among SSLs, it appears that these barriers may be inhibiting schools from making changes to the way they manage challenging behaviour.

The next chapter will explore student perceptions of behaviour management in their school.

## CHAPTER 8: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION – STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

### 8.0 Introduction

As students are intrinsically involved in behaviour management systems in schools, it was felt that there should be some exploration of student perceptions of behaviour management (student voice). Their perception of the system is likely to have an impact on how they respond and ultimately on whether it is a successful system for managing student behaviour. The data presented in this chapter aims to contribute to the following research question (RQ):

- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

As discussed in the literature review chapter, collaborative working between students and teachers is a key aspect of alternative approaches to using rewards and punishments to manage behaviour. With these types of approaches, the perception of the students is even more important as they are active participants in the system processes. For example, by taking part in a restorative conversation. Focus groups were conducted at a case study school to gain student perceptions on their current behaviour management system. This chapter will report the results of the case study and offer an analysis and discussion of the findings.

As described more fully in Chapter 3: Methodology, the case study school was an independent day and boarding preparatory school in Northern England for boys and girls aged 8 – 13 years old. Four focus groups were conducted in person by the researcher, each comprising of 5 to 7 students (n=24) who had volunteered to take part in the study. The focus groups were ordered by year group and an equal number of boys and girls participated overall. As only one student in Year 8 volunteered to participate, there was a joint Year 7 and 8 focus group in this case.

**Table 26: Focus group participants**

Focus group	Age range (years)	Total no of students	Number of boys	Number of girls
Year 4	8 – 9	7	3 (42.8%)	4 (57.2%)
Year 5	9 – 10	5	2 (40%)	3 (60%)
Year 6	10 – 11	5	3 (60%)	2 (40%)
Year 7 and 8	11 -13	7	4 (57.2%)	3 (42.8%)
<i>Total</i>		<i>24</i>	<i>12 (50%)</i>	<i>12 (50%)</i>

Each of the focus groups lasted around 20 minutes. While it is acknowledged that this is a relatively short time for a focus group discussion, this was the length of time allocated by the

school for the students to be away from their lessons. The data were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The focus groups were unstructured, so that the discussion would be free flowing. However, the researcher facilitated the discussion on the topic of behaviour management by prompting the participants to share their experiences of how behaviour is managed in the school, how they feel about the current system, and if there is anything they would change if they could.

Following transcription, the data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher identified common themes from the data by closely reading the transcripts and noting key words and phrases. After this initial exploratory analysis, the researcher assigned the themes code names and clustered similar themes together (Appendix U). This enabled two over-arching themes to be identified: Rewards and Punishments, with four sub-themes within each.

### **8.1 Results of the case study**

The sub-themes within the Rewards theme were: Fairness, Motivation, Competitiveness, and Suggestions for future developments. The codes which make up each of these sub-themes are listed below:

- Fairness - Growth Mindset; Rewards given for effort and individual achievement
- Motivation – Motivation by rewards; Less motivation for high achievers due to repetition of rewards
- Competitiveness - Feelings of competitiveness among students; Positivity about observing others receiving rewards
- Suggestions for future developments – More tangible rewards; Re-naming of ‘expectation points’; Different rewards for different levels

The sub-themes within the Punishments theme were: Effectiveness, Fairness, Value of talking with mentors, and Suggestions for future developments. The codes which make up each of these sub-themes are listed below:

- Effectiveness – Changes to the system; Effectiveness impacted by frequency of low-level sanctions
- Fairness – Lack of consistency among staff; Sanctions being issued to the wrong person; Ineffectiveness of staff shouting at students



- Value of talking with mentors – Opportunity to talk about feelings; Opportunity to think about ways to change behaviour
- Suggestions for future development – Develop mentor scheme further; Increase consistency among staff; Different sanctions issued for different behaviour

Each of the sub-themes is described in more detail throughout this chapter.

### 8.1.1 Theme 1: Rewards

The first theme to be discussed revolves around the rewards system used within the school. The focus groups discussed how the current system works when someone gets a reward and how they feel about this. They also discussed potential changes that they would like to see happen within the rewards system at their school. Four sub-themes were identified within the Rewards theme: Fairness, Motivation, Competitiveness, and Suggestions for future development.

Evidence from all the focus groups shows that the students have a good understanding of the rewards system at their school. They were able to talk with confidence about the structure of the reward system:

*You get an EP for maybe doing good work so say your handwriting is really neat, you might get an EP and then when you get 25 EPs you get a certificate, 50 is another certificate and 100 is a master's certificate where you get a certificate from (headteacher) (EP = Expectation Point) (Year 4 focus group)*

*...you can get merits or distinctions for really good pieces of work. Distinctions are the better one and you get EPs if you do well. (Year 6 focus group)*

The students were able to describe the reasons that might lead to a reward being given and they understood that the rewards were given out for reasons other than achievement. The students talked about rewards being given for effort and individual achievement, rather than there being a standard expectation for everyone.

*Say if somebody got a merit and you didn't then just because you didn't get one doesn't mean your piece of work isn't as good as someone else's. It's on how well you did and how much effort you put in. (Year 6 focus group)*

*And you usually get merits when you've done like a piece of writing and then the next time you do it and the teacher has seen that you've improved you'll get a merit because that shows that you've listened to them. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

They also talked about rewards being given for reasons that are not related to work. These included good behaviour and manners, such as holding a door open for a guest.

*...if you do something well or the teacher is proud of you like holding the door open for an adult or a guest, then they give you an EP, so it's not just for work. (Year 5 focus group)*

#### *a) Fairness*

The focus group discussions suggest that the students find the rewards system to be fair overall. This appears to be linked to the idea of Growth mindset and being rewarded for effort rather than solely for achievement.

*I think it's really fair because they do it for good work, they wouldn't just do it for like dotting them around to people who they like, they give them to people who deserve them, so I think it's quite fair how they give the awards out. (Year 5 focus group)*

However, there were a few comments which suggested that the students may occasionally perceive the system as unfair. An illustrative example is given with the following quote:

*... my sister was like just doing her work correct, so did someone else who was next to her and so the teacher was like you get a merit for it to her friend and then to my sister she was like you've done it all wrong and like I don't think that's really fair... (Year 6 focus group)*

These comments appear to suggest that sometimes students do not understand why teachers give rewards for one piece of work and not others. This could be mitigated by ensuring that there is consistency among staff and re-iterating the Growth mindset philosophy of individual differences and rewarding for effort. Other comments by students suggested that this concept was understood:

*Well really it depends who's getting a merit because if it's someone who does really good work like ... and it's got to be really hard for him to get a merit because he has to do like amazing work for his work but if it's someone like me who's not as good it would*

*be same difficulty for me but he might think it's easy for him, but it's different standards.*

(Year 5 focus group)

#### *b) Motivation*

Motivation was a strong sub-theme present across all the focus groups, suggesting that the rewards offered are motivating for the students. This is a positive outcome as the intention of most reward systems in schools is to provide extrinsic motivation for the students. The evidence from this case study suggests that this has been successful.

*I got a merit earlier in the year and it made me feel really good about myself.* (Year 6 focus group)

*You feel quite good because you feel like you've improved.* (Year 7 and 8 focus group)

However, there was a minority of comments which suggested that some students may not find the rewards system as motivating as others do.

*...they're nice rewards to have but it kind of wears out how much you like it if that makes sense.* (Year 5 focus group)

These comments may be due to the repetition of the same rewards, particularly for high achievers. The students appeared to be saying that having the same reward given numerous times meant that the positive emotional response elicited by the reward became lessened over time and repetitions. This is addressed further in the 'Suggestions for future developments' section below.

#### *c) Competitiveness*

Any system based on rewards is likely to create some element of competitiveness. Comments from the focus groups suggest that there are feelings of competitiveness and jealousy amongst the students, despite the emphasis on rewards for effort rather than achievement.

*Sometimes you can feel a bit annoyed like if you've spent ages working on a piece of work and you didn't get an EP and you look over your shoulder and you see your friend's work and you know they haven't spent as much time on it and they get an EP. It's like a bit annoying because you think that you spent more time on your work, but they got the EP.* (Year 7 and 8 focus group)

*Sometimes if I feel I should have got a merit for something I would feel a little bit jealous for them getting a merit and I'm not. (Year 5 focus group)*

This competitiveness is an unintentional by-product of the reward system and is to be expected. A more surprising outcome are the comments by students expressing positive feelings about observing others receiving rewards. This altruism was expressed by students across all year groups. It suggests that, despite the competitive element of the reward system, there is a positive collaborative ethos throughout the school. Comments indicate the students feel genuinely pleased when they observe others doing well and receiving rewards.

*When people get a merit, especially when they're in my house, I feel quite pleased for them. (Year 5 focus group)*

*...feel quite glad for them because maybe before they got quite, they didn't really do that well and then you see them improve, you feel quite good for them. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

#### *d) Suggestions for future developments*

During the focus group discussions, the students offered ideas and suggestions for how they would like to see the reward system develop in the future. One common suggestion was for the students to gain rewards that are more tangible than a certificate. Ideas included rewards of sweets, food, and even money. One comment described a system where the students earned points which they could then spend in a tuck shop at school.

*Just an idea, I think maybe at the start of the year we should get cards, like you see credit cards. Not credit cards, but like that and say if we did something good for example. Not an EP, but we get it scanned and like points could go on it... and there'd be like almost like a little tuck shop type thing... and if you had so many points on your card you could go to the shop and get it scanned and buy however many points you've got. Sweets or whatever. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

However, the actual material reward appeared to be less important than the desire to feel that the reward was special and that their achievement had been recognised.

*I'd say that, sometimes I feel that, last year I got [---] EPs and I felt that when I was on my [---], I thought oh good I have got quite a lot but I thought that Mr [X] just sits there then just doesn't really actually look at the certificates, he doesn't really mind who got*

*it, he just sits there, signs the certificate, signs it on the next one, I feel like they could make it more special, and something more substantial than just a certificate of paper because a certificate of paper you can pin up on a notice board but you can't really do anything else with. (Year 5 focus group)*

This links in to the theme of motivation. When a student has earned multiple rewards and certificates, there is the potential that the extrinsic motivation will diminish. Having different rewards for different levels of achievement was one idea put forward by the focus groups which could counteract this.

*...every time you get to 25 [EPs] you could just get something small, and then 50, get bigger and bigger... (Year 5 focus group)*

Some comments indicated that students felt it was too easy to gain rewards and that the rewards may be valued more if they were more difficult to achieve.

*If I could change one more thing about the system. I'd probably change something because I think there have been too many EPs handed out. (Year 4 focus group)*

Other comments suggested the opposite, indicating that it is actually difficult to gain rewards. One comment focussed on the name of the rewards, suggesting that expectation points should be called something different as they are awarded for doing more than simply meeting expectations.

*If I'm going to be honest, Expectation Points shouldn't be called Expectation Points because it's actually quite hard to get them, they're like, over, they're something that you think they wouldn't do that's really good and what I think is that merits is treated out fine but I think when they do the certificates I think they should hand them out in assembly not house because it shows everybody that you've got it. (Year 5 focus group)*

### 8.1.2 Theme 2: Punishments

The second theme to be discussed focusses on the punishments used within the school. The focus groups discussed how the current system works when someone gets given a punishment and how they feel about this. They also discussed potential changes that they would like to see happen with the way punishments are used at their school. Four sub-themes were identified within the Punishments theme: Effectiveness, Fairness, Value of talking with mentors, and Suggestions for future development.

The comments from the focus groups show that the students have a good understanding of the punishments system in place at their school. The students showed an understanding of the two-tier system (Level 1 and Level 2) and were able to explain this to the researcher.

*Okay, well you can get, so the teacher sometimes warns you quite a lot but then like two or maybe three times. But if you carry on doing it for example talking, you get a Level 1 which is like concern which means that your teachers will keep track of how many you've got. And then if you get quite a lot of Level 1s then you will eventually get a Level 2 which is a detention. And then your parents get emailed and they're asked to like talk about it and stuff. But you can just get a Level 2 for doing something really bad just straight away and that's really bad. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

#### *a) Effectiveness*

There have been changes to the punishments system since last year and there were several comments about these changes. The students felt that, since the changes, there were more punishments being given out.

*They've changed the system, it used to be concerns and they were harder to get, and I think Level 1s, they're just given out way too often. (Year 5 focus group)*

However, the comments did not indicate that the increase in punishments were correlated with an increase in effectiveness. Evidence from the focus groups suggests that the Level 1 punishments may actually be less effective due to them being issued more often.

*It depends what kind of person they are. Some people just keep getting them and they're not really bothered. (Year 6 focus group)*

*... there isn't really actually any punishment for getting a Level 1, you just get a Level 1. (Year 6 focus group)*

*... if it was just a Level 1 they would just say, if they were a naughty person, they would just say oh I've got lots of them, it doesn't really matter... (Year 5 focus group)*

Some comments suggested that a Level 1 punishment did not have an impact on students, or that it was even seen as being a form of status symbol to accrue a Level 1 punishment.

*I don't think anyone's here in the group, but they're all like oh I've got a Level 1, I'm so amazing and everything. (Year 6 focus group)*

*b) Fairness*

There was a strong theme among the focus groups around the fairness of the punishment system. There appears to be a perception that the punishment system is not always applied fairly. This appears to be due to three main reasons: lack of consistency among staff; punishments being issued to the wrong person; and staff shouting at students.

The students felt that there was a lack of consistency among staff regarding punishments being issued. This sounded as though it could be due to differing expectations.

*... some teachers give out Level 1s more than others, because something, some people, some teachers think that's wrong and some teachers think it's alright. (Year 5 focus group)*

*... I think some teachers who aren't as confident should be more confident and actually decide okay I think this person deserves it and they should have a Level 1... (Year 5 focus group)*

Another concern that was raised by the focus group discussions was that punishments are sometimes issued to the wrong person. The comments suggested that students feel staff do not take enough time to gain a full understanding of a situation before issuing punishments. This then leads to the wrong students being given punishments, diminishing the effectiveness of the punishments system.

*When you, say, they're coming to tell you off and when someone is saying against you, but if that's not true, it feels kind of wrong to go against what a teacher is saying so you don't always get the punishment for what you've done. (Year 6 focus group)*

*And then the people are too scared to stand up and say it was someone else and they just take the telling off. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

The focus group discussions also commented on staff shouting at students when issuing punishments. The overall view appeared to be that students would prefer staff not to shout at them and that they did not feel that this added to the effectiveness of the punishments system.

*...but I think a teacher can still be cross but maybe not shout just calm their voice down a bit... (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

*I don't think they should just shout, they should ask what's going on instead of just giving you a Level 1 because something completely different could have been going on*

*and I mean they're not always 100% sure what's going on, so they should ask and be like what's gone on and then come to a conclusion, what they're going to do about it.*  
(Year 7 and 8 focus group)

*c) Value of talking with mentors*

The focus group discussions talked about the value of speaking with mentors following a behaviour issue or conflict. This approach appeared to be valued by the students, as it gives them the opportunity to talk about their feelings with a trusted adult and to think about ways to change their behaviour. The comments indicated that the students felt that this approach was more effective than being given a detention without the opportunity to talk with someone.

*I think that maybe you would maybe stop if you talked to your mentor more because then you have told them how you are feeling and why you did it. And then if they said, well, gave you ways to try and control if it was anger, to try and control that. Or when the teacher's told you to stop to stop doing it and when they tell you why you should stop and maybe help making you stop.* (Year 7 and 8 focus group)

*I think it's better to talk with your mentor, because if you're just writing it down you're not really sure what you could do better or how you could change it and stuff like that and it's nicer to talk with someone about it, because like you can't really write down on paper if you were feeling a certain way or like why you really did it, like you never know, if someone had been mean to you and you did something. Like if you got a Level 2, you wouldn't really necessarily write down that but if you're talking to your mentor you might like be able to open up and say you did it for this reason and they could try and help you with it instead of a detention.* (Year 7 and 8 focus group)

*d) Suggestions for future developments*

Increasing consistency among staff would address some of the issues around the perception of fairness in the punishments system. Making school-wide expectations clear to the students, so that they are aware of what will and will not result in a punishment regardless of which lesson they are in, would help to establish this consistency.

Some of the comments from the focus groups suggested that students recognised that some of their peers needed more support with their behaviour than others and this could be an opportunity to further develop a more restorative approach.



*Say if you get, I'm not saying anyone here does, but if you get lots of Level 1s maybe teachers could recognise that and sort of be a bit more gentle, because you might have some sort of difficulty with your behaviour, so maybe not make you think that you're getting everything wrong. (Year 6 focus group)*

There was some discussion about the difference between Level 1 punishments and Level 2 punishments. Comments from the focus groups suggested that the students felt there was a significant difference between Level 1 and Level 2.

*From Level 1, it's a big step to Level 2, Level 1, nothing happens, you just, like me you would be sad if you got one, but other people who are a bit more silly wouldn't really care, but it's a massive leap from just being sad to having to miss all of your lunch, so I think they should change the, they should have something in between, so I think Level 3 should be a lunchtime detention and then maybe Level 2 would just be break or something. (Year 5 focus group)*

Suggestions included a tiered system that would mean different punishments being issued for different issues, depending on how serious the misdemeanour was.

*I think they like say if you kicked someone or hit someone I think that you should get like a higher standard of like telling off than if you're just not listening, because you could actually hurt someone from doing it. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

*I think you get more told off, so if you just weren't listening, like you should get more told off if you were distracting someone else because it's not just you that's not going to learn it's also your friend, so I think that there should be like a higher punishment for that than just for not listening. (Year 7 and 8 focus group)*

## **8.2 Key findings**

The key findings from this aspect of the data collection were that the students at the case study school had a good understanding of the school behaviour management system. The researcher's professional experience also found this to be the case with students who are repeatedly or permanently excluded from school. In their professional role, the researcher works with students regularly who are at risk of permanent exclusion from school. Not one student has ever stated to the researcher that they were unaware of the school rules by the time they reach this stage of the sanction system. Students are often able to articulate what the rules are in their

school, even if they are not able to control their behaviour to the extent that they can always follow those rules.

Greene (2008) concurs with this finding and experience, suggesting that when undesirable behaviour occurs, the issue is rarely that students do not know the school rules. This is particularly the case for those students who are in regular contact with the school discipline system. Despite knowing what the rules are, there is a minority of students who are not able to self-regulate their emotions and behaviour due to underlying unmet needs (Greene, 2008). This highlights an issue with the use of punitive responses to undesirable behaviour, as repeated punishments do not help students to learn other ways of behaving in future situations. Alternative approaches, such as Greene's (2008) Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS), offer more opportunity for discussion and agreeing solutions that support the student with how they could behave otherwise, instead of simply reinforcing how they should not be behaving.

The case study school had, in common with many English schools, clearly defined systems of rewards and punishments as part of their behaviour management approach. The key themes that were identified in relation to the rewards system at the case study school were: Fairness, Motivation, and Competitiveness. The key themes that were identified in relation to the punishments system at the case study school were: Effectiveness, Fairness, and Value of talking with mentors.

Overall the students felt that the system was effective but they did not always perceive it to be fair. This was particularly highlighted in relation to punishment. This suggests that the school were perhaps overzealous in their application of punishments. For it to be effective but not fair, suggests that there are occasions when students receive punishments that they may perceive to be undeserved. The staff member issuing the punishment will believe it is appropriate to do so, whereas it is possible that the student receiving the punishment or their peers may hold a different opinion. The students gave examples in the focus group of occasions where a staff member had mistakenly issued a punishment to a student who was not the one that had committed the misdemeanour. It is recognised that this is human error and is likely to occur in all systems at some point. Children might not yet have developed their understanding of this and therefore would perceive it as being grossly unfair. Alternative approaches with their focus on discussion and listening to all parties involved would help to minimise this margin of human error. By taking the time to talk with the students, the staff member would have gained a fuller

understanding of the situation and been able to identify the correct student who had behaved in an undesirable way.

There are potential issues with this approach too. One is the matter of staff having time to have these conversations with students. This is something that is discussed in more detail in the section considering barriers to implementing alternative approaches in English schools (Chapter 5). The case study school was an independent school, so it could be argued that if any schools were going to have the funding to enable staff to take time to adopt more collaborative behaviour management approaches, it would be independent schools rather than underfunded state schools.

The other issue that this approach raises is one of power and control. For the teacher to acknowledge that they may have made a mistake in issuing a punishment, also acknowledges that their judgement is fallible. As adults most people are aware that everyone can make mistakes but in the context of a teacher and student relationship, there is often the unspoken assumption that the teacher's judgement is correct and overrules that of the student if there is a disagreement. To a certain extent, it can be argued that this is the case with any relationship between an adult and a child. Additionally, it can be argued that this may be a necessary position to take in order for the teacher to maintain an ordered environment in the classroom. However, from the perspective of a more collaborative approach to behaviour management, it can be counter-argued that there is not necessarily a need for the teacher to hold control over the classroom if the students are in agreement with the type of behaviour they should show in the classroom and are engaged in meaningful activities.

Furthermore, having a teacher, or any adult, acknowledge that they have made a mistake can be a valuable learning tool for a student. It normalises the fact that everyone makes mistakes at times, and it gives the teacher the opportunity to model how these occasions can be acknowledged and learnt from. For children, making mistakes is a valuable learning experience. When this occurs within academic learning, students are encouraged to try and to seek support if they make mistakes. However, there appears to be a different frame of mind when a student makes a behavioural mistake. Often this results in the imposition of a punishment and little to no opportunity to learn how to behave differently. Alternative approaches can offer this opportunity by encouraging discussion and working together to seek sustainable solutions to situations where a student displays undesirable behaviour.

### 8.2.1 Implications for extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

The students felt that the rewards system was motivating. This raises issues around extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2) with particular regard to Kohn's (1993) work on 'punished by rewards'. Alternative approaches do not tend to make use of explicit extrinsic rewards, such as stickers and certificates. But given that the students felt that this was motivating, it raises the question of whether it would be counter-productive to take this aspect of the system away if it is being effective. However, some of the older students in the focus group suggested that the rewards do tend to get less motivating over time and this is something that chimes with Kohn's (1993) work. It was also a finding in Payne's (2015) study. Payne (2015) suggested that there were a complex range of student responses to reward systems, and these responses varied across age groups. Rewards were found to be less effective for motivating older students. This finding supports what is suggested by this study, that rewards get less motivating over time. This will impact on older students as they will have been at the school for longer than younger students and will therefore have been subject to the reward system for a longer time.

One suggestion by the students in the focus groups was the introduction of tiered reward systems to maintain motivation for high achievers. Whilst in theory this is a good idea, there is the risk that the rewards offered will have to become more and more desirable, and most likely more expensive, in order to maintain motivation. This is one of the risks that Kohn (1993) describes, illustrating it with a version of the following story (Figure 13).

### Figure 13: Motivation story

Every day when walking home from school, a child walks past a house and drops their litter in the front garden of this house. The person who lives there decides on a strategy to stop the child doing this. They go out one day and say to the child, “Tomorrow when you walk past my house, I want you to drop litter in my garden and I’ll give you £1.” The child thinks this is brilliant as this is what they do anyway and now they will get £1 for doing it. The next day the person says to the child, “I’m sorry, I can’t afford to give you £1 every day, but I could give you 50p instead.” The child thinks this is not as good as £1 but better than nothing, so continues to drop the litter. The next day, the person says to the child, “I’m sorry, I can’t afford to keep paying you for this, but I would like you to keep dropping the litter all the same.” The child thinks, ‘Huh, I’m not doing that for free’ and the person has now achieved their goal of a litter free garden.

Whilst this story is an amusing illustration, it does highlight how children can become demotivated to do something, that they would have done anyway out of intrinsic interest, when extrinsic rewards are introduced, particularly in the form of tiered rewards. The entire point of rewards is to enhance extrinsic motivation to do something. This is a key aspect of Behaviourism. However, the use of this system in schools raises questions about whether the emphasis on extrinsic motivation comes at the cost of developing and nurturing intrinsic motivation. This touches on key debates about what types of motivation schools should be encouraging. Intrinsic motivation is more likely to foster long-term mental health and resilience than teaching young people to rely on extrinsic motivation.

There is a link between school exclusions and poor mental health among students. Awareness of this among school staff needs to be raised, as there is the risk that undesirable behaviour is seen as wilful defiance when it actually indicates underlying unmet psychological needs (Nash and Schlösser, 2014). Reward systems are popular in schools because they are easy to set up, clear to follow, and offer quick results. However, it should be considered whether this is at the cost of sustainability and encouraging a lifelong love of learning.

Another aspect that chimes with Kohn’s (1993) work is the theme of competitiveness. Kohn (1993) suggests that reward systems encourage competition against others and this in turn tends to devalue collaboration. As the case study school is an independent school and therefore it is

possible that there may be an expectation from parents that their child achieves highly, the focus groups potentially highlighted competitiveness about rewards more so than might have been the case in a state school. But this is not necessarily the case. Children tend to like getting rewards such as stickers and certificates, and therefore it appears natural that there would be an element of competition as they would want to be the ones who gain the reward.

Despite the competitive element mentioned by the students in the focus group, it was positive to also hear them speak about their feelings of happiness when observing peers gaining rewards too. This suggests that there is a level of pride in their school community as a whole, rather than a solely individualised outlook.

The students in the focus group also showed understanding that rewards were given for reasons other than academic achievement. They talked about rewards being offered for putting in effort and for individual achievement, as opposed to the same standards being applied to everyone. This fits with the Growth mindset (Dweck, 2012) philosophy of the school, advocating that effort leads to success and that intelligence can be developed.

#### 8.2.2 Fairness and consistency

The focus group data suggested that the most important elements of the behaviour management system, from the students' perspective, was for the system to be fair and consistent. It was suggested that increased consistency among staff members and ensuring a full understanding of the situation before issuing a punishment, would be ways for the school to change the perceived lack of fairness in their behaviour management system.

The students in the focus group highlighted the value of talking with their mentors. This was an aspect of the school behaviour management system that draws on Restorative Practice. It also provided the students with an opportunity to develop their emotional literacy. One of the suggestions for the school to explore, based on the case study research, was to consider further development of the mentor scheme for the future. A school wide restorative approach could be beneficial to the students and the rest of the school community. Restorative Practice has been shown to be an effective evidence-based approach, which can support students to develop emotional literacy and develop strategies to manage their behaviour (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013).

The students did not necessarily indicate a preference for the mentoring over the systems of rewards and punishments, but did talk about how much they valued this aspect of behaviour

management alongside the more traditional aspects. This is an approach that some schools in England have adopted when thinking about introducing alternative approaches. It perhaps appears to be less of a risk to introduce a new, more collaborative system whilst still retaining the underlying structure of rewards and punishments. This may be a way of encouraging more schools to try alternative approaches. However, it could be argued that introducing alternative approaches alongside traditional systems of rewards and punishments does not give a true reflection of the effectiveness of these approaches. The continuation of the rewards and punishments means that the power imbalance between teacher and student continues to be rigidly enforced and the true collaborative spirit of alternative approaches cannot be fully realised. However, then it could also be argued that there will always be a power imbalance to some extent, as teachers are ultimately the ones who are in control of the school. The best that schools can do is acknowledge that it exists and be transparent in their efforts to work collaboratively as a whole school community, including students as active participants in this work.

Introducing new approaches alongside existing practices often leads to the new approach being a targeted approach, rather than universal, which means that it is aimed at specific groups of students or individual students. For example, this could be the case if the SSLs decided which students would have access to mentor support and these were the only students that were able to benefit from this. Targeted behaviour management tends to be reactive and responsive. It means that the student has to get things wrong before they are able to access any support. However, universal behaviour management approaches are typically more proactive and collaborative. For example, offering mentor support for all students when they feel they need it is much more inclusive. It would be expected that not all students would wish to take up this offer, but it would be there if needed, without any stigma attached to it as it would be seen as the norm within the school community. Universal changes to behaviour management also encompass a change in the language used by the whole school staff and in the ethos of the school, which creates a more welcoming and collaborative environment for all.

Overall, the focus group data suggests that students hold positive perceptions of their school behaviour management system. They felt comfortable with the systems of rewards and punishments in place, although they would like staff to be more consistent in the way that these were applied. They highlighted that the mentoring scheme was particularly valuable to them, as an opportunity to talk with someone when they faced difficult situations. The introduction

of mentoring was the school's first step towards implementing alternative approaches and one that could be developed further in the future.

The suggestions and themes arising from this case study could be considered by the case study school for potential future development of the behaviour management system. Two priorities identified by the researcher are: emphasising the value of the mentors, and continuing to use restorative conversations where appropriate. The researcher sent a report of the findings to the case study school and followed up several months later with an email to see whether there had been any changes as a result of the study. However, there was unfortunately no response from the school.

### **8.3 Summary**

This chapter has presented the results and analysis of focus groups conducted with students at a case study school. The aim of the focus groups was to explore student perceptions of behaviour management, with the intention of addressing the following research question:

- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

The next chapter of this thesis, Chapter 9: Discussion and conclusion, will present a discussion and analysis of the study as a whole and consider the findings in the context of existing literature.



## CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 9.0 Introduction

Having reported the findings of this study in the previous four chapters, this chapter focusses on the key findings to emerge from the study as a whole. Attention will be given to the implications of these key findings in relation to the research questions and pertinent literature. A reflection on the study will also be presented, before outlining a final conclusion to this research project.

The main aim of this study was to explore why schools in England are reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour. There is a strong evidence base, as discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), that suggests that punishment-based systems, including school exclusions, are not effective in changing student behaviour. However, this is still the system that is adopted by the majority of schools in England. Despite growing evidence that alternative approaches can be successful in supporting students to change their behaviour, these approaches are not widely used in English schools. This study aimed to explore the reasons and justifications for why this is the case, by gathering data on senior school leaders' (SSLs) experiences and perceptions of behaviour management systems in England and internationally. Data were gathered in mainstream schools and in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). The study also sought to gain an insight into student perceptions on the way their school manages their behaviour.

As a reminder to the reader, the overarching research question which this research aims to answer is:

- Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?

This overarching question was broken down into three sub-questions, to enable different aspects of the research question (RQ) to be examined in greater depth. These three sub-questions are:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?

- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

Attention will now be turned to discussing the extent to which each of these research questions has been addressed by the findings of the study.

## **9.1 Key findings**

The findings from this study suggest that SSLs are knowledgeable about alternative approaches to behaviour management and there is a good level of awareness in schools about these approaches. There is also a general sense of motivation, amongst both SSLs and students, towards trying something different. None of the participants in this study expressed being a strong advocate for punitive responses to challenging behaviour.

So, this leads to the question of why these alternative approaches are not more commonly implemented in English schools. The findings from this study suggest that the barriers preventing more schools from adopting these approaches are: a lack of funding and time, concern over how an alternative approach would be perceived by the wider school community, and a general sense of risk aversion among senior school management. These barriers, coupled with the finding that there is not a strong motivation among students for their school to change, appear to explain why English schools do not use these alternative approaches more often. Despite these barriers, there is a case for change to be made. This is discussed in the next section.

### 9.1.1 Case for change

It can be argued that the current predominant systems for managing undesirable student behaviour in English schools, based on rewards and punishments, are already effective for the majority of students and therefore change is not necessary. However, the increasing numbers of school exclusions in England tell a different story for a core minority of students, who persistently exhibit disruptive behaviour at school. For these students, caught in a cycle of repeated undesirable behaviour followed by an escalating series of punishments, the current system is clearly not working.

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), for this core minority of students who are persistently disruptive, it appears that they lack the skills to respond to a punitive approach in a positive way (Greene, 2008). When thinking about the majority of students, it could also be questioned whether it is the threat of punishment or lure of reward that causes them to behave

in a compliant manner. Children generally want to do well when they can and when they wish to conform to social norms and values, to enable a sense of belonging in their community (Greene, 2008). In addition, most students are likely to go through their entire school career without having much contact with the school discipline system at all. So, if exclusions are not working for the minority of students who receive them, and they are not implemented at all for the majority of students in the school population, it needs to be considered why there is a continued rise in the use of school exclusions.

Change is needed within the current school system in England to ensure that the core minority of students, who are the focus of this study, do not miss out on the opportunity to access and engage with their education as fully as possible. The long-term impact of multiple exclusions from school influences the life chances of these students. Exclusion from school is recognised as a risk factor for involvement in criminal activities (Parsons, 2011). There is also a potential impact on future employment opportunities, the need for support from services such as Education Inclusion Services, and the impact on society as a whole of not enabling all students to reach their educational potential. Tillson and Oxley (2019) also suggest that a systemic reform is needed in England to ensure that exclusions are being used in a way that is compatible with children's moral rights, as set out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In order to move towards a more socially just society, there are changes required in the ways schools respond to challenging student behaviour. As mentioned earlier (Chapter 2), alternative approaches, such as those described in this thesis, are more in-line with the principle of social justice than punitive responses. The key elements of dignity, access, equity, and participation (Oxley and Holden, 2021) are more easily achieved when working in a collaborative way with students. These alternative approaches also offer opportunities for affective justice (Mills et al., 2016) to be considered. This may include the implementation of support structures and respectful caring relationships between students and staff.

Change towards more collaborative behaviour management should lead to more sustainable solutions to challenging behaviour issues. This in turn will potentially lead to benefit to all involved. If the approach is effective, in a best case scenario, the students who were previously receiving multiple exclusions and other punishments from school, will no longer be receiving these punishments. They will be in school more consistently and regularly as they will not be excluded. Increased attendance in school will in turn lead to improved academic performance

as they will not be missing out on vital teaching (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). All other students will also benefit as their lessons will no longer be disrupted by persistently challenging behaviour from the minority of students. All students will also benefit from the modelling of a collaborative and respectful behaviour management system, which will also support them in developing their emotional intelligence as an important life skill (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013).

Teachers would also potentially benefit from this change as sustainable, mutually agreeable solutions are likely to mean a reduction in challenging behaviour. This would mean that teachers could spend more time teaching and less time managing behaviour incidents. In turn, this would reduce stress for teachers which continues to be a significant issue within the profession (Jerrim, Sims and Taylor, 2020; Kyriacou, 2001). Addressing this would potentially help with the issue of recruiting and retaining high quality staff members at schools.

Society as a whole would benefit from a reduction in school exclusions as the long-term prospects of this group of students, who would previously have received multiple Fixed Term exclusions, would instead be able to remain in school and access their opportunity to reach their educational potential. This would lead to better employment prospects in the future for these students. It would also reduce strain on external agencies working alongside schools, such as Education Inclusion Services and the police. In addition, there would be financial gains for society, as there would be less of a need for costly Pupil Referral Units and Youth Offender Services.

### 9.1.2 Challenges to implementing change

One of the challenges with promoting alternative approaches to behaviour management is that there is no large-scale evaluative evidence available yet in favour of the success of these approaches. However, this may be due to the fact that large data sets would have little value when considering the benefits of working psychotherapeutically with children. This type of work is very individual and it lends itself to case study approaches and in depth individual discussion more readily than to large-scale evaluations. Case studies of success in using alternative approaches are widely documented, for example by Clifford and McBlain (2017), Noor (2011), Geddes (2006), and the Attachment Research Community (n.d.), among many others.

However, what is already clear is that the current system is not working for this core minority of students, as evidenced by the increasing number of school exclusions being imposed. Exclusions from schools in England are continuing on a rising trend (Department for

Education, 2018). Punitive responses to persistently challenging behaviour are not successfully changing the behaviour of these particular students. Whilst the reasons for this could be debated, and are undoubtedly complex and individual for each child, it is unhelpful to continue responding in a way that has been shown to be ineffective. The persistent and repetitive cycle of undesirable behaviour, followed by punishment, followed by more undesirable behaviour, needs to be broken. The alternative approaches discussed in this thesis may be helpful in achieving this, as they place emphasis on collaboration and respect. They draw the student into being an active participant in resolving the issue, which means that the mutually agreed upon solution is more likely to be sustainable in the long-term, as opposed to one that has been imposed on the student by an authority figure.

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone agrees that these approaches are beneficial. Seith (2019) claims that non-punitive responses to disruptive behaviour are ineffective, and that the use of Restorative Practice in Scottish schools has led to a rise in indiscipline. Similarly, Bennett (2015) focusses on the use of punitive responses to tackle low level disruptive behaviour, claiming this to be the most effective way of ensuring the authority of the teacher.

At the moment it is acknowledged that it would be difficult for schools to overcome the identified barriers to implementing alternative approaches, without any external support. The lack of appropriate funding and the lack of understanding of these approaches in the wider community means that SSLs see this change as being too big a risk to take in most cases. To support schools to make this change, policy makers at both local and national levels need to reconsider school funding and prioritise schools being given the funding that they need to support all their students successfully without resorting to the use of exclusions. There needs to be more emphasis placed on exclusion being used only as a last resort. Rather than being seen as the default option for students who have reached that point in the cycle of escalating punishments, it needs to only be used when SSLs cannot see any other way of resolving the situation.

When considering the potential barrier of funding for alternative approaches to behaviour management, it is also important to take into account the current financial cost of school exclusion. For example, offering alternative provision or making a referral to a PRU can be a costly process. From the researcher's professional experience, the cost of a PRU placement can be four times as much as the funding for a mainstream school placement. It could be argued that this money would be more effectively spent in supporting schools with resources to

introduce alternative approaches, and potentially reduce the rate of exclusions and referrals to alternative provision settings.

Educating the wider community and raising awareness of the principles of alternative approaches and the psychological underpinnings that make these approaches effective, is an essential first step. If there was more awareness and understanding of these alternative approaches among parents and the general public, then there could be a greater desire for schools to implement them. This may lead to policy makers listening to this, and therefore to more priority being given to promoting and funding these approaches in schools. But the first step is to make this information accessible to the wider public. This is something that researchers and SSLs can start doing immediately.

The findings from this study suggest that there is the motivation among SSLs to make a change, as they want the best for their students and are open to change. However, there needs to be support available to enable them to do so. It is important that these findings are made accessible to policy makers, school leaders, and the wider public because the first step towards acquiring the necessary support is knowing that it is needed. The findings of the study will be of interest to a range of parties including: policy makers, SSLs, teachers, parents, and students. Policy makers in particular are key in ensuring that policy supports schools to make a change. Implications of the findings of this study are discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

At the individual school level, some aspects of alternative approaches can begin to be introduced with little impact on cost. One example is the introduction of mentoring support, as the case study school in Chapter 8 of this study has implemented. SSLs could consider requesting support from education unions to lobby policy makers for more funding for schools to promote alternative approaches to behaviour management. Researchers can also support this cause by promoting understanding of these approaches through public engagement events and publications. Greater public awareness may lead to increased funding.

### 9.1.3 Overcoming barriers to implementing change

Introducing a new initiative in schools often involves an initial financial outlay, and this is likely to be similar when considering the prospect of introducing alternative approaches to behaviour management. Funding may be needed for staff training, employing additional staff, and purchasing resources needed. Unfortunately, the issue of a lack of funding is one that is not easily resolved. This is something that needs to be considered by policy makers and Local Authorities. Individual schools can only work with the funding that they are allocated.

However, it could be possible for schools to decide to prioritise the implementation of alternative approaches and allocate additional funding for this within their budget. This would need to be a balancing act between allocating sufficient additional funding for this, and reducing funding for another area of school life. The evidence base (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013; Greene, 2008) suggests that the long-term benefits for individual students, teachers and the school community as a whole would be increased through the adoption of a more collaborative and restorative approach to behaviour management, but that would be at the expense of short-term gains through, for example, excluding students who are persistently disruptive. As mentioned above, the financial costs of introducing a new approach should be balanced against the current cost of referring students to alternative provision settings, such as PRUs. It is a difficult decision for SSLs, and one that is unlikely to become easier until funding for schools is given a higher priority by the government, policy makers, and Local Authorities.

Leaving the thorny issue of funding to one side, the barrier about the perceptions of others is perhaps more easily overcome. There are already some schools in England that are introducing alternative approaches to behaviour management and seeing success from these. For example, Attachment Aware Schools are becoming more prominent across England, particularly within the primary sector. These schools take a whole staff approach to offer specific support for developmental vulnerabilities, including executive function, regulation, and psychological development (The Attachment Lead Network, n.d.).

As time goes on and the longer term benefits are potentially seen in these school communities, it may be possible to point to a growing evidence base for adopting alternative approaches. This may give other schools the confidence to take this step for themselves. The concerns about the perceptions of staff members, parents and students could be mitigated by ensuring that there is a robust programme of information available for all in the school community to access, at a level appropriate to their role and age. Ensuring that all involved have a full understanding of the principles of the alternative approaches and the underlying reasons why these approaches are effective, would prevent many misconceptions such as those about systems based on collaboration and restoration being a ‘soft touch’.

In an ideal world, if schools could access the funding they require and could implement programmes to raise awareness of the principles of alternative approaches, then it appears likely that the third barrier, relating to risk aversion of SSLs, would largely be mitigated. Risk aversion occurs because there is a chance that taking the risk will not pay off. But even though

this is not an ideal situation, it can still be beneficial to consider taking a risk by trying something different. The current predominant system of behaviour management that leads to multiple exclusions for the same minority of students is not working for everyone, as outlined in Chapters One and Two.

As highlighted by one of the participants from an English school, SSLs often continue to do things the way they are doing them because that is the way that things have always been done. This is most likely applicable in many situations, not just in schools, as it is human nature to continue with the status quo unless there is a reason for change. The increasing trend of exclusions in English schools over the past decade suggests that there is now a reason for change to be attempted. There is a pressing need for undesirable behaviour to be considered as a sign of emotional distress, and for these students to be supported with their mental health (Geddes, 2006). The additional challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic have made this especially relevant.

It is possible that the motivation to change may be constrained by SSLs having a limited understanding of alternative approaches. For example, they may have heard of the approaches but have not had experience of them or know about the underlying principles based on theories and neuroscience. Geddes (2006) and Bombèr (2007) have both aimed to make their books, on the relevance of Attachment Theory to the classroom, accessible to all. There is a need for school staff to gain an insight into what is known within Educational Psychology, with a focus on Attachment Theory in understanding difficulties at school.

Nash and Schlösser (2014) conducted a case study in a secondary school with the aim to enhance understanding of disruptive behaviour through the use of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) materials. Their previous research had found that a sizeable minority of teachers in both primary and secondary schools appear to be unaware of the psychological underpinnings of disruptive behaviour and that this type of behaviour often communicates unresolved emotional needs, rather than simply being wilful defiance. The main objective for the CPD, delivered in one day, was to raise staff awareness of the relevance of attachment theory in understanding and managing disruptive behaviour effectively. Staff were presented with a compelling account of the neuroscience research findings related to insecure attachments. Giving staff access to this knowledge and information was intended to help them see the link between attachment and behaviour. After participating in the CPD day, findings showed that 76.1% of the teachers involved felt that their ideas about disruptive behaviour had



changed over the course of the day. This suggests that, although there may be some knowledge about alternative approaches, a deeper understanding of the underlying psychological principles is perhaps limited among all school staff. Teachers involved in the study felt that they had a greater understanding of the psychological underpinnings of disruptive behaviour at school, and it was clear from the survey responses that they felt emboldened to try alternative approaches. When the teachers were given the opportunity to find out more about disruptive behaviour and the potential reasons behind it, this changed the lens through which they were viewing it and may lead to them being more willing to consider a more compassionate, collaborative style of behaviour management.

#### 9.1.4 Reflections on key findings

There was an overwhelming sense within the data that the school leaders wanted to do their best for the students at their schools. This is to be expected to some extent as they have chosen to work in a career as a SSL. It is possible that some of the motivation behind their aspirations for the students is based on enhancing the reputation of their school and therefore their own careers, but the general sense was that the participants wanted their students to do well for the students' own benefit. This is a positive aspect of the findings.

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), behaviourist ideals underlie many of the standard behaviour management approaches taken in schools in England. Despite this, SSLs in this study did not explicitly advocate the use of rewards and punishment being the most effective way to manage student behaviour. Preventative measures, such as building positive relationships with the students, were discussed. This supports Atici's (2007) findings that British teachers are likely to use preventative methods to manage behaviour where possible. It also links with the ideals of social justice. Preventative methods, such as building positive relationships, are central to ensuring affective justice is taken into account (Mills et al. 2016).

The researcher had expected that there would be more of a focus on Ofsted requirements, but this was not mentioned very often at all by any of the participants. It was thought that the Ofsted requirements may be a constraining factor in the schools being innovative with their approaches to behaviour management, but it appears that this is not the case, or if it is, it does not appear to be a conscious decision made by the SSLs.

The main barrier identified to making changes to how behaviour is managed was a lack of time and resources. This is a significant issue for schools in England, in all aspects of their educational provision, not just regarding behaviour management. Goodman and Burton's

(2010) study also identified lack of resources as being a barrier to managing students with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD).

Being concerned about the perceptions of others, such as staff, students, parents, and other schools, was another key barrier identified in this study. School leaders want their staff to be in agreement with the approach that they are being asked to take and want their students to respect the system that is in place. The views of parents are particularly important because if parents do not think that the school is dealing with behaviour issues well, they are unlikely to wish to send their child to that school. If a school has fewer students attending, this has an impact on the amount of funding they receive. So, it is in a SSL's interests to make a positive impression on parents and it is much simpler to clearly explain a rigid system based on rewards and punishments than to outline the complexities of a more collaborative approach, particularly if this is something that parents are unfamiliar with from their own time at school or may see it as a 'soft' option.

## **9.2 Study reflections**

### 9.2.1 Research methods

The researcher chose the research methods that were used in this study as it was felt that these were the most appropriate methods to use for gathering data that would answer the research questions. The main findings of the study were presented as qualitative themes. This was as expected since the researcher had chosen to use IPA which is a qualitative methodology. The researcher strongly felt that there was a need for qualitative data in order to explore a complex topic about individuals' experiences and perceptions. It was felt that quantitative data alone would not capture the nuances and depth that could be gained through a qualitative approach.

On reflection as the study drew near completion, the researcher felt that taking a qualitative approach had worked well overall. It had enabled investigation into the complexities of SSLs' attitudes and beliefs about behaviour management which would have been difficult to convey via quantitative measures alone. It is acknowledged that it could be argued that quantitative methods may have made it easier to conduct comparisons between individuals and groups. However, the researcher felt that the depth granted by the qualitative individual data were more valuable for this particular study and its aim of exploring the views of SSLs.

The study did make some use of quantitative data as well. This was used in the surveys that were conducted, and it was a useful aspect of the overall data collection. It allowed some of

the survey answers to be categorised and ordered, for example, in asking participants how effective they felt their school behaviour management system was on a scale of 1 to 10. In this instance, an easily ordered answer was more useful than asking for a qualitative response. The qualitative interview data delved into the reasons why participants felt this way about their school behaviour management system, so this complemented the data gathered from the online survey well.

### 9.2.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted prior to the main data collection phase. This was in the form of an individual interview with one SSL at a secondary school. There was also an online survey conducted with staff at the same school. The results of the pilot study are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Conducting a pilot study interview was a useful experience and it allowed the interview question prompts to be refined, particularly around the use of terminology, such as whether to refer to behaviour management or discipline.

Carrying out the survey with staff was also a useful learning experience. The intention of the staff survey was to triangulate what the SSLs were saying in their interviews and to see whether this matched up with how the staff perceived the behaviour management system in the same school. However, it was decided not to conduct a staff survey in the main data collection phase. This was partly because the response to the survey was low and it was anticipated that this would be similar at other schools. Thus, it resulted in a small self-selected sample which was unlikely to be representative of the views of the whole school staff. It was also felt that this triangulation was somewhat superfluous to the main aim of the study, which was to focus on the experiences and perceptions of the SSLs.

Another learning point from the pilot study was to ensure that participant demographic information was collected prior to the interview. Initially the researcher did not do this and then had to contact the pilot study participant at a later date to gather this information. As they had moved to a new role in a different school, this was not straightforward. So it was decided that collecting this information prior to, or at the time of, the interview was the best course of action.

### 9.2.3 Study limitations

It is acknowledged that there are limitations to this study. The nature of the IPA methodology meant that there was only a small sample of SSLs interviewed. These cannot be said to be representative of school leaders as a whole. However, the purpose of the study was not to

generalise the findings. Rather it intended to shine a light on the experiences and perceptions of individuals in senior leadership positions in schools and to highlight how these can have an impact on the way they expect behaviour issues to be managed within their school. The limitations of IPA have been acknowledged throughout this study and discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Other qualitative methodologies were considered, for example narrative analysis, which aims to understand how individuals perceive their everyday lived experiences. But it was decided that IPA was more suitable as the study was looking at views and beliefs, which in this case constitute the phenomenon being explored, rather than focussing on a temporal experience that could be expressed as a story narrative. This type of analysis may be interesting to use for exploring SSLs' experiences of instances of managing behaviour, for example a particular instance of issuing an exclusion to a student. A narrative of how this was experienced by the SSL could be constructed through an interview and the data analysed with a narrative technique. This may be another idea for further research in the future.

There were also limitations to the online survey that was conducted. As some of the questions were quantitative, it would have been interesting to be able to follow up on the answers and delve more deeply into why participants had answered in the way they had. However, this was not possible, partly due to the survey being anonymous but also partly due to the extra time this would take and the time constraints of completing a PhD with a finite amount of data.

The case study exploring student perceptions of behaviour management in their school has the clear limitation that it was a case study and therefore was conducted in one school. A further potential limitation was that it was an independent school, rather than a mainstream school. Given these limitations, the data is not a suitable basis upon which to make generalisations. However, as with the IPA analysis of the interviews, this was never the aim of the focus groups conducted within this case study. Its aim was to give some indication of what students felt about behaviour management at their school and the case study achieved this.

The dual role of the researcher, as both interviewer and as a professional working in the education section, potentially introduced some challenges. The researcher knew some of the schools in her professional capacity prior to undertaking this study, whereas others were not known to her before their participation in this research. Having experiences of some of the schools beforehand meant that the researcher had to be aware of her potential preconceptions about school leaders' opinions on different forms of behaviour management. The researcher

attempted to acknowledge these preconceptions and put them to one side when analysing the data. Conversely, there may have been some benefit to this dual role as participants who already knew the researcher, may have felt more comfortable talking to her in the interviews.

The researcher feels that if they were to start the study over again, there are some improvements that they would make, given the gift of hindsight. The international element to this study was interesting but perhaps did not add a great deal to the findings. However, the researcher could not have known that this would be the case until after the data had been collected. It may also have made for a more focussed piece of research if it had been specifically exploring the barriers to implementing alternative approaches in English schools. In writing up the results of the study, while it has been interesting to find out more about the experiences and perceptions of SSLs, the barriers that have been identified appear to be the aspect that has the most potential use and implications for educational practice.

### **9.3 Implications of key findings**

#### **9.3.1 Implications for educational practice**

The findings of this study suggest that there are possibilities for English schools adopting a more collaborative approach to behaviour management. SSLs and students appear to be open to the idea of trying things a different way. The main barrier that would need to be overcome appears to be around a lack of time and resources. Schools across the country are struggling with funding and the situation with the current Covid-19 pandemic has potentially made this situation even more difficult as schools are unexpectedly having to divert resources into providing online education. Identifying that this is the main barrier as to why these approaches are not being used more widely in English schools, as opposed to it being a matter of school leaders lacking knowledge of alternative approaches or having a negative attitude towards these different systems, is a step forward. It means that there is a tangible issue that has the potential to be tackled and by removing this barrier, schools are more likely to be willing to take risks with trying out new approaches. However, if it was easy for schools to access additional money to fund extra staff and resources, they would already be doing this. This is discussed further in the section on implications for policy makers.

This study should be primarily of interest to SSLs, as it gives an insight into the experiences and perceptions of other SSLs. This could help them to consider how their own experiences influence the way they manage behaviour in their school and to recognise any similarities or differences between themselves and other senior leaders. Finding out how other schools

manage behaviour could give senior leaders the confidence to try something new or could reassure them that what they are already doing is consistent with the approaches of other schools.

The findings of the study should also be of interest to teachers and other school staff who are looking for alternative ways of managing persistently challenging behaviour in their classroom. Whilst this study is primarily focussed on SSLs and a whole school approach, one teacher taking the time to change their approach for just one child could make all the difference for that individual and their long-term engagement in education. It could be that the support of that one teacher can help to break that cycle of persistent challenging behaviour and escalating punishments for that student. Greene (2008) tells the story of one lone teacher who is supporting a disruptive student. At the start of the process, the teacher feels helpless and unsure of what to do to support the student. Greene (2008) tells readers how the teacher started to work with the Educational Psychologist to implement Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS). In the end, the teacher is able to successfully help the student to change their behaviour and the whole school is on board with the new approach.

The findings of this study could also be potentially of interest to parents of school age children. In particular, the finding that one of the reasons why SSLs are reluctant to adopt alternative approaches to behaviour management is because of their concern over the way that parents will view this change. Parents who would like the school to adopt an alternative approach, could show their support for these changes to be made and may even be able to work collaboratively with the school, through parent teacher associations and similar organisations, to educate the school community on the potential value that these alternative approaches could hold for improving behaviour management systems.

Ultimately even with funding available and support from the school community, introducing an alternative approach to behaviour management is a long-term undertaking. It is not something that can be implemented and evaluated after a term. The change in the entire school culture needs to be embedded and this takes time. There is also further research that could be conducted to support schools in making this change. For example, a longitudinal evaluation of a school that has implemented an alternative approach and has the time to make a sustainable change to their ethos, would be helpful for schools who are about to embark on making the change.

The barriers that have been identified in the study (lack of funding, time and resources, concern over the perceptions of others, and risk aversion among senior school management) are inhibiting change from taking place for behaviour management in the majority of English schools. These barriers mean that it is more beneficial for the school community to continue with the current systems, at the expense of this core minority of students who are not engaging with education.

It is acknowledged that these barriers make it difficult for SSLs to act in isolation within their own schools. There is a need for policy makers at both the local and national level to prioritise school funding and to promote alternative approaches to behaviour management, in place of punitive responses and reward systems. This two-pronged approach, of additional funding and encouragement to make a change, would enable and support schools to implement alternative approaches without being concerned that they are taking a risk with their school's reputation and resources.

A particularly interesting finding, which is highlighted by both the surveys and the English school interviews, is that there is not necessarily a significant difference in the way that PRUs and mainstream schools manage undesirable student behaviour. Taking the same approach as many mainstream schools, many PRUs continue to use punishments, including exclusions, as a response to undesirable student behaviour. The fact that most, if not all, the students at PRUs have not been able to successfully adapt their behaviour in response to these approaches whilst they were at mainstream school, evidenced by them being referred to a PRU, suggests that the same approach is unlikely to support them to change their behaviour at this stage either.

One implication of this is that in order to start change within our education system, perhaps PRUs could be the catalyst for this. Some PRUs, as shown in the results of the online survey, are already no longer making use of punishments as a response to undesirable student behaviour. Adopting alternative approaches in PRUs would also mean that these approaches would likely be more targeted at the core minority of students who have received multiple exclusions from school, and are therefore most likely to benefit from something different. PRUs also generally have more resources, in terms of staff to student ratios, than mainstream schools, which could help to overcome some of the barriers related to funding and resources. The smaller school community of a typical PRU would also lend itself well to the collaborative nature of these alternative approaches. If success at using these approaches could be demonstrated in PRUs, this would then add to the evidence base and strengthen the call for

promoting these practices in mainstream schools. Alternatively, if the approaches were shown not to be successful, it would support the view that these approaches should not be more widely promoted.

### 9.3.2 Implications for policy makers

Policy makers are key to driving change within the school system. Lack of funding for schools is a broad issue, with concerns about this reaching beyond behaviour management. What the findings from this study can do is add weight to the case for schools being granted more funding. In particular, it offers a prompt to policy makers and Local Authorities to consider providing schools with additional funding specifically for behaviour management by highlighting that the need is there and that this is a barrier to potentially improving outcomes for persistently challenging students.

It is not only about funding though. Schools also need the support of the Department of Education, Local Authorities and Academy Trusts to feel confident about deviating from the typical way of approaching challenging behaviour. Without promotion of these alternative methods and the promise of support for schools who adopt them, there is little incentive to make these changes, particularly when SSLs often find themselves in situations where they are having to battle on several fronts at once and their attention is pulled in many different directions. Having to balance the needs of everyone in the school community is a difficult task. Without support to introduce these methods, it is difficult for the evidence base either for or against alternative approaches to be built upon further. It is necessary for schools to implement these approaches in order to gather evidence to either support or dismiss their effectiveness as an alternative to the current status quo.

Policy makers should find the results of this study to be of interest. The impetus to change needs to come from the top down. When talking about an individual school, this starts with the SSLs, which is why this study chose to focus on this group of people. However, when talking about potential change in schools across the country, this needs to be supported by national policy. Senior leaders in schools take notice when something is promoted by the Department for Education and by Ofsted. These are two essential bodies that could drive a change in what schools see as the default way of responding to persistently challenging behaviour. Support from the government behaviour adviser would also be valuable. The insight that the findings of this study provide could support the development of policy that promotes the adoption of alternative approaches involving more collaborative and less punitive aspects.



### 9.3.3 Implications for further research

While the findings of this study are useful, there is further research that needs to be done in this area of behaviour management. One important piece of data that would have been useful for this study is to know how many schools are currently using alternative approaches to behaviour management in England. The survey that was conducted showed that there are some schools which do not use punitive responses, or do not use rewards, or do not use either in their management of student behaviour. A quantitative piece of research could be conducted to determine how many schools across England this applies to.

Following on from this, there is a need for a robust longitudinal evaluation of schools that are using alternative approaches to enable researchers to assess the effectiveness of these systems, as opposed to the more traditional approaches that make use of punitive responses and exclusions. It would make sense for this to happen before there is a more widespread push for the use of these alternative approaches. If they are found to be effective, the evidence will then be stronger for promoting more commonplace use of these methods. On the other hand, if they are found to be ineffective or detrimental, then this evidence could be used to argue against wasting time and money on a more widespread promotion.

Conducting a robust longitudinal evaluation of schools that are using alternative approaches is key to supporting more schools to consider adopting these alternative approaches as at the moment there is not a large-scale evaluation that can be highlighted as demonstrating that these approaches are more effective than using punishments and exclusions. Longitudinal studies of schools that have already implemented alternative approaches, documenting their journey through the change, would increase SSLs' confidence in starting out on this path with their own schools. A robust evaluation of the experiences of English schools already using alternative approaches is also needed to be able to assess the success of these approaches across different contexts. One of the reasons why this has not been done yet is because it can be difficult to measure behavioural outcomes in ways that are meaningful and yet also result in data that is easy to categorise. Consideration would need to be given as to how this issue could be overcome.

There are opportunities to learn from the good practices of schools that have low exclusion rates and avoid using punitive approaches. However, there first needs to be evidence that what is identified as good practice is actually effective. This would tie in well with an evaluation of alternative approaches to behaviour management currently being used in schools.

Where English schools are already implementing alternative approaches, it would be of interest to explore how they are overcoming or mitigating the barriers that were identified by SSLs in this study. A longitudinal case study could be conducted to document the experiences of a SSL as they lead their school to make the change from traditional ways of managing behaviour to embedding an alternative approach.

There is an opportunity for further exploration of student perceptions of behaviour management systems, building on the case study that was conducted in this study. This piece of research could be tied in to the evaluation of the effectiveness of alternative approaches in schools. Consideration could be given as to whether student perception about how effective behaviour management in their school is, actually matches the findings of the evaluation.

#### **9.4 Conclusion to thesis**

This chapter has offered an overview of the key findings and implications of this PhD study, which has explored why punitive responses appear to be the predominant way of trying to change student behaviour in English schools.

The findings of this study have addressed the overarching research question:

- Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?

This question was addressed by investigating the three sub-questions:

- RQ 1: What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?
- RQ 2: What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in schools in England?
- RQ 3: What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in their school?

With a focus on the experiences and perceptions of SSLs, the findings of the study suggest that there is the potential for change in English schools and for behaviour management systems to move away from punitive approaches being the default response to undesirable student behaviour. Overall the study gives hope that there are identifiable barriers as to why change has not yet occurred but that, once identified, SSLs can be supported to overcome and mitigate against these barriers. Moving forward, there are several directions for future research that

could be useful in building on the findings of this study. At the forefront, the researcher feels that it is essential for there to be a robust large-scale and longitudinal evaluation of schools that are already implementing alternative approaches to behaviour management in England, so that other schools can learn from their experiences and good practice. The wider adoption of more collaborative ways of managing challenging student behaviour would allow schools in England to begin to make a move towards a more equitable and socially just way of working.

The evidence that the current predominant behaviour management system in schools in England is not working for a key minority of students is clear. There are alternative approaches that could be adopted to try and support the most challenging, and often also the most vulnerable, students within the school system. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the famous quote attributed to Albert Einstein states that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. The researcher will end with the thought that surely it is better to try something different than continue with something that is not working, just because that is how it has always been done.

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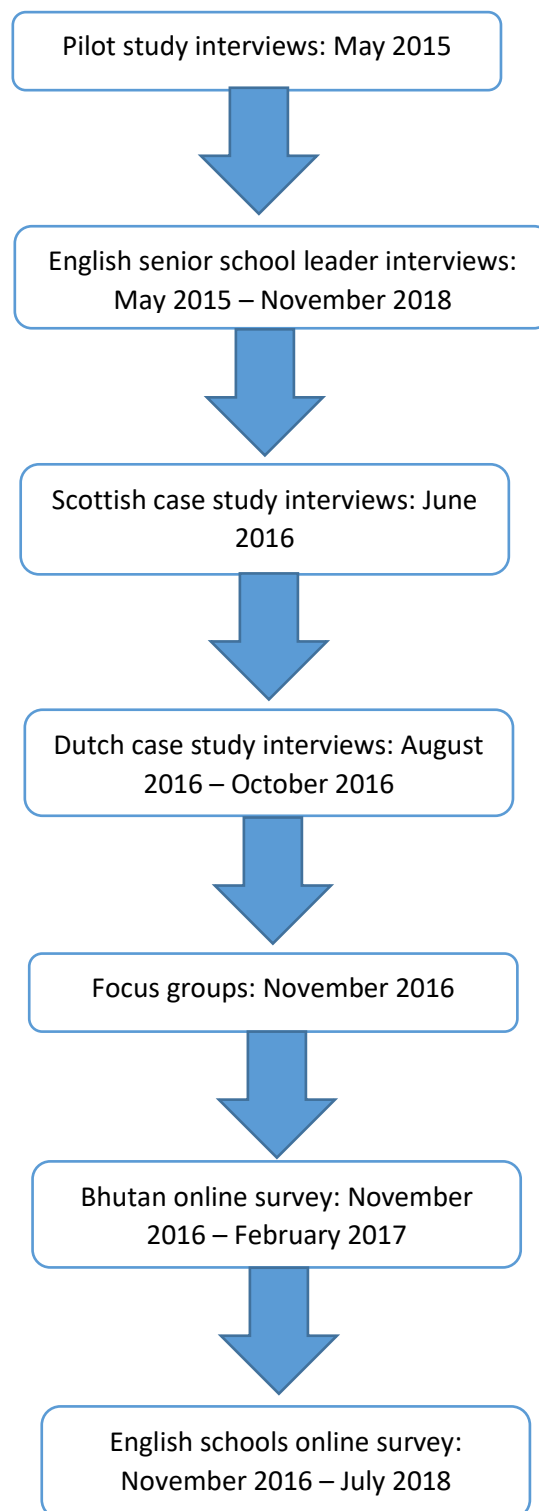
## APPENDICES

### Chapter 3: Methodology

#### Appendix A: Data collection methods mapped to research questions

<b>Why are punitive approaches still being used as the predominant way to manage student behaviour in English schools?</b>	
<i>Sub research questions:</i>	<i>Data collection method to address sub-question:</i>
<p>1. What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured qualitative interviews with senior school leaders in English school (including primary and secondary mainstream schools, independent schools, special schools, and Pupil Referral Units)</li> <li>• Online survey sent to headteachers at primary and secondary mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units in England</li> <li>• Semi-structured qualitative interviews with senior school leaders in Scotland (case study)</li> <li>• Online survey sent to teachers in Bhutan (case study)</li> <li>• Semi-structured qualitative interviews with teachers, academics, and adult participants who were students, from the Netherlands (case study)</li> </ul>
<p>2. What are students' perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups with students at a case study school (independent prep school, including Years 4 – 8, 9-13 years old)</li> </ul>
<p>3. What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in English schools?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured qualitative interviews with senior school leaders in English school (including primary and secondary mainstream schools, independent schools, special schools, and Pupil Referral Units)</li> <li>• Online survey sent to headteachers at primary and secondary mainstream schools and Pupil Referral Units in England</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Data collection timeline



Appendix C: Interview question guide

Research Question	Interview Question
<p><b>Research question:</b></p> <p><b>Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?</b></p>	
<p><b>Sub-question:</b> What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?</p> <p><i>Opening question: Could you tell me about your experiences of behaviour management in relation to student behaviour in schools?</i></p>	<p>Tell me about your professional background and your career route into becoming a senior school leader</p> <p>What motivated you to enter this career?</p> <p>What/Who would you say has had the biggest influence on your style as a school leader?</p> <p>What do you believe is the purpose of education?</p> <p>Would you say that you keep up to date with current educational research? If not – why not? If yes – in what ways do you keep up to date? Do you use research findings to suggest or implement new approaches within your school?</p> <p>Tell me about your experience of behaviour management systems in schools (as a professional, as a young person, as a parent)</p> <p>What training have you received in your career to equip you for managing behaviour in your school? Either formal or informal, direct or indirect</p> <p>Tell me about the behaviour management system currently in place at your school. How effective do you feel this approach is? What works well? What doesn't work so well? How much time do you as a senior leader spend each week on behaviour management issues? Would you say that your behaviour management system is more preventative or more reactive?</p> <p>What do you feel are the reasons for including sanctions in a school behaviour policy?</p> <p>How often is your school behaviour policy reviewed? On what criteria is it reviewed? Who has responsibility for this? What or who do you feel has the biggest influence on any revisions made to the policy?</p>

	<p>What are your views on school exclusions? What experiences have you had of school exclusions? How often do you use Fixed Term exclusions as a sanction? For what reasons would you impose a Fixed Term exclusion? How effective do you feel these are in changing student behaviour? What alternatives does your school use in place of Fixed Term exclusions? What preventative methods do you use to try and prevent escalation to Fixed Term exclusions?</p>
	<p>Tell me about an occasion where you took the decision to exclude a student. What was your motivation for making this decision? What were your thoughts and feelings at the time? How do you feel about this decision now, on reflection?</p>
	<p>What do you think are the ‘reasons’/possible explanations/potential explanatory factors behind disruptive behaviour in school? Do you think there are any implications for mental health difficulties?</p>
	<p>Other than the reward and sanction based system, tell me about any alternative approaches to behaviour management that you are aware of</p>
	<p>Tell me more about... How did you hear about this approach? What is your opinion of this approach? Do you think this approach would be more or less effective than the current approach? Why?</p>
<p><b>Sub-question:</b> What are the perceived barriers to implementing alternative behaviour management systems in English schools?</p>	<p>What needs do you think would have to be met before schools could consider adopting an alternative system of behaviour management?</p>
	<p>What barriers do you think there would be? How could these be removed?</p>
	<p>What qualities do you think a teacher should have to manage behaviour effectively? How do you support staff to achieve/maintain these qualities in your school? What CPD opportunities are available for staff in your school?</p>
	<p>What other resources or support would your school like to access in order to effectively empower all staff to manage behaviour well and to reduce the use of Fixed Term exclusions?</p>
	<p>What influence do the strategies of other schools (locally and/or nationally) have on the behaviour management strategies that you implement in your school?</p>
	<p>Can you outline the funding responsibilities your school has for pupils accessing alternative provision?</p>
	<p>What impact do you think devolved funding has on exclusions?</p>

## Appendix D: IPA interview participant consent form

### **Informed consent form to participate in interviews for a PhD research project conducted by Laura Oxley**



Dear participant,

You are invited to take part in a research project about behaviour management systems in schools. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview conducted by the researcher (Laura Oxley). The interviews will explore the experiences, beliefs and perceptions of senior leaders in education about school discipline strategies, as well as knowledge of, and attitude towards, alternative approaches to behaviour management other than a system based on sanctions and rewards. The study aims to explore this topic, as well as identifying needs that must be met before any alternative system of school discipline could become commonplace within education institutions.

The interview will last approximately one hour. It will take place at a time and location of your convenience. If possible, the interview will take place face-to-face. If this is not possible, the interview will be organised to take place via Skype or telephone. This research study is being supervised by Dr Poppy Nash (Department of Education, University of York). It has been approved by the University of York Ethics Committee, and is being self-funded by the researcher Laura Oxley.

You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time before the interview takes place or during the interview process itself. You may also withdraw your data within one week following the interview. This will be prior to any transcription or analysis taking place. Once this has begun and data has been anonymised, it will not be possible to withdraw your data. If you do choose to withdraw your data part way through the interview or within one week following the interview, your data will be securely disposed of.

At any time during the study, you can have a copy of your raw data (ie the audio recording) upon request. Raw data will be securely destroyed by the researcher once she feels that analysis is as complete as is necessary. Data will be stored in electronic form with password protection in a secure location.

As the interviews will be semi-structured, the specific questions asked will be guided by the discussion and the points raised by participants. Participants will have the opportunity to view the interview guidance (ie general areas likely to be covered) prior to the interview. During the interview process, participants may choose not to answer certain questions or not to discuss certain topics within the interview, without having to completely withdraw their data. Participants who choose to withdraw their data completely may be asked for a reason. This will assist with future planning and participant recruitment. However you are under no obligation to give a reason if you prefer not to. If you wish to withdraw your data, please contact the researcher Laura Oxley in person or via email on [lo590@york.ac.uk](mailto:lo590@york.ac.uk).

The interviews will be audio recorded for use by the researcher, Laura Oxley, in analysis. Field notes may also be taken by the researcher during the interviews to assist with recall. Only the researcher and her supervisor (and the participant upon request) will have access to the raw data. During the interviews, it is acceptable to refer to individuals or institutions by name if necessary, as all data will be anonymised before inclusion in the analysis and subsequent reports.

Participants will be given the opportunity to comment on the preliminary analysis undertaken by the researcher, if they wish to take part in this. This offers the opportunity for participants to correct factual errors and comment on the initial analysis. Where interpretations differ between the researcher and the participant, the researcher retains the discretion to present both views. The interviews may not be transcribed ad verbatim. However selective quotes will be used to illustrate themes and points. Re phrasing ideas and clarifying comments on reflection will be possible in discussion with the researcher if the participant wishes.

All data will be anonymised. Fictional names will be used for individual participants and for institutions. Participants may select the fictional names for themselves and their institution (within reasonable boundaries) if they wish.

By signing this consent form, participants agree that their anonymised data may be used in published material which would be publicly available, for example peer reviewed journal articles. Every effort will be made to anonymise data and ensure that no individual or institution can be identified. If you would prefer your data were not used in any publicly available publications, please discuss this with the researcher prior to signing this consent form.

Whilst anonymity will be strived for, please be aware that confidentiality is a different concept and cannot be promised in all circumstances. Any disclosures or information which the researcher feels legally or morally bound to pass on will be passed on to the appropriate external bodies. Please discuss this with the researcher if you would like further clarification about this.

Data may be used in future studies by the researcher. All conditions of anonymity outlined for this study will continue to apply.

At the end of the study, all participants will be given an executive summary of the data and analysis obtained from their own interview and any data gathered from their school.

If you have any queries, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact the researcher, Laura Oxley, by email [lo590@york.ac.uk](mailto:lo590@york.ac.uk). Alternatively you may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee at the University of York, by email at [education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk).

### **Participant**

Signed

Print name:

Date:

### **Researcher**

Signed



Print name: Laura Oxley

Date:

## Appendix E: Online survey questions for English schools

### **Behaviour management in your school**

On a scale from 0 - 10, how effective do you believe the current behaviour management system is in your school?

Not at all effective

Extremely effective

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

Please comment on why you have chosen the above point on the scale.

Please comment about anything that you feel would improve the effectiveness of behaviour management in your school.

Please comment on anything which you feel works particularly well as part of behaviour management in your school.



Appendix F: Online survey questions for schools in Bhutan

Does your school use punishments as a way of responding to challenging behaviour?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Does your school use rewards as a way of responding to positive behaviour?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

How effective do you think the behaviour management is in your school?

- Extremely effective
- Very effective
- Moderately effective
- Slightly effective
- Not effective at all

If you could make one change to the way behaviour is managed in your school, what would that be?

**Informed consent statement for deputy headteacher of case study school**



Thank you for inviting me to collaborate with your school to explore students' perceptions of behaviour management in their school. As part of my PhD research, I would like to arrange focus groups of students to discuss the topic of behaviour management. This will involve a group of between five to ten students from each year group being randomly selected to take part in a group discussion with me and you about their perception of how behaviour is managed in (school name). This topic will cover good behaviour in school and how this is responded to, as well as how poor behaviour is dealt with when necessary. The focus groups will last for around 30-45 minutes each and will be scheduled in agreement with teachers at (school name) to ensure that they do not interfere significantly with the students' lessons. The focus group discussions will be audio recorded for future transcription and analysis.

The focus groups will form part of a larger research study, which is being supervised by Dr Poppy Nash (Department of Education, University of York). It has been approved by the University of York Ethics Committee, and is being self-funded by the researcher Laura Oxley.

You have the right to withdraw consent to participate in the research at any time before the focus group takes place or during the focus group itself. Once the focus group discussion has been completed, all data will be anonymised. The audio recording of the focus group will be securely destroyed by the researcher once she feels that analysis is as complete as is necessary. Data will be stored in electronic form with password protection in a secure location.

As the focus groups will be semi-structured, the specific questions asked will be guided by the discussion and the points raised by participants. During the focus group, participants may choose not to answer certain questions or not to discuss certain topics within the interview, without having to completely withdraw their data. Participants who choose to withdraw from the research during the focus group may be asked for a reason. This will assist with future planning and participant recruitment. However, participants are under no obligation to give a reason if they prefer not to do so.

The focus groups will be audio recorded for use by the researcher, Laura Oxley, for analysis. Field notes may also be taken by the researcher during the focus groups to assist with recall. Only the researcher, her supervisor, and yourself, if requested, will have access to the raw data. During the focus groups, it is acceptable to refer to individuals or institutions by name if necessary, as all data will be anonymised before inclusion in the analysis and subsequent reports.

Participants will be given the opportunity to comment on the preliminary analysis undertaken by the researcher, if they wish to take part in this. The focus groups may not be transcribed ad verbatim. However selective quotes will be used to illustrate themes and points arising from focus groups. All data will be anonymised. Fictional names will be used for individual participants and for institutions, as necessary.

By signing this consent form, you agree that anonymised data from the focus groups may be used in published material which would be publicly available, for example peer reviewed journal articles. Every effort will be made to anonymise data and ensure that no individual or institution can be identified. If you would prefer that the data were not used in any publicly available publications, please discuss this with the researcher prior to signing this consent form.

Whilst anonymity will be strived for, please be aware that confidentiality is a different concept and cannot be promised in all circumstances. Any disclosures or information which the researcher feels legally or morally bound to pass on will be passed on to the appropriate external bodies. Please discuss this with the researcher if you would like further clarification about this.

Data may be used in future studies by the researcher. All conditions of anonymity outlined for this study will continue to apply.

If you have any queries, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact the researcher, Laura Oxley, by email [lo590@york.ac.uk](mailto:lo590@york.ac.uk). Alternatively, you may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee at the University of York, by email at [education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk).

**I understand what the research project involves and give consent for students at my school to take part in a focus group.**

**YES**       **NO**

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of School -**

---

## Appendix H: Parental consent form for focus groups



Dear Parents/Carers

I am a PhD researcher at the University of York. My research is exploring experiences of behaviour management systems in schools. (School name) has agreed to collaborate with me in this research to investigate students' perceptions of the behaviour management system at their school.

I would like to conduct some focus groups with students from across the school. This will involve a group of between five to ten students from each year group being randomly selected to take part in a group discussion with me and (deputy headteacher) about their perception of how behaviour is managed in (school name). This topic will cover good behaviour in school and how this is responded to, as well as how poor behaviour is dealt with when necessary. The focus groups will last for around 30-45 minutes each and will be scheduled in agreement with teachers at (school name) to ensure that they do not interfere significantly with the students' lessons. The focus group discussions will be audio recorded for future transcription and analysis.

Your child has been randomly selected to participate in the focus group for their school year and has been invited to contribute to this research. I would like to ask for your consent for them to participate. If you are willing to give consent for this, please could you read through the following statement which provides further information about the research and complete the consent slip at the bottom of the page. Please return this consent slip to the school by (date).

Kind regards

Laura Oxley

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## **Informed consent statement for parents/carers of students invited to participate in focus groups**

This research study is being supervised by Dr Poppy Nash (Department of Education, University of York). It has been approved by the University of York Ethics Committee, and is being self-funded by the researcher Laura Oxley.

You or your child have the right to withdraw consent to participate in the research at any time before the focus group takes place or during the focus group itself. Once the focus group discussion has been completed, all data will be anonymised. The audio recording of the focus group will be securely destroyed by the researcher once she feels that analysis is as complete as is necessary. Data will be stored in electronic form with password protection in a secure location.

As the focus groups will be semi-structured, the specific questions asked will be guided by the discussion and the points raised by participants. During the focus group, participants may choose not to answer certain questions or not to discuss certain topics within the group, without having to completely withdraw their data. Participants who choose to withdraw from the research during the focus group may be asked for a reason. This will assist with future planning and participant recruitment. However, you or your child are under no obligation to give a reason if you prefer not to do so.

The focus groups will be audio recorded for use by the researcher, Laura Oxley, in analysis. Field notes may also be taken by the researcher during the focus groups to assist with recall. Only the researcher, her supervisor, and (deputy headteacher) will have access to the raw data. During the focus groups, it is acceptable to refer to individuals or institutions by name if necessary, as all data will be anonymised before inclusion in the analysis and subsequent reports.

Participants will be given the opportunity to comment on the preliminary analysis undertaken by the researcher, if they wish to take part in this. The focus groups may not be transcribed ad verbatim. However selective quotes will be used to illustrate themes and points arising from the groups. All data will be anonymised. Fictional names will be used for individual participants and for institutions, as necessary.

By signing this consent form, parents/carers agree that their child's anonymised data may be used in published material which would be publicly available, for example, peer reviewed journal articles. Every effort will be made to anonymise data and ensure that no individual or institution can be identified. If you would prefer your data were not used in any publicly available publications, please discuss this with the researcher prior to signing this consent form.

Whilst anonymity will be strived for, please be aware that confidentiality is a different concept and cannot be promised in all circumstances. Any disclosures or information which the researcher feels

legally or morally bound to pass on will be passed on to the appropriate external bodies. Please discuss this with the researcher if you would like further clarification about this.

Data may be used in future studies by the researcher. All conditions of anonymity outlined for this study will continue to apply.

If you have any queries, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact the researcher, Laura Oxley, by email [lo590@york.ac.uk](mailto:lo590@york.ac.uk). Alternatively, you may contact the Chair of the Ethics Committee at the University of York, by email at [education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk](mailto:education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk).

**I understand what the research project involves and give consent for my child to take part in a focus group.**

YES  NO

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Child**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of School**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Research project about behaviour at (school name)








You are invited to take part in a discussion about behaviour at your school. The discussion will be with other members of your year group, (deputy headteacher), and me as the researcher. We will be discussing how good behaviour is responded to at your school, as well as how poor behaviour is dealt with when necessary. Your involvement will help us to understand what students at the school think about how behaviour is managed at (school name) and whether there is anything that could be changed to make this better than it already is.

You can change your mind about taking part at any time by letting us know. We won't mind if you do change your mind.

We would like to audio record the discussion so that we can remember what you have said. We won't let anyone else listen to the recording.

We would like to use the information we find out about during the discussion to improve behaviour management at your school and at other schools. We will not tell anyone else your name or which school the information was recorded at.

	<p>I want to take part in this project, discussing behaviour at my school</p>
	<p>I know I can say 'NO' to the project at any time</p>
	<p>I am happy to share my ideas and for them to be recorded</p>
	<p>I know that my name will not be used when people are told about the project</p>
	<p>I want to join in and I understand what is involved</p>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 4: Pilot study

### Appendix J: Extract from interview question guide

Research Question	Interview Question	Reasoning for question ( <i>link to Kelchtermans' framework of teachers' self-understanding</i> )
<b>Research question:</b> <b>Why are schools in England reluctant to use alternative approaches to punitive responses in managing undesirable student behaviour?</b>		
<b>Sub-question:</b> What are senior school leaders' experiences and perceptions of current behaviour management systems in schools?	Tell me about your professional background and your career route into becoming a headteacher/senior leader (title as appropriate)	Exploring past experiences, which may influence current belief system ( <i>self-image, job motivation</i> )
	What motivated you to enter this career?	Exploring beliefs and motivations, and self-image, which may influence views on behaviour management ( <i>self-image, job motivation, future orientation</i> )
	What/Who would you say has had the biggest influence on your style as a school leader?	Exploring past experiences which may have been internalised and drawn upon to inform actions in the present ( <i>self-image, task perception</i> )
	What do you believe is the purpose of education?	Attitude toward education as a holistic concept will impact on attitude towards behaviour management, eg academic focus may have a different emphasis to focus on holistic development of young people ( <i>task perception</i> )



Appendix K: Pre interview survey questions and answers

## Initial Report

*Pre interview survey*

September 9th 2016, 4:01 pm BST

**Q1 - On a scale from 0 - 10, how effective do you believe the behaviour management system is in your school?**

Answer	%	Count
0	0.00%	0
1	0.00%	0
2	0.00%	0
3	0.00%	0
4	0.00%	0
5	0.00%	0
6	0.00%	0
7	0.00%	0
8	0.00%	0
9	100.00%	1
10	0.00%	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1</b>

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
On a scale from 0 - 10, how effective do you believe the behaviour management system is in your school?	9.00	9.00	9.00	0.00	0.00	1	0.00%	100.00%

## Appendix L: Extract from pilot study interview transcript

Why are sanction based approaches such as Fixed Term exclusions still being used in English schools? Could you give me your opinion on what you think about that?

I think just picking up on the term, Fixed Term exclusions there, and I suppose that we really only use Fixed Term exclusions here as a real last resort if someone's behaviour has been very very poor and it will be for, frankly for a very small range of things to be actually given a Fixed Term exclusion and I'm just wondering whether actually how far, I think I asked this in the survey a bit, about how far Fixed Term exclusions actually change behaviour and you tend to find with the kids who have Fixed Term exclusions they're often kids who are probably, who are in trouble anyway. I can think of very few examples where a child has a Fixed Term exclusion who's not as it were somebody who's been on the wrong side of the law in school so whether it changes that much in terms of behaviour I'm not sure but other sanctions you hope do. But Fixed Terms exclusions are a very very last resort to the point where you're almost just saying we can't have you here, because of your outrageous behaviour. I'm not how much that particular sanction changes but I think other sanctions certainly, well the evidence would suggest that they do.

If Fixed Term exclusions aren't being used to change student behaviour, what do you think are the reasons behind schools using Fixed Term exclusions?

Well, I think, I hope but you know I can't obviously speak for everybody but Fixed Term exclusions really are for really extreme examples of poor behaviour. I think there are a number of things. I think, I think first of all the whole purpose of behaviour management is to support students in realising their potential otherwise there's no point in doing it because that's what we should all be about as teachers, hopefully we all are. But I think that sometimes in life, not just in school, drawing a line in the sand somewhere on some things is actually rather important for us as people. You know if I turn up to work late ten times and I get three warnings and I carry on being late to work, it's probably pretty reasonable that I'm going to lose my job. I think you sometimes have to say to students the same thing but here Fixed Term exclusion is number one is think very carefully about it and number two it's either for a very serious one off incident or and that's more likely to be the case, nowadays.



I = interviewer, P99 = pilot study participant

Descriptive, *linguistic*, conceptual

### **Initial thoughts before analysis**

- A preference for an interventionist approach to behaviour management
- Sees teaching as more than a job – need to like the students
- Good intentions/aspirations for students – wants students to reach their potential
- Acknowledgement/query – is it different at other schools?
- Sanctions in school, likened to sanctions in society/life in general
- Some contradictions – whether students are in control of their behaviour, whether extrinsic motivation works, whether exclusion from school is used as a last resort
- Belief that good behaviour follows quality teaching
- Self-image – educated, middle class, was a ‘good boy’ at school
- Education = choices – improves individuals, improves society

### **Emergent themes – initial grouping**

1. **Education = choices, education improves society, comparison to life in general (Purpose of education)**
2. **Quality teaching, achievement follows behaviour, link between behaviour and teaching (Teaching and behaviour)**
3. **Desire for improvement, barriers to achievement, lack of effectiveness of exclusions (Aspirations)**
4. **Links with parents, influence of other schools (External links)**
5. **Pastoral work, relationships, underlying reasons for poor behaviour (Relationships)**
6. **Support for staff, leadership (School organisation)**
7. **Consistency, boundaries, visibility of behaviour management system, exclusion as a last resort (Structured behaviour management system)**
8. **Rewards, extrinsic motivation (Motivation)**

## Superordinate themes

<p><b>Aspirations</b></p> <p>Aspirations for students, self, school, and society          Barriers to achieving aspirations          Widening choices and reaching potentials</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Education = choices, education improves society, comparison to life in general (Purpose of education)</b></li> <li>2. <b>Quality teaching, achievement follows behaviour, link between behaviour and teaching (Teaching and behaviour)</b></li> <li>3. <b>Desire for improvement, barriers to achievement, lack of effectiveness of exclusions (Aspirations)</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <p>Relationships between leadership and staff, between teacher and students, between parents and school, between different schools, between students and their own families</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <b>Links with parents, influence of other schools (External links)</b></li> <li>5. <b>Pastoral work, relationships, underlying reasons for poor behaviour (Relationships)</b></li> <li>6. <b>Support for staff, leadership (School organisation)</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>Importance of structured behaviour management system</b></p> <p>Boundaries, consistency, exclusions, extrinsic motivation, rewards</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Consistency, boundaries, visibility of behaviour management system, exclusion as a last resort (Structured behaviour management system)</b></li> <li>8. <b>Rewards, extrinsic motivation (Motivation)</b></li> </ol>

Appendix N: Staff survey initial support

**Q12 - How effective do you feel Fixed Term Exclusions are as a sanction?**

Answer	%	Count
Very Ineffective	0.00%	0
Ineffective	16.67%	1
Somewhat Ineffective	0.00%	0
Neither Effective nor Ineffective	16.67%	1
Somewhat Effective	50.00%	3
Effective	0.00%	0
Very Effective	16.67%	1
Total	100%	6

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	Bottom 3 Box	Top 3 Box
How effective do you feel Fixed Term Exclusions are as a sanction?	2.00	7.00	4.67	1.49	2.22	6	16.67%	66.67%

Appendix O: Scarf with academic poster display



Appendix P: Pilot study comic strip

(Submitted as a separate file for ease of reading the text)





## Chapter 5: Analysis and discussion – interviews in English schools

### Appendix R: Key words frequency table

School → Key words ↓	<b>A1</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>P1</b>	<b>P2</b>	<b>P3</b>	<b>S1</b>	<b>S2</b>	<b>S3</b>
<b>Learning category</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>
Learning	60	35	12	5	5	14	13	9
Teaching	22	22	0	0	1	0	0	1
Engaging	4	5	1	0	0	1	0	4
mentors	32	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Targets	21	5	0	0	1	5	1	0
Monitoring	8	7	0	2	0	0	6	6
Intervention	19	1	1	0	4	0	0	13
Achievement	13	12	4	2	3	1	11	2
<b>Rewards category</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7</b>
Reward	7	20	9	9	5	2	18	2
Success	13	1	2	1	1	1	10	3
Positive	20	20	5	4	13	1	6	1
Praise	2	3	8	3	1	0	9	0
Golden	8	7	1	9	0	0	0	0
Celebration	0	4	2	2	2	0	0	0
Motivation	2	0	2	0	0	0	3	1
Incentive	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Outstanding	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Alt approaches category</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>
Restorative	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Collaborative	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1
Relationships	12	4	3	2	5	0	2	2
Solution focussed	1	0	0	0		0	0	0
Support	27	20	9	1	9	21	20	21
Encourage	8	3	3	4	1	0	0	0
Reflection	11	0	3	4	3	0	10	2
Trust	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Respect	0	6	8	4	7	0	1	6
Nurture	0	1	3	1	2	0	0	0
Communication	3	3	1		1	0	0	2
<b>Clear structure category</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>73</b>
Clear	8	4	4	3	1	3	10	11
Consistency	7	5	12	2	3	0	7	1
Systematic	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Firm	2	0	0	2	1	0	3	2
Boundaries	7	0	0	0	2	0	1	3

Rules	6	2	0	20	2	1	7	11
Structure	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Expectations	8	4	2	3	1	0	5	10
Standards	1	2	0	0	0	1	7	5
Comply	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Responsibility	6	12	6	3	3	2	11	20
Orderly	2	3	0	0	0	1	8	0
<b>Sanctions category</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>119</b>
Punishment	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
Sanction	6	14	5	4	0	16	19	12
Consequence	6	6	1	2	8	0	2	3
Negative	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
Exclusion	19	7	3	2	4	27	24	33
Risk	1	6	0	1	0	3	2	11
Jeopardise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Indiscipline	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Reprimand	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Detention	0	1	0	0	0	25	16	25
Misbehaviour	1	3	1	0	0	0	8	1
Warning	1	0	2	0	0	2	5	6
Zero-tolerance	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Disruption	2	7	1	0	0	5	4	6
Isolation	1	0	0	2	0	24	1	2
Discipline	0	3	1	2	0	0	18	12
<b>School ethos category</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>65</b>
Warm	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Welcoming	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Safe	11	5	1	6	6	1	11	27
Secure	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	9
Caring	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	2
Inclusive	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0
Fair	3	2	5	2	0	0	2	0
Calm	8	2	4	3	2	0	1	1
Ordered	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Friendly	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Unified	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Community	2	8	5	4	2	0	4	15
Civilised	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Happy	0	2	0	3	1	0	1	0
Sensible	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Courtesy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Consideration	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Kindness	1	1	0	3	1	0	0	1
Pride	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Appendix S: Images of behaviour management

(Submitted as a separate file for ease of reading the text)

## Chapter 6: Analysis and discussion – online survey

### Appendix T: School size information

Number of pupils on roll	All schools		Primary schools		Secondary schools	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Less than 50 pupils	1	2.3	1	4.8	0	0
50 – 100 pupils	2	4.7	2	9.5	0	0
101 – 200 pupils	6	14.0	4	19.0	1	5.9
201 – 300 pupils	6	14.0	5	23.8	0	0
301 – 400 pupils	1	2.3	1	4.8	0	0
401 – 500 pupils	7	16.3	6	28.6	0	0
501 – 1000 pupils	12	27.9	2	9.5	10	58.8
1001 – 1500 pupils	5	11.5	0	0	5	29.4
Over 1500 pupils	1	2.3	0	0	1	5.9
Prefer not to say	2	4.7	0	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>43</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>100.0</i>

## Chapter 8: Analysis and discussion – student perceptions

### Appendix U: Focus groups preliminary analysis

