

**Action Research with Teachers in a
Secondary School to Improve the
Educational Experiences of Children with
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**

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ABSTRACT

Action research was carried out in one secondary school to investigate the nature of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). Prior to the action research, a survey on staff views of pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties was carried out in one local authority to inform the local authority's behaviour support plan and staff in one secondary school expressed particular concerns regarding pupils' behaviour difficulties. This secondary school agreed to become the focus of the action research project on behaviour difficulties. Three action research cycles were used to investigate the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. The first action research cycle focused on senior staffs' perceptions of pupils' behaviour difficulties and Year 7 groups were perceived by the special educational needs co-ordinator (Senco) as particularly challenging. The second action research cycle included classroom observations of Year 7 groups, meetings with school staff and a further series of observations with particular attention to two subject areas in which contrasting teacher/ pupil behaviour was observed. Feedback on the classroom observations was given to each class teacher and one teacher who was observed to be particularly successful in engaging pupils in the curriculum was interviewed. The third action research cycle focused on staff focus groups with the aim of generating solutions to problem behaviour across the school. Focus group meetings were provided for staff to talk about issues openly and promote opportunities to share good practice. The behaviour of Year 7 pupils' was observed to vary considerably in different lessons. Unsuccessful strategies in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks were identified as well as strategies and teaching practices which appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

1.1 Preparing for the research

This research project into the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties was informed by a local authority survey on staff views of behaviour difficulties. The survey was undertaken to inform the local authority behaviour support plan.

The role of local authorities in the education of children with EBD was clarified in the 1996 Education Act which placed a duty on local authorities to publish behaviour support plans which have coherent, comprehensive and well understood local arrangements for pupils with EBD to meet the full range of their special educational needs. Government regulations view local authority behaviour support plans as most likely to succeed if they are based on shared values and principles devised through local consultation (DfEE, 1998). A School Operations Group was set up to address the behaviour support plan and the three key areas were identified for investigation:- staff views of which elements of their own and their organisation's practice encourage successful outcomes; what staff perceive as unhelpful; what provision is seen as desirable. A survey of staff views in one local authority was carried out to gather information on the key areas (Lloyd Bennett, 2006).

Questionnaires were circulated to key staff (mainly special educational needs co-ordinators, SENCOs) at all schools and relevant LA support agencies. The response rate for each organisation varied from 0 to 20. There was a total of 35 responses from staff at secondary schools and 57 % of these responses came from one secondary school where respondents expressed concern about the severity of behaviour difficulties and their views that mainstream education was not appropriate for meeting the needs of students with behaviour difficulties. Response rates were likely to be affected by a variety of factors including the effectiveness of circulation and collection of questionnaire responses by a key member of staff so it is not possible to prioritise LA secondary schools in terms of associating a high response rate with a high level of staff concern regarding behaviour difficulties. However the responses suggested that there were a

number of staff at this particular secondary school who were concerned about students' behaviour difficulties and perceived these problems as separate from the learning environment.

The secondary school with a relatively high response rate was receiving input from the researcher in the role of the school's educational psychologist. Following meetings with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) and the Head of Year 7 who expressed concern about many students' social emotional and behaviour needs, the researcher drafted a letter to the SENCo and the head teacher, offering a research project on behaviour difficulties in the school. The letter was given to the SENCo during a routine school visit and shortly afterwards an email was received in which the head teacher and SENCo agreed to the proposed research project.

The project offered to investigate the nature of behaviour difficulties presented by pupils in the school and aimed to identify factors and approaches to classroom management which can help to reduce the pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Initially two assumptions were made by the researcher - the researcher knows what behaviour difficulties are – based on fifteen years of teaching (including eight years in a special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, EBD) and 13 years practicing as an educational psychologist. The second assumption was that behaviour difficulties can be separated from learning and treated as a separate entity. Both of these assumptions were found to be incorrect based on two classroom observations carried out in a secondary school setting prior to the research.

1.2 Educational psychologist's input to the school prior to the research

Prior to the research project the researcher was interested in the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties as there is a great range of diversity within the category of behaviour difficulties (Cornwall 2004). The researcher provided educational psychology input for the school community and at the request of the deputy principal, two classroom observations were conducted as part of an assessment for a pupil in Year 10. Ainscow (1998) suggested that research should take into account the uniqueness of contexts and

encounters. The two classroom observations informed the researcher's thinking and planning for research into the question *What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?*

Data from the observations are provided in order to illustrate the teachers' contrasting approaches to behaviour management in the two lessons. Pritchard (2004) suggests that behaviour is dependent on the interactions between the systems within which children develop and therefore it is important to take account of young people's learning environments. The deputy principal reported that the target pupil (TP) had difficulties in relationships with peers. During the first classroom observation there were 20 pupils and an experienced English teacher was accompanied by a teacher in training. In lesson 1 it appeared to the researcher that the teachers showed a high tolerance to off task behaviour. With regard to lesson delivery the experienced teacher's instructions were clear and positive. With regard to teacher management she showed quiet positive regard for the class. Following the observation she reported that she liked the class and this came across to the researcher in terms of a generally relaxed, fairly task focused atmosphere with high levels of social interaction between peers. Data from the classroom observation is reproduced here in order to provide a rich picture of the contrasting behaviour in each of the two lessons.

Lesson 1

With regard to pupil behaviour at the beginning of the lesson, pupils were engaged and ready to learn. Target pupil (TP) arrived 10 minutes late (ushered in by deputy principle in a flurry) to comments from other pupils 'it arrives', 'been drinking weed', he sat at the back on his own.

The experienced teacher immediately went over and explained the nature of the task

2 boys in front turned round and questioned him about an incident.

The class were generally engaged in task

1 boy called over to TP 'you're going to get battered'

TP grinned and said 'what'

2 or 3 pupils turned to look at TP who lounged against a filing cabinet behind him
Teachers were engaged around the classroom with individuals seemingly
oblivious to the development of off task behaviour

Pupils not abusive or challenging to teacher

One boy threw paper and then walked over and put in the bin

Someone threw paper and it landed in TP's lap, he ignored it

2 boys in front re-engaged him 'I bet he don't', there seemed to be some sort of
altercation between them 'does it hurt, I bet it did, I bet it did'

Teacher asked 'anyone got one of these' holding up a book

Pupil threw scrunched up paper hard at him

Another pupil 'oh you missed'

Teacher 'will you get on with your work please'

There was a general sense of other pupils targeting aggression and derision on TP
who appeared to enjoy the attention from the other pupils but also found it
intimidating.

At the end of the lesson TP put his coat on and covered his head with a hood. He
seemed reluctant to leave the room and walked across to science with the
educational psychologist and deputy principal.

With regard to the teachers' expressed views she reported the following
information – the class is generally OK, TP has erupted on 3 occasions this year,
not sure why, may have been some ribbing throughout the lesson which has got to
him and not stood out from the lesson. Sometimes he asks to stay behind at the
end of the lesson and avoids corridors at lesson change.

Lesson 2

Science lesson with 10 pupils, including TP and an experienced male teacher who
sent two pupils out at the beginning of the lesson.

'Out you go right now, don't you dare say another word. (One boy had made a
comment and another boy had answered him when the teacher was addressing
another pupil.) Teacher: 'Get out'. Pupil: 'say one word Jesus Christ'. Both boys
left the classroom. There was absolute quiet while the teacher explained the safety

features of a car during a crash. TP quietly focussed on tasks and engaged in the lesson by answering some of the questions.

In conclusion there appeared to be a marked difference of teachers' perception and tolerance of unacceptable behaviour. The two teachers in the first lesson tolerated a high level of social interaction with peers who were throwing paper and making comments across the classroom. In contrast the teacher in the second lesson excluded two pupils for the whole lesson ostensibly because of their brief comments at the beginning of the lesson. The experienced teacher in the first lesson who reported that she liked the class appeared to have a different level of tolerance to off task behaviour to the teacher in the second lesson.

The information from these two classroom observations suggested that teachers may have different perceptions of what constitutes behaviour difficulties and teachers also vary in their willingness to tolerate off task behaviour. This supports the view of Galloway et al (1982) that behaviour which one teacher is able to ignore without interrupting the lesson can escalate into a major confrontation with another teacher. Therefore the question 'what is the nature of emotional and behavioural difficulties?' may be answered in a wide range of ways according to different sources of data. Pupils' behaviour in the first lesson was experienced by the observer as threatening and destructive which accords with Gates et al's (2002) definition of behavioural distress. This term is used as a definition of behaviour difficulties in this research project. The tolerance of teachers in the first lesson observation to behaviour which appeared to the observer as threatening and destructive in contrast to the teacher in the second lesson who excluded two pupils for a negative comment at the beginning of the lesson suggested that teachers may have very different views of what constitutes behaviour difficulties. The observations of the target pupil in two classroom settings indicated to the researcher that no one holds an objective view of the nature of behaviour difficulties. The researcher's experience of fifteen years teaching which included eight years in a special school for pupils with EBD and thirteen years practicing as an educational psychologist did not mean that he could access an objective view of what constituted behaviour difficulties. The question 'what is the nature of

emotional and behavioural difficulties? does not differentiate between perceived or observed behaviour and is unlikely to generate a commonly agreed definition of behaviour difficulties. Furthermore the behaviour of the target pupil which was causing concern for the deputy principal was observed to be influenced to a large degree by the behaviour of the other pupils and their management by the teacher. This suggests that pupils' behaviour difficulties are influenced to a considerable degree by the classroom environment and should not be perceived as separate from the classroom environment in which the behaviour occurs. This corresponds to other research findings by Molnar & Lindquist 1989, Cooper & Upton 1990, Miller & Leyden 1999, Miller et al 2002, Daniels 2006.

1.3 Rationale for the research

This investigation was informed by the classroom observations above and previous research. Action research methodology is used to investigate the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school which aimed to achieve systemic change (Frederickson 1990) by focusing on the organisation in which staff expressed concern over the presenting problem of pupils' behaviour difficulties.

The initial question - what is the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties - was informed by the researcher's professional experience as a teacher and educational psychologist/ researcher. A review of the research literature on behaviour difficulties developed the initial question into key issues for investigation with additional issues for investigation informed by action research methodology.

The action research was undertaken in three cycles. Cycle one aimed to explore the perceptions of senior staff regarding pupils' behaviour difficulties. It was anticipated that the staff may view the causes of behaviour difficulties as generally located within individual children as reported by McLean (1987). Action research cycle two involved observing the lessons of groups of pupils who were perceived by the Senco as particularly challenging. Observations would take account of teachers' qualities and strategies (Garner 1993) which were of particular interest with regard to promoting the

learning of pupils with EBD. Daniels (2006) suggested that providing staff with opportunities for self reflection and sharing knowledge are likely to have positive outcomes. Therefore action research cycle three included special educational needs (SEN) focus groups to consider and share good practices between staff regarding the management of pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Reviewing current literature and previous research into behaviour difficulties is a double edged sword. It both informs the potential researcher by raising awareness of prior research findings and at the same time constrains him/ her by providing frameworks to direct thinking.

Drawing upon unconventional sources of ideas can broaden, refresh and challenge current thinking though these ideas can not be seen as stemming from a defended scientific line of inquiry. In order to widen the researcher's breadth of thinking this literature review draws upon prior research literature as well as another source of ideas.

A history of various terms related to behaviour difficulties will be discussed followed by an explanation of how the terms 'behaviour difficulties' and 'emotional behaviour difficulties' are defined for the purpose of the present study. The identification of behaviour difficulties is considered followed by a discussion on models of causation. Research literature on behaviour difficulties in school communities is reviewed in terms of a history of behaviour difficulties and terminology; the identification of behaviour difficulties; theoretical models of causation. Following on from this the research literature on behaviour difficulties in school communities is considered in terms of pupil characteristics; teacher pupil relationship and teacher characteristics; differing views of parents, pupils and staff; circular causation; systemic and interactionist views of emotional behavioural difficulties; organisational factors in schools, and the curriculum. School funding of special educational needs (SEN) is discussed and relationships between educational communities and outside agencies is followed by a view taken from a source outside the research literature.

2.2 History of behaviour difficulties and terminology

Bowlby (1944) identified ‘affectionless character’ for children whose early histories are marked by prolonged separation from their mothers and foster mothers which was linked to child conduct problems. Children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties were first described as maladjusted in the 1945 Education Act which identified various categories of handicapped pupils. Maladjustment was described as ‘pupils who show evidence of psychosocial disturbance or emotional instability and require special educational treatment in order to affect their personal social or educational readjustment’ (DES, 1945).

The Underwood report (1955) described aspects of behaviour disorders which were consistent with symptoms of maladjustment in terms of aggressiveness, demands for attention, stealing and begging. In line with the trend of employing new terms to avoid social censure through negative labelling the term ‘maladjusted’ was replaced by ‘emotionally and behaviourally disturbed or disordered’ in the 1981 Education Act. The 1994 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (CoP) provided guidance on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. The CoP emphasised the need for early identification of children with SEN and the need for clarity and precision in the drafting of statements of SEN. Pupil Behaviour and Discipline (Circular 8/94) builds on the recommendations of the Elton report and draws on evidence of good practice in schools. Cooper (1998) suggests that the important elements of this circular include the development of whole school behaviour policies, encouraging positive behaviour and consistent approaches to pupils who break school rules, a differentiated curriculum and the use of rewards. The Education of Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (Circular 9/94) identified a continuum of emotional and behavioural difficulties ranging from social maladaptation to abnormal emotional stresses.

Nicholson (2003) carried out a five year longitudinal study of low and high socio-economic status New Zealand children. Major gaps in pre-reading skills at school entry were found and it was suggested that poor skills may play a strong role in later

behavioural difficulties simply because of the negative effects of reading failure on self esteem and feelings of confidence.

A variety of terms are in current use for behaviour difficulties including emotional behaviour difficulties (EBD), social emotional behaviour difficulties (SEBD), behavioural distress, antisocial, delinquent, maladjusted, deviant, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional and defiant disorder, conduct disorder, aggressive, affective disorders, personality disorder and psychopathology. Terms related to behaviour difficulties are diverse in their application and it is extremely unlikely that there is any single factor that can be seen as central to their origin and maintenance. Terms are used in a number of ways by different individuals and can be interpreted as implying that the difficulties are within the individual rather than influenced by external factors such as school organisation or family circumstances.

There is no clear 'category' or 'syndrome' with which to label an individual thought to have behaviour difficulties – there is no specific set of symptoms and there are no fixed recognisable features. There are no widely recognised and used objective tests with clear criteria for measuring behaviour difficulties (Farrell, Harraghy & Petrie 1996). There is a great range of diversity in behaviour difficulties, so any kind of classification is almost rendered meaningless (Cornwall 2004) and of little value in understanding the needs of children (Galloway 1985). The various terms associated with behaviour difficulties have been likened to 'Balkanization' (Forness and Kavale 2000) in which ethnic groups are separated into distinct categories following recognition of a separate identity for an ethnic people. The American Psychiatric Association (1994) has attempted to identify distinct categories of disorders but following close examination significant overlap exists across disorders and there may be more symptom variability within disorders than across disorders associated with behaviour difficulties. In addition diagnostic categories have also been criticised as poor predictors of intervention responsiveness (Strain 2001; Tremblay & Royer 1992).



Thesis for further consultation

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me increasingly reliant on friends for
al validation of self-esteem which may

be a crucial mediator of the link between peer relationships and internalising problems in
adolescence.

EBD is a vague umbrella term and we should be wary about the consequences of
indiscriminate labelling. Cooper (2005) suggested that the term should be used to
describe patterns of behaviour rather than labels applying to people. These patterns of
behaviour are viewed as extreme variants of normal behaviour. Deviant or disordered
behaviour can be performed by anyone depending on circumstances surrounding the
behaviour. These circumstances will usually include the viewpoint of an individual or
group who judges the behaviour to be disordered or deviant.

Supporting the important influence of situational factors, Swinson et al (2003) argue that
the behaviour of children identified as EBD and their mainstream counterparts does not
differ significantly in a classroom setting.

From an interactionist perspective which takes into account social constructions and situational factors Gates et al (2000) view behaviour as referring to

‘the total response of a person to a situation that s/he faces including the psychological and physiological elements. The expressions of these elements when perceived by the self and/or others as threatening, frightening, destructive or self destructive are described as behavioural distress’ (p. IX).

This definition is particularly pertinent to the study of EBD as it avoids focusing on certain behaviour of some individuals that is not deemed to be socially acceptable. It contrasts with the criteria for conduct disorder identified in Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV – aggression to people and animals, destruction of property, deceitfulness or theft and serious violation of rules in the last six to twelve months in which the difficulties are firmly located within the individual. Gates et al’s (2000) definition of behavioural distress allows the investigation of behaviour difficulties to include the school environment as well as pupil behaviour. The current study adopts Gates et al’s definition of behavioural stress for the terms emotional behaviour difficulties and behaviour difficulties which will be used interchangeably.

2.3 Identification of behaviour difficulties

The identification of young people’s special educational needs including behaviour difficulties can draw upon a medical approach or a social approach to identification and interventions for young people’s difficulties. The medical model favours identifying a child in terms of a disorder which is viewed as a necessary step prior to adopting appropriate treatments to overcome the child’s disorder.

In defence of the medical model, Kauffman (2002) argues that labelling of pupils is a necessary precursor to treatment – only universal interventions that apply to everyone can be implemented without labels. The use of the medical model of diagnosis and treatment means that children can be labelled because of the frequency and persistence of their unacceptable behaviour. The increasing use of the term ADHD may be partially due to

parents who seem to actively pursue diagnoses which result in health-based labels for behaviour and learning difficulties which can result in treatment of the child rather than changing aspects of the child's learning environment. DSM III-R (American Psychiatric Association 1987) identifies the term conduct disorder as referring to within child factors such as truanting lying, stealing, running away, initiating fights and using weapons. Further support for the medical model of behaviour difficulties being located within the child is provided by McGhee, Silva & Willaims (1984) who identified perinatal risks such as prematurity, low birth weight and anoxia as being associated persistent parent and teacher rated behaviour problems. Criticism of the medical model came from therapeutic circles in which professionals attempted to understand the causes and development of emotional disturbances influencing how children felt about themselves and others (Bowlby, 1998; Roe, 1978).

The extent to which the introduction of labels such as 'special educational needs' and 'behaviour difficulties' has led to more inclusive practices has been questioned by Barton (1993). The nature of disabilist assumptions and discriminatory conditions are seen by Oliver (1990) as an offensive feature of SEN policy and practice. The role of professionals in defining needs and creating dependency of pupils raises the question of power relations. Professional definitions tend to favour within-the-child and therefore deficit based interpretations of individual needs.

A social model of identification and treatment for behaviour difficulties takes into account the situational factors which influence a young person's behaviour difficulties. The social model accepts that individuals may vary in their perceptions of a young person's behaviour which may result in different constructions relating to the reasons for a young person's behaviour difficulties and how they could be overcome.

Ainscow (1998) suggested that progress in the field will be more likely if the identification of behaviour difficulties is reformulated in order to pay attention to the uniqueness of contexts and encounters.

Tobbell and Lawthom (2005) attack the notion of describing children ‘with behaviour difficulties’ as indicating a specific construction of the word ‘child’ as a concept and intervention which is treatment driven. They view behaviour difficulties as distributed across a context rather than situated within a child and the identification of difficulties does not require individual treatment but contextual analysis.

Geddes (2006) suggests that behaviour has meaning whether it is provocative and reactive or withdrawn and silent. Understanding the communication explicit in behaviour can protect the teacher from being adversely affected by pupils’ feelings and defensive patterns and can thus enhance professional practice and pupil achievement.

The identification of behaviour difficulties cannot be seen as an objective process in which certain individual’s behaviour can be separated from the social situations in which the behaviour occurs. Investigating the causation of young people’s behaviour difficulties is also a complex task.

Thomas (2005) views the agenda of identifying behaviour difficulties as

‘one of deficit, deviance and disadvantage’ in the child and while school systems are usually mentioned in discourse such as this, they seem to appear almost as an afterthought. It is clear that the real problem is considered to be dispositional: that of the child and the emphasis is thus on individual treatment’(p.61).

The term EBD induces a clinical mindset from which it is difficult to escape. The notion of need here is based on the belief that a child’s problems are being identified and addressed. Need in this context however is more usefully seen as the school’s need – a need for calm and order. The language of special needs invariably steers professional attention toward a child based action plan which distracts attention from possible shortcomings of the school and avoids large scale upheaval and expense of whole school reform. Thomas (2005) suggests that

‘emotional needs may be a fiction constructed to escape

the school's insecurities about failing to keep order' (p.64).

Advisors who provide assessments of children are not viewed as labellers but as benefactors. The adolescent's cut of hair, walk posture, clothes, use of slang, speech tone of voice may be the basis for the typing of a student as a conduct problem. For aberrant behaviour to occur there has in Foucault's words

'to be something wrong with him, and this is his character, his psyche, his upbringing, his unconscious, his desires' (1980: p. 44).

This suggests that personal dynamics between staff and students may be influential in the behaviour difficulties of pupils and adults may be using the label emotional and behavioural difficulties to express dislike of a particular pupil.

By retaining and using the label EBD, sight is often lost of the fact that schools are educational communities which may inadvertently alienate individuals by packaging behaviour difficulties as children's problems and divert attention from ways in which schools can become more congenial and inclusive places.

The most serious challenging behaviours involve physical and verbal aggression as well as refusal to cooperate with teachers' direction. When these behaviours occur at a low frequency or in isolation they are not considered serious. Using a medical within-child model Lyons and O'Connor (2006) found that children and teachers identified behaviour difficulties in terms of talking out of turn, being out of one's seat, disrupting class activities and playing around. It was also found that whether or not pupils refused to submit to the authority of the teacher played a central role in school perceptions and constructions of young people's behaviour difficulties.

2.4 Theoretical models of causation

A conceptual framework of therapeutic and non-therapeutic influences in the development of behaviour difficulties takes into account society, professional organisations, the family and the individual (Lloyd Bennett 2005). Each of these areas

could be conceived in terms of levels which are interconnected by therapeutic, non-therapeutic and neutral influences on the development of the individual. Any aspect or manifestation of behaviour difficulties is likely to be influenced by any or all these interconnected levels. The framework provides the background for theoretical causal models of behaviour difficulties providing guidance to this researcher regarding the direction of the present study. Though this study will focus on one educational community the researcher acknowledges that influences at all the levels of society, professional organisations, family and the individual can be active in manifestations of behaviour difficulties observed and described in the educational community. The term educational community rather than 'school' is preferred as the focus of the study is on a complex organisation of individuals with cultural, social, managerial and educational factors rather than simply an environment for learning.

Theoretical models of causation draw upon factors from at least one of the levels within the developmental framework.

The social information processing model for aggressive children was developed by Dodge (1991) and distinguishes between reactive and proactive aggression. These types of aggression have different neural and cognitive mechanisms as well as different aetiologies' developmental courses. Reactive aggression is a response to cues and proactive aggression usually occurs in the forms of object acquisition or peer domination. Dodge has found support for the view that reactively aggressive boys demonstrate inaccuracy in the interpretation of peers' cues and also demonstrate tendencies to hostile intentions to peers in ambiguous circumstances. Individuals with behaviour difficulties associate favourable evaluations of the outcomes of their aggression. Dodge proposes that a history of trauma, abuse, deprivation and insecure attachment relations will lead to hypervigilance and active aggressive behaviour. Dodge (1991) initially focused on how the development of social information processing biases are causally influenced by environmental factors and then reformulated the model (Crick & Dodge 1994) with no reference to biological or environmental influences. The individual's information

processing may not be conscious so that when asked why s/he acted aggressively s/he might have no idea.

Weiner et al 1971, focussing primarily on society and the individual, combined social learning and cognitive elements in attribution theory which focuses on the explanations people give for their behaviour and places particular emphasis on the ways in which explanations either indicate individuals' belief that they are in control of their behaviour or their belief that they are helpless in the face of external influences which cause their behaviour resulting in their passivity in the face of antisocial and delinquent influences (Davison & Neale, 2001).

Mitchell & Blair (2000) developed a model of causation which primarily focuses on the individual and society, proposing the violence inhibition mechanism model in which the biological make-up determines whether individuals show emotional difficulties which are only seen as risk factors for the development of the disorder and it is the individual's adverse social environment that creates the conditions necessary for the development of psychopathy.

Patterson et al (1992) focussed primarily on the levels of the family and society. A particular pattern of social influences recurring in the life histories of severely anti-social adult males was identified and a causative model based on family relationships was proposed. The men commonly came from families afflicted by unstable and conflicting family circumstances, where patterns of care were unpredictable and discipline was enforced inconsistently, with corporal punishment being a recurrent feature in child management.

Cooper (2004) drawing upon our understanding of society, the family and the individual, suggests that aetiological factors can be thought of in terms of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors and he stresses that the presence of biological or genetic factors should not be taken as an indication of a simple biological cause for the associated difficulty or disorder (e.g. the frontal lobes of the brain which are concerned with the

regulation of attention and behaviour in children with ADHD have been found to function differently from those of the general population). However the structure of frontal lobes cannot be assumed to cause ADHD.

Caspi & Moffitt (1995) take into account society, the individual and family factors developing the theory of life course persistent antisocial behaviour. Neuropsychological problems are thought to arise as a result of long term biological problems. Neural development may be disrupted by maternal drug abuse, poor prenatal nutrition or post natal exposure to toxic agents. Neural development may also be disrupted by neonatal deprivation of nutrition, stimulation and affection. In terms of the individual Caspi & Moffitt (1995) cite research evidence that two deficits are empirically associated with antisocial behaviour – verbal deficits and executive function deficits. Deficiencies in the brain's self-control functions or 'executive' functions could interfere with children's ability to control their own behaviour, producing inattentive, impulsive children who are handicapped in considering the future implications of their acts and adapting their behaviour to changing social circumstances. Control theory distinguishes between primary and secondary control (Wrosch & Heckhausen, 1999). Primary control refers to behaviours directed at the external world to fit the needs and desires of the individual. Secondary control is targeted at internal processes and serves to focus and protect motivational resources needed for primary control.

There are a number of theories which aim to explain the causation of behaviour difficulties and the content of these theoretical frameworks influence the nature of treatments and investigation of EBD. Behaviourists and the related cognitive and social learning theories claim that all behaviour is learned and therefore can be 'unlearned'. Psychodynamic theory however states that behaviour is the outward manifestation of our feelings, which are affected by our life experiences.

Ecosystemic theories view behaviour as the consequence of the interactions between the systems within which children develop, and therefore, those working with them need to take account of the various environments in which they interact (Pritchard 2004).

Behaviours that cause concern in school are the result of the children's life experiences and the interactions between these experiences and their personal characteristics.

Behaviour that is acceptable and applauded in one setting may engender disapproval in another setting. Some children find it hard to adapt their behaviour in a variety of settings – the playground the streets, the home and the classroom. Eco-systemic approaches to behaviour stress the interconnectedness within social systems, the complexity of causation and the nature of the relationships between the child's school and home (Cooper, 2004).

Miller 2003 and Cooper 2004 conclude that the search for the one true cause or what started EBD in the first place may become a fruitless distraction from overcoming behaviour difficulties. Causal modelling may be better suited to conditions such as autism and dyslexia rather than conduct disorder due to problems of definition, identification and lack of a well established genetically mediated basis (Krol et al 2004).

The wide definition of behavioural distress by Gates et al (2000) and the psycho social model of behaviour difficulties suggest a complex interplay of factors relating to a wide range of social, psychological and biological relationships within and between factors which impact on individuals and groups.

2.5 Behaviour difficulties in school communities

Previous studies suggest that opposing views are commonly found in educational communities on the nature of SEBD as well as who experiences them and why. Key factors in the development of behaviour difficulties have been considered in terms of pupil characteristics, differing views, circular causation, situational factors, organisational factors such as school policies, teacher/ pupil relationships and the curriculum.

2.5.1 Pupil characteristics.

McLean (1987) found that disruption in schools was traditionally analysed in terms of individual pupils and the causes were generally located within the child and the child's family background and circumstances. Research suggests that the within child model

continues to be very prevalent in schools (Roffey 2002, Ellins & Porter 2005) and there are a wide range of factors that contribute to this – funding through statements of SEN, non-reflective teaching styles and curriculum constraints.

Galloway & Goodwyn (1987) noted that educational psychologists are under powerful pressure to individualise difficult behaviour and locate it within individual children finding themselves *persona non grata* when they identify weaknesses in teaching method, organisation and management.

Royer (2005) noted a substantial gap between research and practice based on his experiences of providing training in schools ‘there remains a very strong tendency to target the EBD student or his family as being the problem. The school philosophy is thus often limited to one of :

‘cure the child and his family then we will be able to teach him. EBD students use the school’s behaviour management strategies to ensure that their non-conforming activities are all very public and visibly displayed.. Many professionals continue to believe that we must fix the behaviour of students before being able to teach them. Using punishment as the sole method of intervention increases the probability of problem behaviours.’ (p.373)

Macleod (2006) considered the distinction between ‘mad or bad’ in which a young person in trouble can be supported or blamed. Lloyd & Norris (1999) point to the medicalisation of behaviour difficulties and the application of a label of forgiveness which removes blame but identifies the individual as ‘ill or mad’.

Gillham (1981) and Dowling & Osborne (1994) refer to the maintenance of disruptive behaviour in some individuals as contributing to the maintenance of the status quo of an institution which might otherwise be challenged. In some circumstances families and schools may collude successfully to maintain equilibrium at the expense of the ‘symptomatic child’.

2.5.2 Teacher pupil relationships and teacher characteristics.

Garner (1995) found that humour features significantly as a teacher characteristic in comments by disaffected pupils who seem to appreciate a clear structure and fair management within which they can feel comfortable, knowing that the teacher is both fair and in control. Schools must foster an environment within which pupils can develop a sense of belonging, a network of relationships with peers and staff, and an appreciation of the learning that is experienced in school. Garner (1993) identified teacher qualities that were seen as significant by disaffected pupils – a source of help, having a charismatic personality, patient, motivating, disciplinarian.

Davies (2005) points out that there has been limited official attention in government documents given to the emotive aspect of the teaching role and yet it is greater focus on the affective aspects of professional practice that is likely to serve best the growing number of EBD pupils that in turn would result in more effective schools and classrooms. Teachers are slowly beginning to acknowledge the importance and appreciate the value of listening to young people. Rogers (2004) in his behaviour recovery programmes places the rebuilding of the teacher – pupil relationship at the heart of improving pupils behaviour.

2.5.3 Differing views.

Differing views of pupils who may be experiencing behaviour difficulties have been documented in terms of teachers, parents, practitioners and researchers.

Walker et al (1995) found that less than 1 % of children are identified as having EBD in the United States though professionals agree that approximately 10% of school age children and youth manifest EBD. This discrepancy may be due to teachers perceiving higher levels of pupils' behaviour problems than school managers and administrators.

Croll & Moses (1985) suggested that teachers tend to attribute special educational needs to parents or children.

Miller (2003) found that teachers and parents do not, in the majority of cases, identify the same students as having difficulties and problems; parents and students agree that teacher unfairness is a major cause of difficult behaviour in school but teachers do not agree: teachers, parents and perhaps students agree that adverse home circumstances are a major cause of difficult behaviour; pupils and parents view positive information being sent home as a particularly potent reward for acceptable behaviour in school but teachers do not; teachers think that they are the party who are most able to bring about improvement in pupils' classroom behaviour but students do not; students think parents are the party most able to bring about improvement but teachers do not.

Rutter et al (1970) found little overlap between views of teachers and parents with only one child in every six or seven in the 'deviant group' being identified by both parties. Similar findings in Tizard et al 1988, McGee et al 1983 – suggest that some forms of behaviour are context specific or more likely to occur at home or in school but not in both.

Cefai (1995) found that the majority of parents in one primary school perceived their children's behaviour difficulties as an inability to cope with the work and /or difficulties coping with the teacher or authority. Teachers in the same study were more concerned about pupils' challenge to authority and /or their reluctance to complete school work and they blamed within child or family factors as the cause of behaviour problems in school. This straight forward contradiction of opposing teacher/ parent views does not acknowledge the complexity of pupils' perceived difficulties suggested by other researchers. Cefai (1995) proposed factors which benefited children in adversity including a caring and supportive relationship between students and staff, an accessible meaningful and engaging curriculum and active participation in the classroom. Hood (1999) concluded that models of parents as 'problems' rather than partners or consumers were likely to dominate in situations where there is concern about pupils' behaviour in school. The nature of home school relationships that surround difficult behaviour in schools is often strained and contentious.

Behaviour which one teacher is able to ignore without interrupting the lesson can escalate into a major confrontation with another teacher (Galloway et al 1982). The majority of children identified as problems in one setting may not be seen as such in the other. Nias (1993) suggests that teachers as 'people' perceive and interpret their pupils and the latter's actions and reactions according to perceptual patterns which may be unique to themselves. No matter how pervasive particular aspects of a shared social or occupational culture may be or how well individuals are socialised into it, the attitudes and actions of all teachers are rooted in their own ways of perceiving the world. Galloway et al (1982) observed that a healthy extravert to one teacher is a noisy disrupter to another. Behaviour that is mildly annoying on Tuesday morning is the last straw on a Friday afternoon. Deviance like beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Attributions of cause are not objective truths but the results of our human capacity to infer cause in complex social situations. Clashes in perspective are shown to exist in at least four areas – the identification of which students and which types of behaviour are judged to be problematic; the assumed causes of difficult behaviour; effective rewards and sanctions; and views about whose responsibility it is to take what action and its likely efficacy' (Miller 2003, p137). Agreement between informants on the nature of emotional and behavioural problems tends to be low (Achenbach, McConaughy & Howell 1987). Individuals with poor prognosis are more likely to be accurately identified if data from two informants is combined rather than relying solely on one informant (Verhulst, Koot & van der Ende 1994). Each informant may make a unique contribution to the understanding of childrens' difficulties.

2.5.4 Circular causation.

In situations in which there are conflicting views of a pupil's difficulties circular causation may occur (Dowling & Osborne 1994, Cefai 1995). For example a primary school teacher who informs a mother about her child's behaviour difficulties in the classroom may meet a protective response that in the mother's view the child does not have any problems with behaviour. In order to persuade the mother, the classteacher informs the mother of every occasion in which she perceives the child as having difficulties. The mother responds to the teacher by 'sticking up' for her son and accusing

the teacher of picking on him. This can result in circular causation in which the teacher and the mother blame each other for the child's difficulties in school. (Miller 2003). In addition the child who hears his carers being critical of teacher behaviour may feel justified in challenging the teacher's management strategies in school. Thus resulting in more negative behaviour in which all parties see others as primarily responsible for a child's challenging behaviour while each person's behaviour acts as a stimulus to the beliefs and behaviour of others. From a social constructionist perspective each person's behaviour may be seen as the more prominent, reasonable, inflammatory or confrontational according to whose account is actually being presented as well as the attitudes and views of the listener.

Miller (2003) taking a critical view states –

‘the vexed area of difficult student behaviour is suffused with notions of blame , that people are stuck, demoralised and set against each other as a result of it’ (p.101).

Simplistic attempts to blame one party or another are likely to be inaccurate and counter-productive and avoiding blame can encourage a deeper understanding of behaviour difficulties and attempts at mediation stand a much stronger likelihood of bringing about positive outcomes for all. Professionals can benefit from setting aside fixed views of blame and responsibility in favour of open minded debates on the issues of the nature of behaviour difficulties and how they may be overcome.

2.5.5. Systemic and interactionist views of EBD.

Frederickson (1990) suggests that systemic change does not focus on the presenting problem of an organisation but on the situation in which there is perceived to be a problem. The initial task for the researcher is to build up the richest possible picture of the situation in question drawing the disparate perceptions of everyone involved.

Systemic change can be achieved by identifying representations of reality and developing a systemic model which may improve reality.

A systemic approach to the management of pupil behaviour in a secondary school was

reported by Sutoris (2000) whose approach aimed to understand school processes and the emotional experience of school life through investigating the concepts of the school's aim and role.

Systemic and interactionist accounts of behaviour difficulties are supported by a substantial number of researchers (e.g. Rubington & Weinberg 1968, Laslett 1977, Galloway, Ball, Blomfield & Seyd 1982, Galloway 1985, Molnar & Lindquist 1989, Cooper & Upton 1990, Miller & Leyden 1999, Miller et al 2002, Daniels 2006) in which organisational processes in schools, pupil background factors and teacher pupil interactions may exert a myriad of influences on each other.

Miller et al (2002) used a three factor model. The first factor was termed 'fairness of teachers actions' and attributes of misbehaviour to injustices on the part of teachers. The second factor relates to curriculum demands, the appropriateness of learning objectives and levels of support for learning. High demands of the curriculum and low levels of support are thought to result in disruptive behaviour. The third factor – pupil vulnerability to peer influences and adverse family circumstances reflects a view of misbehaviour as originating with pressure from other pupils or from families' inability to control their children and general family problems.

Billington (2000) warns against focusing upon individual children rather than professional practices in which ideas on young people are first formed and the social character of the processes involved in professional practices.

Clarke and Murray (1996) emphasise the importance of developing and implementing a whole school behaviour policy and the key role of the head teacher in this endeavour is emphasised by the Department for Education (DFE Circular 8, 1994). The management of pupils' behaviour in school can be substantially influenced by the whole school behaviour policy and researchers may identify gaps between the written policy and its implementation (Lloyd Bennett & Gamman, 2000). School buildings may also contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties as outlined by the Department for Education

and Science (DES, 1989) which includes staff having oversight of all parts of a school building to monitor pupils' behaviour. In terms of a broad view of pupils' behaviour McGuinness (1994) illustrates the broader view of a single disruptive act in terms of sociogenic effects (national/ social influences , family/ domestic influences), pathogenic potential of school (ethos, curriculum, teaching methods) and psychogenic effect (individual pupil, peer influences). Cornwall (2004) suggests that key factors in reducing behaviour difficulties are clear boundaries and consistency.

2.5.6 Organisational factors in schools that may influence pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Clarke & Murray (1996) suggest that whole school behaviour policies have an important role in managing behaviour which contributes to schools' learning environment. Dalin (1993) suggests that staff culture in the school is influenced by the unwritten rules that regulate behaviour as well as the standards and rules set for its members. A system of informal rules that influences how people are to behave most of the time may contrast with public pronouncements and official school policies (Deal & Kennedy 1982, Coulby & Harper 1985). Argyris & Schon (1978) make this duality more specific by referring to 'the theory in use' and 'the espoused theory'. An important aspect of understanding an organisation is the detection of possible gaps between theory in use and espoused theory which may result in staff carrying out defensive routines to hide the gap.

Thomas (1992) found that various interpersonal processes, often maintained by school procedures and staff cultures, can militate against the evolution of classroom management strategies. Galloway et al (1982) suggests that the school's own rules and expectations may create deviance. School organisations require rules: the paradox is that obedience to rules logically implies the possibility of disobedience. Punishment implies the possibility of reform and involves the possibility of rebellion by students who question teachers' right to punish (Goffman 1961). It may be possible to reduce behaviour difficulties by increasing students' involvement and investment in keeping rules.

Mayer (1995) found that when schools rely exclusively on reactive, consequence based discipline policies there have been increases in problem behaviour.

Algozzine & Algozzine (2005) suggest that prevention strategies for controlling problem behaviours are preferred to general behaviour management approaches because of the potential to reduce the development of new and current cases of school related problems. Clearly described school and classroom rules and procedures, and consequences define the expectations of success in schools using unified discipline.

Staff use and consistency of school rules can be a major difficulty in terms of secondary schools with large staff groups who may not agree on what the school rules are and how they are applied (Rendall & Stuart 2005).

Galloway & Goodwin (1987) noted that teachers can exert a powerful and beneficial influence on their pupils as well as contributing to pupils' negative outcomes. The system of informal rules operating among staff and the difficult behaviour of some pupils does not necessarily *cause* difficult behaviour but relationships are complex and staff culture can act to obstruct positive outcomes for teachers and students and deny schools examples and learning opportunities.

Cicourel & Kitsuse (1968) analysed a secondary school and its power to encourage the emergence of deviant behaviour which its stated aim was to discourage. It was found that failing pupils felt that the school does not value them and they had no opportunities to experience success.

Miller et al (2000) reported on a questionnaire survey of items on causes of difficult behaviour in school derived from small group interviews and four factors emerged – unfairness of teacher actions, pupil vulnerability, adverse family circumstances and strictness of the classroom regime. The first two were seen as primary causes of misbehaviour and it was found that students attribute to teachers a significantly greater responsibility for pupil misbehaviour than they attribute to parents in contrast to Croll & Moses 1985.

As long as classroom processes remain largely hidden from all other participants, pupils may be invoked as a reference group to justify many different decisions and types of behaviour (Nias 1985).

Hargreaves (1967) spent one year in what was then a secondary modern school studying fourth year pupils and collecting data by means of multiple choice questionnaires, sociometric techniques and informal interviews with all pupils in the age group. He also asked teachers to complete questionnaires and carried out direct observations revealing the social complexity of school life. Hargreaves' study found that teachers' responses to deviant behaviour can create further difficulties by uniting pupils in their opposition to the school's value system.

Rutter et al (1979) proposed an ethos which was thought to have a greater influence upon pupil outcomes than any individual school process variables and this 'institutional effect' contained three primary factors. The first primary factor was values which are inherent in teacher expectation of standards. The second factor was consistency which refers to the degree to which the school functions as a coherent whole with agreed ways of doing things which are consistent throughout the school and have the general support of all staff. The final factor was level of acceptance which refers to the degree to which the pupils share the education perspective and the general atmosphere of cooperation and sharing between staff and pupils.

Charlton & David (1993) asserted that the following effectiveness factors taken from a broad range of British and American studies, tend to be present in schools that successfully manage difficult behaviour. Consultative and collaborative leadership which takes into account pupil and parent opinion; consistently applied school wide policies on education and behaviour management; differentiated curricula; high but not unreasonable academic expectations; positive behaviour management stressing prevention and offering more rewards than sanctions; efficient and punctual staff offering skilful, responsive teaching; supportive and respectful relationships between all adults and pupils; effective

systems of pastoral care. There is no mention in this paper of educational practice adopted by some educational communities in which pupils are identified as having EBD and separated from their mainstream peers suggesting that this approach may not be an effective way of managing behaviour difficulties.

Cooper (1998) suggests that there is an increased lack of tolerance to pupils with EBD in our schools which results in an increased incentive to exclude them from mainstream educational provision. Laslett (1998) points out that many emotionally disturbed children feel guilty about their behaviour which has brought about criticism and rejection and they perceive themselves to be essentially unworthy and unsuccessful. Professionals use of terms regarding behaviour difficulties may unintentionally compound children's negative view of themselves and their low self esteem. Professionals in the education system should be wary of employing labels as children do not generally fit into neat categories (Lloyd Bennett 1999).

Materials intended to enhance young people's emotional and social development were first introduced in primary schools, and more recently extended to secondary schools, by the Department for Education and Skills (2007). The guidance for schools on social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) covers self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. It is suggested that these aspects underlie every aspect of our lives enabling us to become effective learners and get on with people. A comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of this government initiative has not yet been carried out. However Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning is an approach which is very welcome in an education system which tends to focus on assessment results of pupils' academic achievements. SEAL materials are intended to link seamlessly into Personal Social and Health Education programmes and may make a valuable contribution to reducing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Cooper (2005) suggests that 'a climate of positive regard in which students are valued as individuals will enhance the effectiveness of behavioural interventions, whilst a climate of blame and negative labelling will undermine the behavioural intervention' p118.

2.5.7 School Curriculum.

The accessibility of the school curriculum, in terms of content and delivery, has been viewed as a key component in the management of pupils who are likely to exhibit behaviour difficulties Charlton & David (1993), Davies (2005). Kaufman (1997) emphasises that pupils need help to understand the relevance of the compulsory curriculum. O'Brien (1998) noted that frustration at the failure to achieve will frequently result in antisocial behaviour, often in an attempt to compensate for low academic status. The value of involving pupils more actively in planning their educational experiences has been recognised for a long time (Gersch 1990).

The traditional school system and its organs, e.g. the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA 2001) have had great difficulty in trying to define what 'access to' or 'differentiation' means for pupils with additional educational needs in the United Kingdom. The results of the QCA deliberations are behavioural descriptions. Children who have not learned listening, turn taking and sharing prior to school entry are seen as needing to acquire these behaviours in the school setting where failure is public.

Children seek to make sense of their environment and protect themselves from further failure on the curriculum and rejection by the school community. If not given sufficient attention from a parent in the early years they may constantly seek attention even if it results in a negative experience such as being shouted at or smacked. They may decide not to attempt any curriculum tasks in case they are seen to fail. They may adopt a thinking style that 'everyone hates me' to protect themselves from rejection and then behave in such a way as to confirm that their belief is correct. They may believe they cannot change events and carry with them a burden of guilt and failure (Cornwall 2004).

2.6 School funding and the identification of children with SEN

Bruner (1986) studied the ethnographic stories of native North Americans whose way of life was fundamentally changed by the trans European culture resulting in their breakdown and disorganisation. This interpretation had real effects in terms of justifying

certain interventions by the dominant culture, including the appropriation of territories. This narrative could be seen as relevant to the debate on special educational needs where the dominant school culture identifies certain children as having special educational needs (SEN) and used as a means of gaining additional funding from local education authorities unlike the North American natives who lost their territories.

There is a tension between educational systems in which problems are identified as being located within specific individuals who are then labelled as having behaviour difficulties and professionals who are aware of factors within the learning environment which can contribute to the difficult behaviour of students.

2.7 Intervention approaches to behaviour difficulties

Intervention approaches to behaviour difficulties use systemic, behavioural and psychodynamic methods. Systemic approaches to behaviour difficulties integrate the management of the intervention process within the fabric of the institutions or systems in which the behaviour difficulties occur.

Behavioural approaches aim to modify children's behaviour difficulties by providing reinforcers for positive behaviour and negative consequences for difficult behaviour. Hayes, Hindle & Witherington (2007) employed systemic and behavioural approaches to increase the number of positive statements used by teachers to students in their classrooms. Observations were carried out of teacher and pupil behaviours in the classrooms, teacher questionnaires and interviews followed by a focus group with staff at the end of the project. The study found evidence of change in teachers' behaviour with regard to an increase in positive comments towards pupils.

Psychodynamic approaches as used by Kohut (1991) highlight the influence of the subjective experience of the child. Tracking the development of the child's sense of self can reveal the child's experience and the emergence of the self-narrative providing a view of the child's integration of the meaning of those experiences. Social responses to

the child can reinforce a negative cycle of interactions or contribute to rebuilding the child's positive self-image.

Kurtz (1996) explored the nature and incidence of behaviour difficulties and mental health problems in children and concluded that early intervention programmes could help to break the cycle of childhood disorders that lead to mental health difficulties. Kazdin (2000) identified more than five hundred and fifty different child and adolescent therapies in use and proposed that there are two key areas. The first key area is a theory of dysfunction identifying the factors which may be important in treatment. The second key area is a theory of therapeutic change which identifies the therapeutic process and how it works towards achieving the stated outcomes. There is a general lack of consistency across evaluation studies of intervention programmes which makes comparison of the effectiveness of intervention programmes problematic.

2.8 Relationships between educational communities and outside agencies

Smith (2003) provides a radical critique of the psychologist 'dealing with' an aggressive child perhaps with the help of medication while ignoring the social and economic conditions which have led the child to find advantages in aggressive behaviour. However it is surely more complex than this as educational psychologists are expected to provide a service to the school by Ofsted. If a child is causing difficulties in the school then staff may not welcome being told that their behaviour management techniques could be at fault. Educational psychologists are advised to work in a supportive and cooperative manner with schools while at the same time recognising that difficult behaviour needs to be seen as part of a psychosocial system (Miller & Todd, 2002).

Jennifer & Shaughnessy (2005) provided an intervention to reduce violence in schools and questioned the schools' readiness to address change in terms of cultural, organisational and managerial factors. They proposed three models of readiness – the circular model reflects an organisation that is self aware and responsive and operates from a clearly focussed rationale; the corkscrew model reflects an organisational culture that fluctuates, sometimes being able to identify action through self reflection but the

action is not always clearly focused; the string model reflects a fragile organisational culture having limited self evaluation and experiences difficulty in identifying a clear course of action.

Rogoff (2003) refuses to privilege any particular group of individuals (psychologists, teachers, parents) as authoritative guides and she suggests that both the participant and the observer have something crucial to contribute. Progress can be achieved by everyone working in partnership together.

Current models of assessment need to reflect the body of psychological knowledge which emphasises the dynamic interactive nature of children's learning and social behaviours within the environments in which they develop. It is therefore important for professionals to observe pupils in the settings in which problem behaviour occurs rather than simply carry out individual assessments which do not take into account the possibly diverse nature of pupils' learning environments .

2.9 A source outside the research literature

Research literature provides a rich and diverse body of knowledge on the the nature and causation of students' behaviour difficulties. In studies of the nature of behaviour difficulties it may also be useful to take into account social factors that are present in society and go beyond the boundaries of educational communities. Individuals' behaviour is bound by legal, social and cultural rules but rule keeping is not always a valued behaviour in social contexts as the following story called 'How to find a bride' (Shah 2003) illustrates.

Nasrudin's oldest son was looking for a wife. 'Which qualities are you seeking ?'

Nasrudin asked the youth.

'Intelligence rather than beauty,' replied the young man.

'If that is the case,' said the Mulla, 'I have an excellent way of finding you the perfect bride.' He told the youth to follow and went into town. When they reached

the main square, Nasrudin started to cuff his son and shout: 'How dare you do exactly as I say? This is the punishment fit for one who obeys!'

'Leave him alone!' hissed one young woman, 'How can you beat him for being a model son?'

'This is surely the woman for me, father,' said Nasrudin's son.

'Best to have a choice,' replied the Mulla and led the way to the neighbouring town. Here he acted out exactly the same scene. But this time a young girl began to cheer him on:

'That's right! Hit him! Only a fool obeys blindly.'

'Son,' said Nasrudin with a smile, I think we have found you an intelligent bride.'

This story suggests that simply following the rules is unlikely to result in an individual's desired outcome. In terms of educational communities this could apply to a child in school where the peer culture encourages pupils to be independent of the school's authority and demonstrate intelligence and independence by openly challenging teachers' authority.

2.10 Key issues arising from the literature

Causal factors for behaviour difficulties have been identified in terms of society, professional organisations, the family and individuals. Professionals and educationalists have not been able to agree on a single definition of behavioural difficulties. For the terms social and emotional behaviour difficulties, emotional behaviour difficulties and behaviour difficulties, the present study adopts Gates et al's (2000) view of behavioural distress as referring to the total response of a person to a situation that s/he faces including the psychological and physiological elements. The expressions of these elements when perceived by the self and/or others as threatening, frightening, destructive or self destructive are described as behavioural distress.

An investigation into pupils' behaviour difficulties within an educational community should take into account aspects of the learning environment which may be contributing to difficult behaviour. Previous research suggests that there may be a gap between the theories in use and the theories espoused by the staff within the educational community (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

A researcher who is embarking on an action research project within an educational community should be aware of the potential pitfalls of joining with school staff in labelling certain pupils as having EBD and highlighting factors within the learning environment which may be viewed as hostile by school staff.

The researcher welcomed and sought opportunities to work systemically on the nature of behaviour difficulties with a school because Thomas (2005) claims that practices for pupils with special educational needs are based on a false legitimacy of deficit, deviance and disadvantage in the child. The notion of special educational needs is based on the belief that it is the child's problems that are being identified and addressed as a way of deflecting attention away from systemic and organisational factors which may be responsible for children's difficulties. Action research can provide the researcher with an opportunity to examine the nature of systemic relationships within a school in

conjunction with school staff using an approach which considers factors in the school environment which contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties rather than focusing on the pathology of individual pupils.

Research suggests that a school climate of positive regard in which students feel liked and valued could be a key factor in promoting positive behaviour. The research literature also suggests that there is unlikely to be a single meaningful answer to the question '*What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?*'

Identifying the causation of behaviour difficulties is beyond the scope of the present study on the nature of EBD in one secondary school. The research takes an ecosystemic path using the psycho social model of behaviour difficulties and aims to gather information from a variety of sources on a range of investigatory pathways starting with the question '*what is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?*' This study is a research journey which aimed to facilitate interactions between the researcher and one educational community starting with collating the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Pupils' behaviour difficulties were investigated primarily in terms of the relationships between teachers and pupils. Gathering data on the views of pupils was outside the remit of the terms of the ethical review. The research literature and the results of the local authority survey suggested that staff, at the secondary school in which the action research was carried out, could espouse a within child view of behaviour difficulties. The present research investigation aimed to empower staff by identifying strategies which could be implemented by staff to reduce pupils' behaviour difficulties.

2.11 Key issues for investigation

The following key areas were identified from the research literature on behaviour difficulties as potential areas of investigation using action research for investigating the nature of pupil's behaviour difficulties in one secondary school.

What are the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. (Do staff in a school who perceive high levels of EBD in their pupils espouse a within child model of behaviour difficulties?)

McLean 1987, Roffey 2002, Ellins & Porter 2005.

What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms?

Clarke & Murray 1996.

Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties? Galloway et al 1982, Nias 1993.

What strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks? Lloyd Bennett 2006.

What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties? Cefai 1995.

What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties. DFE Circular 8, 1994.

Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties? (EBD is likely to perpetuate in situations in which there is a culture of blame and reluctance to accept personal responsibility . Dowling & Osborne 1994, Miller 2003, Cooper 2005.)

Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school? –(espoused theory and theory in use Argyris and Schon 1978).

Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties? DES 1989.

What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils' behaviour? Dalin 1993.

The key issues above are a selected range of issues which have been informed by previous research literature on behaviour difficulties. Identifying a comprehensive range of issues covering all the research literature was not within the scope of this investigation which primarily focuses on teachers' management of pupils' behaviour difficulties. The researcher planned to employ a range of research techniques to investigate each of the key issues – individual interviews, group interviews, classroom observations and focus groups as well as observations of the school community at break time and between lessons. The key issues will also be informed by research methodology (chapter 3) and will be discussed in more detail and revised in 'Key issues for research', (chapter 5).

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodology for investigating the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school will be considered. Qualitative methods will be used to explore the nature of behaviour difficulties and provide rich descriptions with detailed insights which can inform the understanding of behaviour difficulties and aspects of the learning environment which are influential on students' behaviour. An action research methodology was used in order to explore aspects of the school community which may influence the nature of behaviour difficulties using three cycles of action research. In the first action research cycle interviews with senior staff were used to understand how they perceived the nature of behaviour difficulties. In the second action research cycle classroom observations were used to understand the nature of behaviour difficulties observed within the school community and further interviews were held with staff and followed by another series of classroom observations which were carried out in order to provide further evidence of factors which influence pupils' behaviour difficulties. In the third action research cycle SEN focus groups were employed to encourage staff to share successful practices in reducing behaviour difficulties.

This methodology chapter discusses the values of qualitative and quantitative research methods followed by the nature of action research and limitations of research inquiries. A critical examination of research techniques is undertaken with regard to three research methods for data collection – interviews, classroom observations and focus groups. The use of content analysis for analysing data is considered followed by an outline of the intention behind the action research.

3.2 Qualitative or quantitative research methodology

A quantitative experimental approach was not thought to be appropriate as the researcher did not seek to identify specific variables which would need to be strictly controlled and isolated through statistical and experimental procedures. The instructional and ecological conditions of schools make it difficult to manipulate independent variables and the outcomes of intervention packages with a level of precision commensurate with a

research laboratory (Stoiber & Waas 2002).

A rigidly defined structure of data gathering was not possible in the ecological setting of the school community and could have constrained the results of the research as the answers would have been restricted by the specific research questions in the investigation. Friedman (1967) suggested that even the most rigorous of psychological experiments may not comply with the requirements of the scientific model because of the essentially interactive nature of any psychological situation

Educational research should be connected to the 'real world' (Robson 1993, Haste, Hogan & Zachariou 2001) and may or may not employ controlled experimental conditions (Carnine & Gersten 2000). The present study used qualitative methods in which the temporal dimension of interpretations were likely to be influenced by the passage of time as well as external and internal events in the educational community . In contrast to empirical pursuit of robust evidence which may claim to be free of the effects of time, temporality may be a critical dimension in which stories exist by virtue of the plotting of unfolding events (Foucault 1980a).

Woolgar (1988) proposed three methodological 'horrors' or problematic issues which he sees as irresolvable in empiricist research and can also be seen as relevant to qualitative research. The first is inconcludability where every representation (e.g. data collection event) can always be augmented by further displays of the phenomenon. The present research could be seen as an investigation point along the journey of educational psychologist involvement with the school. The second problematic issue is indexicality in which every description is tightly tied to specific situations and circumstances. Research which collects data from different individuals and groups on different occasions using a variety of methods attempts to overcome or reduce indexicality by gathering data from different sources. The third problematic issue is reflexivity in which the position of the researcher affects the phenomena and preconceptions draw attention to certain things and lead us to disregard others.

The present study does not focus on the collection of quantitative data as it examines people's reported perceptions (including the researcher's) of other individuals as well as observing their behaviour in a variety of classroom situations. The study aimed to provide rich descriptions and detailed insights which can inform our understanding of behaviour difficulties and strategies that influence students' behaviour and learning. An action research approach was adopted which needed to be sensitive to the views and willingness of school staff to engage with the research.

3.3 Action research

The research model adopted in the study was action research in which some co-operation/participation is required from others in the setting.

Action research methodology allows a flexible approach to developing an understanding of relationships within an educational community. Rowland (1984) described action research as 'classroom enquiry' in which we learn from educational settings rather than by transmitting knowledge to them. The present investigation employs an ecosystemic approach to action research (Leadbetter & Tee, 1991; McCall & Farrell, 1993) by gathering information on the school from a variety of sources using three methods of data collection. As the researcher is unlikely to be able to adopt the position of an impartial spectator, it is important that the researcher examines his own assumptions through reflection of personal and professional experiences. Information gathered from different sources within the school community may challenge the beliefs of everyone and may result in the modification of the researcher's as well as the participants' views. The researcher employed an exploratory approach in which accessible aspects of the school community are examined in an open and receptive manner and freedom of thought and action is encouraged through open-ended data collection methods (Elliott, 2005).

Eden & Huxham (1996) suggest that action research involves an integral involvement by the researcher in an intent to change the organisation though change may not result from the research or be in the way it was intended. The results of the action research should have implications which have relevance for other organisations. Theory elaboration and development is an explicit part of the research. Action research uses emergent theory in

which the theory develops from a synthesis of that which emerges from the data and the research literature. Action research is a collaborative process in the construction of knowledge and Elliott (2005) proposes that there is no method for resolving the diversity of views, there is only the quality of the conversation which has no final ending. Action research is seen by some researchers as a lower order activity of educational practitioners and marginalized by scientists favouring quantitative methodologies. Elliott (2005) suggested that action research is a form of action oriented inquiry, a discursive process in which freedom of thought and action is respected, an inclusive process that provides a forum for effecting improvements in student learning experiences, the evidence is gathered in response to the themes and issues that emerge. A disciplined conversation is required in which freedom of thought is respected, the expression of diverse views is protected and participants are open to reasons and evidence that may not support their own views. 'Risking disturbance' was outlined by Winter (1989) as being central to the action research process. In terms of the present enquiry 'risking disturbance' involved the researcher being prepared for challenges to his own understanding and assumptions about the social dynamics in the school.

Practical science is a form of inquiry that subjects people's choices – of actions, goals and values – to reasoned scrutiny in a systematic manner. The discussion or conversation lies at the core of the inquiry process and the responsibility for conducting inquiries is shared with the participants. Good conversation does not press for consensus, but it does create the possibility of a greater fusion of horizons (Gadamer 1975) and co-ordinated action. Elliott (2005) suggests that the ultimate test of disciplined based knowledge in education is whether it helps educators and policy makers do things that will improve the educational value of students' learning experiences.

The history and context of the research is relevant as this can impact on the current functioning of the organisation. A variety of views are taken into account over the research period and it was hoped that patterns and contradictions in the data would be identified. Reflection, feedback to participants and the data collection process are used to develop the emergent theories as action research models rely heavily on the change

process resulting when those who have participated in the research understand the implications of the outcomes of the research. It is intended that development will occur as one of the outcomes in terms of changed practices in terms of some of the participants.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) view action research as

‘inquiry in which participants and researchers cogenerate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which all participants contributions are taken seriously’ (p. 96).

The inquiry process is context centered and leads to the construction of new meanings. The researcher brings the diverse range of all participants’ knowledge and their distinctive social locations to focus collaboratively on a problem such as the nature of pupils’ behaviour difficulties. The participants have extensive and long term knowledge of the problems at hand and the contexts in which they occur and the researcher can bring a fresh perspective to identifying the nature of the problem and jointly explore potential solutions with the participants. The researcher can link with a key individual within the organisation in which the research takes place (Thompson 2006). This key individual can arrange interviews and opportunities for gathering data as well as facilitate communication between the researcher and participants.

Validity and reliability in action research are influenced by the willingness of stake holders to act on the results. Action research is seen as a disciplined way of developing valid knowledge and theory while promoting positive social change.

3.4 Limitations of research inquiries

Popper (2002) asserts that

‘most of our theories are false anyway and that we learn from our experience – that is from our mistakes – how to correct them. There is no such thing as pure observation or pure sense – experience: all perception is interpretation in the light of experience: in the light of expectations of theories’ (p. 547).

This suggests that scientific research and knowledge is not based on certainties and there is no room for conceit or smugness.

Hammond (1994) suggests that it is notoriously difficult to measure the impact in any educational innovation as attributions of cause and effect or even correlation between variables are hard to justify as a result of research studies. When seeking evidence of making a difference in the form of identifying causality there are many variables to consider as young people's lives are so complex and home life or activities with peers outside school can have a major influence (Wellington 2000). The present study is focused on staff views and classroom behaviour within one educational community and does not examine individual pupils' views or sociological or family influences on behaviour difficulties beyond the school community. Action research is dependent on the close involvement of the researcher and the willingness of the educational community to engage with the researcher.

The importance and value of good relationships (building up trust), a strong commitment of time and engagement with participants as well as wanting them to do well has been viewed as key elements in action research (Dickson & Green 2001, Sarland 2001). The methodological approach taken needs to be subtle, flexible and certainly not positivist.

3.5.1 A critical examination of research techniques

The present action research employed three research methods for data collection – interviews, classroom observations and focus groups.

Interviews are considered in terms of what researchers have understood them to be; structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews; individual and group interviews; issues regarding interview procedure and potential pitfalls.

3.5.2 Interviews

There is a wide range of structured and unstructured approaches to carrying out interviews as methods of psychological research. Formal interviews can be tightly directed and structured by the researcher or narrative approaches tend to use a fluid

agenda and open ended questions (Willig, 2001). The structure and content of the interview is dependent on the research question and the research methodology. The research question, data collection technique and method of data analysis are interdependent. As a research technique, interviews may be used as a dominant strategy for data collection or they may be combined with other techniques such as observation or focus groups. Interviews are used in many fields of inquiry and have become a universal method of systematic collection of information and measurement.

Some researchers carry out interviews which aim to achieve objectivity and detachment through scientific positivist research and other researchers such as Oakley (1981) favour interviewing procedures which involve openness and emotional engagement as well as the development of long term trusting relationships between the interviewer and the participant.

What are interviews?

Morgan (1988) described an interview as a purposeful conversation , usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one in order to get information from the other. Denzin (2000) describes the interview as a conversation which involves the art of asking questions and listening, producing ‘situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes’ (pp 633). Holstein and Gubrium (1997) propose a broad view of interviewing ‘as a universal mode of systematic inquiry’ (p.1) to obtain various kinds of information from a variety of sources. Mishler (1986 p.23) viewed interviewing ‘as a routine technical practice and a pervasive taken for granted activity’. However caution should be exercised as the knowledge generated through interviews can be influenced by a number of factors including social dynamics and characteristics of the interviewer such as appearing to be arrogant or condescending.

There are many different kinds of interviews varying from tightly structured to flexibly arranged. They can be singular and brief or they can take place over many lengthy sessions spanning a considerable period of time. Interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured.

Structured interviews use questions and answers in which the interviewer sets the agenda and remains in control. All respondents are asked the same series of predetermined questions which elicit a limited range of response categories and there is very little flexibility in the way questions are asked or answered. Structured interviews tend to be used in survey research which may employ interviews by telephone, face to face interviews in households or intercept interviews in public places. Fontana & Frey (1994) give the following guidance for structured interviews – avoid long explanations of the study and deviations in wording and sequencing of questions; do not let another person interrupt, never agree or disagree with an answer and never interpret the meaning of a question. The interviewer sets the theme and the topics as well as ordering and wording the questions in his or her language. The predetermined nature of structured interviewing is aimed at minimising errors which can be introduced by variations in the interviewer's behaviour. Structured interviewing may enhance the comparability of data that has been gathered but can also constrain the range and meanings of the information that participants are able to provide as well as failing to take account of the emotional content of the interview. Structured interviews tend to assume that there is an external objective truth which can be accessed through a process of stimuli provided by the interviewer and responses of the interviewee. Structured interviews tend to have fixed roles, specific time spans and set agendas. Converse and Schuman (1974) suggest that there is no single interview style that fits every occasion and all respondents. Therefore interviewers should be aware of differences between respondents and able to adjust the interview in a flexible manner.

The research will take an exploratory approach which would not be conducive to structured interviewing as the structure of the interview is likely to place constraints on the data collected.

Unstructured interviews use narrative approaches such as 'free-range' interviewing (Robson 1993) or 'free story' (Miller & Salkind 2002) tend to use a fluid agenda and open ended questions which are intended as triggers to encourage the participants to talk. They may require the researcher to be a good listener and the participant to be a story

teller rather than a respondent. The style may be non-directive though, in common with other approaches, it is the research question that drives the interview.

There is no essential blueprint for how researchers conduct themselves and the self can be viewed not as static but rather as a multiplicity of complex, often contradictory fragmented or plural identities. In such a context the self is always in a state of flux (King 1996) and researchers need to take account of this when gathering interview data.

Narrative interviewing encourages free association rather than question and answer which may result in difficulties gathering comparable data across subjects.

Researchers using semi-structured interviewing (SSI) attempt to maintain a balance between controlling the interview and allowing the interviewee to generate new insights for the researcher. The interviewer has clearly defined purposes but seeks to achieve them through some flexibility in wording and in the order of presentation of questions. Semi-structured and structured interview procedures tend to lose the opportunity to understand how subjects themselves structure the topic at hand.

Individual interview situations may be the most effective way of gathering a detailed picture of a persons' experience, reported perceptions and explanation of their assertions (Morgan 1997). In the present research individual interviews were used to gain insights of school staff's perceptions of EBD as well as gather further information from a teacher on classroom management and curriculum delivery.

Group interviews rely on the systematic questioning of several individuals at the same time in formal or informal settings. Group interviews can employ both structured and open ended procedures depending on the nature of the inquiry which may be seeking specific information within defined parameters or exploring undefined territory as in action research (Eden & Huxham, 1996). The interviewer could gather data to inform the design of a survey questionnaire or examine the expressed views of participants regarding the nature of children's behaviour difficulties. Group interviews may stimulate

embellished descriptions of events or provide a range of views on a specified topic (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) such as the nature of behaviour difficulties.

Interviewers can use reflection of content and feelings to mirror to the participant the meaning of what was said and therefore provide further opportunities for the participant to confirm or reject the interviewer's understanding of what has been stated. Further more participants can be provided with a debriefing, after the interview, in which all parties may have an opportunity to clarify or refine aspects which might otherwise cause confusion or concern (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

Issues regarding interview procedure.

Initial questions may aim to set the interviewee at ease and establish rapport. The use of topic headings rather than set questions can increase flexibility and allow questions to be more relevant and appropriate to the interviewee. On the other hand this approach can introduce wide variability in the questions asked. The interviewer may restate the interviewee's responses and incorporate them into further questions with the aim of enabling the interviewer to check they have understood the answer correctly as well as helping to maintain coherence and continuity. Incorrect interpretations could result in inadvertently leading the interviewee to generate responses which do not express their own views. Interviewers may express ignorance with the aim of obtaining implicit assumptions and expectations. Asking for further illustrations or examples can clarify abstract concepts or general opinions.

Spradley (1979) formulated four different types of questions. Descriptive questions aim at a general account of what happened or what is the case. Structural questions focus on how the interviewee organises his or her knowledge and aim to identify categories and frameworks of meaning. Contrast questions encourage the interviewee to make comparisons between events and experiences. Evaluative questions focus on the interviewee's feelings towards someone or something.

Bogden & Biklen (1992) provided guidance on the nature of being a good interviewer in terms of a person who communicates personal interest and attention to the subject by being attentive, nodding his/ her head and using appropriate facial expressions to communicate. Silence can enable the participant to get their thoughts together and direct some of the conversation. It is important for the researcher to create an atmosphere in which participants feel comfortable expressing themselves .

Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) recommend a happy medium between total disclosure and total detachment on the part of the interviewer who may provide information or advice. How the interview is managed and the roles adopted will raise strategic, personal and ethical questions which will be influenced by the focus of the study.

Potential pitfalls.

Researchers are encouraged to consider possible effects of their own social identities (e.g. gender, class, nationality, age, ethnicity) on the interviewees who could associate the interview with administrative distrust and judgemental assessment. The researcher will therefore emphasise the value of individuals' views and the confidentiality of the data.

Linguistic variability suggests that the same term may mean different things to different interviewees presenting further potential pitfalls to the researcher. It is a basic assumption in much social science research that if the researcher or interviewer uses the same words, they will mean the same thing to numerous people – a great deal hangs on this assumption – the possibility of reliability, the validity of analysing data, comparison and generalisation. Respondents may choose to express what they see as socially acceptable or give answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear. The meanings of words depend upon the context in which they are spoken. Interviewers and ethnographers tend to assume that participants are telling it like it is. However in informal dealings we do not take each other at face value, we question, disagree, bring in counter examples, interpret and notice hidden agendas. Researchers may have lost the subtlety and complexity we use as a matter of course. Meanings tend to revolve around assumed central propositions which give them their value and significance. In order to gain a rich and potentially

diverse picture of the educational community data was collected from a variety of sources using a variety of methods.

Some theoreticians argue that researchers should not be seen as neutral vehicles for representing knowledge in an uncontaminated way. Holloway & Jefferson (2000) view research as legitimate provided no special objective status is accorded to researchers who should be susceptible to theories in a similar way as research participants. The complex emotional and intellectual forces that influence the conduct of the researcher are at once the source of their insight and their folly. Researchers cannot be detached but must examine their subjective involvement because it will help to shape the way in which the interview data is interpreted (Berg & Smith 1988).

Critical realism postulates the interactive nature of people's inner world, their external experience and their ambiguous representations of their experience (Bunge 1993).

Interviewing as a research technique only deals with external experience and relies on participants' ambiguous representations of their inner world. The structure of an interview may ignore the participants' own concerns and curtail their attempts to digress and elaborate.

Furthermore a number of difficulties are inherent in the decontextualisation of the interview as a research tool as participants' answers are disconnected from essential socio-cultural grounds of meaning (Mishler 1986). Each answer may be conceived as a fragment removed from both its setting in the organised discourse of the interview and life setting of the participant.

Participants have reported feeling discomfort when interviewers evaluate their responses or feelings (Bogden & Biklen ,p 102, 1992). Traditional in-depth interviewing can be viewed as unethical (Oakley 1981) due to the techniques and tactics used in the interview to manipulate respondents rather than valuing them as individual human beings. With assurances of confidentiality interviewees may risk putting a level of trust in the interviewer and say things that they never intended to tell. To combat this, interviewees

could be given an opt-out clause for questions they do not want to answer or a contract for signing by both parties. Patten (1990) recommends reciprocity in which participants who are cooperative and accessible receive information and feedback, a sense of being valued and opportunities to reflect on past experiences thereby enhancing their current understanding.

The accuracy of interview data relies on the following assumptions - the participants share meanings with the researcher, the participants are knowledgeable about their experiences, they can access their experience in the interview situation, participants' responses are faithful reflections of reality, they can convey knowledge to a stranger listener and they are motivated to tell the truth (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000).

Researchers can become deeply involved in the research material both during and after data collection. At the same time they should be able to step back, re-evaluate their ideas and appreciate the overall contours and general significance of the findings using emotional reserves and critical awareness (King, 1996).

A semi-structured format will be used for interviews so that the researcher can guide staff to discuss the nature of behaviour difficulties while aiming to avoid constraining their responses. Individual and group interviews will be used in action research cycle one to gather information on senior staff's perceptions of behaviour difficulties. The availability of staff is likely to influence whether individual or group interviews will be held. Group interviews can provide the researcher with an understanding of a range of views.

However the individuals who are present at a group interview could place constraints on the data gathered in terms of the willingness of participants to express their views which may be influenced by the relative positions of interviewees in the hierarchy of school staff. Individuals in the staff may be prepared to give more open and honest responses during individual interviews. The second action research cycle will involve individual interviews and classroom observations to gather data on the observed nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties.

3.5.3 Observations

Observation involves the presence of an observer in a setting in which the behaviours occur which are likely to be of interest in terms of the key issues under investigation. Several features were identified by Flick (1998) as defining types of observation – the extent to which the observation is covert, systematic or standardised, whether or not it takes place in a natural setting as well as the observer's amount of participation and self observation.

Event recording tends to lend itself to reporting discrete behaviour where there is a clear beginning and end. This can be difficult to judge in acts of aggression because, for example a fight between two pupils may be the result of personal tensions building up over several months. Narrative recording procedures require observers to record typically in written form what they see occurring in the classroom. Skinner, Rhymer & McDaniel (2000) point out that the data can be used for a variety of purposes – define target behaviours, develop empirical recording systems and future direct observation procedures, identify antecedents and consequences or confirm problems. In the present research classroom observations resulted in a re-evaluation of the problems rather than confirming data gathered through initial interviews with school staff.

Rowland (1986) explores the concept of classroom enquiry as an approach to the relationship between learning, teaching or understanding children and accepts that any two observers presented with the same classroom event will perceive different things but cautions against dismissing observers' perceptions in favour of observation schedules which list categories of behaviour to be noted and ticked off at regular intervals without regard to the subjective experiences of the observers.

Hatch (2002) identifies several strengths of data collected from observation of social settings – better understanding of the contexts in which phenomena occur; first hand experience allows researcher to be open to discovering inductively how participants are understanding the setting; the researcher has the opportunity to see things that are taken for granted by the participants and therefore less likely to come to the surface using other

data collection techniques such as interviewing; the researcher may learn sensitive information from the setting, getting close to the social phenomena allows the researcher to add his/ her own experience in the setting to the analysis of what is happening.

Participant observation as used in ethnographic studies, is the most naturalistic form of data collection available. Ethical considerations necessitate the knowledge and informed consent of the participants and there is likely to be some degree of researcher impact. Observational techniques are generally not suitable for research into specific events which may rarely occur in the routine running of a school.

The level of participation that an observer takes in the research setting is a key issue and ranges from limited observer to active participant. Hatch (2002) suggests that a complete participant is likely to be more intrusive than a complete observer. However a complete observer involves the participants being unaware that they are being observed. A complete participant on the other hand could have difficulty taking in a variety of information and recording the data. Less active participation can allow more detailed recording and richer information.

‘The presence of an observer makes any natural context, unnatural’ (Hatch 2002, p 73) suggesting that the presence of the researcher will influence the behaviour of those being studied. The researcher will aim to gather information on how staff and general classroom issues influence pupil behaviour using an observation schedule that would not constrain the data collected and would give an adequate account of classroom interactions. Billington (2000) warns against psychologists conjuring the illusion that they are invisible and the observations should take account of observer effects and avoid making moral judgements on the behaviour observed. Observation procedures in natural settings involve the researcher in judgements on what to attend to and what to write down. Woods (1986) writes about the ‘elsewhere syndrome’ (p. 46) in which the researcher has a nagging feeling that really important action is happening elsewhere. Wolcott (1995) recommends that the researcher focuses on what s/he is getting and accepts that all pictures are incomplete and subject to interpretation. The data collected

should be a careful representation of the action observed as far as possible.

With regard to recording observations, audiotape and video recording can provide an accurate account of what happened in the classroom but is not able to focus on particular aspects of information in the way that an observer can by recording on paper some of what was said and at the same time gaining an overall impression of the lesson and teacher/pupil relationships. The use of equipment such as video cameras and tape recorders may be avoided as they can be a focus for pupils' attention and initially at least disrupt their routine behaviour.

3.5.4 Focus groups

Social science focus groups have been used in a range of ways, for example as a means of clarifying and adding depth to quantitative data, a single research method (Lunt 1998), as part of a multimethod research design and as a preliminary study to clarify issues (Wilson 1997). Focus groups will be used in conjunction with interviews and classroom observations as a multimethod research design to investigate the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school.

The focus groups will aim to identify teaching strategies which staff view as helpful in reducing or overcoming behaviour difficulties and also as a means of promoting positive strategies on behaviour management and communication between staff. It was hoped that staff would use the focus groups to discuss aspects of the learning environment which can help to reduce off task behaviour.

Focus groups can be used to gather information more quickly than individual interviews and can be useful as a way of individuals sharing ideas and providing support for their colleagues. Length of time given to a particular topic and strength of feelings expressed by group members may also inform the researcher.

Focus group methodology draws upon a combination of participant observation and direct interviewing which can be seen as a continuum. From researcher effects which

may be minimal during observational procedures to direct interviewing which has a high level of researcher effects as the researcher may be seeking specific answers to a range of questions. Very strong implicit rules governing behaviour of group members may create strong biases in the data but rules can also provide a framework to focus the discussion on a desired topic.

Focus groups may be structured more or less formally varying between individual interviewing and observation according to the research objectives. Individual interviews using formal procedures mean that the interviewer controls the interview content and therefore can have a major impact on the data that is collected. In contrast the focus group moderator allows participants greater control over the content of the discussion as well as the topic which is chosen for discussion. A focus group in which participants are not required to qualify or re-examine their assertions may result in participants being willing to take risks with new ideas and consider a variety of options. On the other hand Myers (1998) suggests that it is possible that the focus group situation can reduce the introduction of ideas which do not concur with the views of dominant group members. Researchers need to be prepared for the challenges and ambiguities of group processes of which they themselves become an integral part (Wilson 1997).

The results from the data collected are embedded in a context that the researcher needs to be acutely aware of (Morgan 1997). Making judgements about the extent to which results may be extended or generalised beyond the narrow confines of the context in which the data is gathered should be carried out with extreme caution.

Lunt (1998) argues that if the group possess intrinsic interest in the topic and are describing their own experiences and perceptions (perhaps affirmed and checked by peers) then validity will be high. However if there is a low level of interest then individuals are more likely to express those views which they feel they ought to hold or views that will gain moderator or peer approval. The initial LA survey responses and interviews with senior managers suggested that behaviour difficulties were an area of particular concern and interest within the school.

Myers (1998) suggests that there are important differences between everyday conversations and focus groups as when focus groups involve strangers they will typically be less concerned than in normal conversation about the impact their opinions will have on others and they may have longer to focus (up to two hours) on particular topics unless the moderator moves the discussion on. Myers argues that though discussions are constrained this does not invalidate focus group findings but makes them practicable and interpretable. Researchers need to be aware of the constraints and conventions at play within the dialogue they are analysing.

Krueger (1994) suggests that an unknown moderator who is not part of established relationships and previous discussions will have less impact on group members' views. Krueger identified a list of interpersonal characteristics that could be desirable for a moderator:- exercising a mild, unobtrusive control over the group; maintaining interest and enthusiasm in the topic; having adequate background knowledge; able to communicate clearly; having self discipline; able to make people feel comfortable; having a friendly manner and a sense of humour; possessing curiosity about the topic and participants.

Lunt (1998) suggests that discussion is facilitated when the atmosphere is permissive, relaxed and unthreatening as possible. A sense of commonality will also promote discussion (Morgan 1997). The following rules and guidelines can be established at the beginning of the session – maintain confidentiality, speak from your own experience, do not preach and encourage everyone to join the discussion (Newton 1995)

Directing the discussion can be influenced by two opposing positions - naturalistic or structured. A structured discussion allows control and enables analysis of data from different groups following the same structure whereas an unstructured discussion allows points not apparent to the moderator to be explored and group members are free to explore topics of particular interest and relevance (Kerslake & Goulding, 1996). Open ended and straightforward questions can promote interactive discussion (Hill et al 1996).

Myers (1998) suggests ways of facilitating interactive discussion – using affirmations ('right, yeah, ok') to confirm discussion of topic, being aware of signals of closure of group members, allowing for disagreements and differences without hostility, encouraging contributions from everyone. The moderator can summarise themes from the discussion and check that there is a shared understanding.

Participants can be selected in a variety of ways, Morgan (1997) suggests that focus group projects are too small to achieve a representative cross section of a population. Within educational settings any research within a single school could generate a homogenous group of participants based on their common experience of one educational community. Morgan & Spanish (1984) suggest that it is not actual differences between participants so much as perceived differences that influence their willingness to discuss a topic together.

There are differing views on whether it is advantageous for group members to know each other or not. Familiarity tends to inhibit disclosure and participants tend to speak more freely with strangers (Krueger 1994, Morgan 1997, Vaughan et al 1996). Participants may rely on shared implicit assumptions and understandings that the researcher is trying to investigate. Kitzinger (1994) found that a group of people who were familiar to each other were able to relate the comments of others to shared experiences as well as point out contradictions between members' expressed views and actions. Lunt (1998) favoured groups where members were familiar to each other as they were used to exploring topics and discussing a wide range of views.

The number of participants in a focus group has varied between 3 or 4 (Goulding 1997), 12 (Wilson 1997) and 20 (Morgan 1997). There is likely to be an increased number of communicative interactions and wider range of views in a large group but a greater opportunity to express views in depth for participants in a smaller group.

Focus group researchers make use of video or more usually audio taping and then the tapes are then transcribed to provide the primary source of data. Vaughan et al (1996)

recommend the writing of notes to identify salient points which can form a plenary at the end of the meeting to explore a group understanding of the major themes. Myers (1998) recommends the writing of further notes to supplement the data which may be able to draw out a complex intuitive sense of what went on in the session. When data collection is completed, analysis should be carried out as soon as possible to aid detailed recall of the session. McClelland (1994) suggests that the focus group approach generates data which is highly qualitative and fairly non-specific. Some researchers summarise their understanding of the major themes. Wilson (1997) feels that this is insufficient for developing theories. The data can be coded and categorised with the use of audio records, transcripts, field notes, categories of units, developing theory and research literature.

Daniels (2006) suggests that the training teachers receive and the organisational structure of schools seem to discourage cultures of professional interaction and knowledge sharing whereas schools where staff have opportunities for self reflection and sharing knowledge are likely to have positive outcomes. Daniels proposes that provision for young people with SEN and SEBD would be enhanced through the development of cultures of staff collaboration. Newton (1995) used focus groups which he called 'circles of adults' with secondary school teachers as a means of providing opportunities for reflection and mutual support. Focus groups were found to be useful in encouraging open discussion about emotional and behavioural needs and plan professional responses to these needs.

In summary three research methods have been considered - interviews, classroom observations and focus groups. The method for analysing the data will be considered followed by the intention of the research, the nature of the school population included in the research, and implications of the literature on research methodologies regarding the key issues for investigation.

3.6 Content analysis used for analysing the data

In content analysis data are systematically classified into a scheme which consists of categories, themes or types. This involves focusing on the key questions, which shaped the inquiry. Data are initially sorted into themes by reading the entire results several

times with the key question in mind (e.g. what is the nature of behaviour difficulties?) and identifying ideas that emerge.

Content analysis involves looking at the content of data and developing categories (Holsti 1969). The categories are intended to describe the data as well as to interpret it to some degree and identifying reoccurring regularities in the data is an intuitive process by which data are placed together in categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Content analysis provides a starting point to enable insight into the major themes that emerge from the data collected. The categories or major themes are described as reflecting the nature of the research and are influenced by the goals and research question. Miles and Huberman (1994) warn that the categories must be clearly defined and accessible to other researchers in order to identify possible biases in the researcher's analysis of data, though it is likely that there will be a subjective element regarding the identified categories.

Initially data is read to identify emerging themes until it is clear that no new themes are identified. Content analysis can be used on all the data or a sampling procedure may be employed according to the volume of data collected. Sommer & Sommer (2002) warn that content analysis can be a long and tedious process which demands attention to detail. Willig (2001) points out that an active engagement with the data is required and a standpoint can be taken which is informed by previous research.

3.7 Intention of the research

The intention was to promote change in practice through action as an intrinsic part of the research in which data was collected and the collected data was shared with participants aiming to stimulate reflection and develop practice.

The current research employs a research focus of hypothesis formation as opposed to hypothesis testing (Billington 2006) and was planned to be inductive (Webb 1990) as the researcher was unsure of the likely content of the data before it was collected and the research pathway was itself influenced by the source of the data as well as influencing the

participants through feedback and opportunities to reflect on the data gathered. The researcher wanted the research to be informed by the research literature and not constrained by it. Therefore the researcher developed an initial line of inquiry 'what is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school' which was subsequently developed and revised during action research carried out with the participants of the school community rather than dogmatic pursuit of answers to specific hypotheses based on previous research.

The research involved three action research cycles using interviews, classroom observations and focus groups. The research process aimed to increase the researcher's and participants' understanding of the nature of students' behaviour difficulties and aimed to identify the manifestation of these difficulties and ways in which they could be reduced or exacerbated. The goal was to illuminate and attempt to resolve issues through action research as the process of data collection and analysis continued (Cummings & Hustler 1986).

Using a series of interviews with staff, observations and focus groups over a period of time the researcher aimed to gain an overall picture and encourage reflective and critical thinking which steers people away from pathologising behaviour difficulties as entirely located within the pupils.

Research was aimed to be a multifaceted affair in terms of the lines of inquiry and the methods of data collection. A narrow focus on one research question could have resulted in the researcher only coming up with answers to a specific question. For example, to the question 'what is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?' the answer could be 'pupils throwing things, hitting, calling out'. Cooperrider & Srivastva (1987) suggest that, through our assumptions and choice of method, we largely create the world we later discover. If hypotheses are narrowly pursued the researcher may miss a whole range of possibilities.

3.8 The nature of the school population included in the research

The terms - behaviour difficulties, emotional behaviour difficulties – are used interchangeably throughout this paper and are defined in terms of Gates et al's (2000) concept of behavioural distress in which psychological and physiological elements in a situation are perceived as threatening, frightening or destructive. This concept focuses on how behaviour is perceived rather than defining it in terms of characteristics of individual pupils.

The researcher aimed to avoid pathologising individual pupils in terms of identifying them as having behaviour difficulties. The research investigation focused on staff within the school community – their perceptions, behaviour and classroom interactions with pupils. The professional who provided a key link between the researcher and the school community advised the researcher that seeking parents' views and permission for pupils to participate would be problematic. As the focus of the action research was on investigating situational factors that contribute to behaviour difficulties or distress, data on individual pupils were not included in the present research.

Pupils' views are an important and valuable source of information on educational communities. Data gathering focused on teachers' views and interactions with pupils and did not gather data on individual pupils' behaviour and views. This could be perceived as a serious weakness in this research project but as the intention of the research was to avoid pathologising individual pupils and identify situational factors that contribute to behavioural difficulties /distress, the researcher decided to focus on staff perceptions and interactions with pupils rather than gathering data from individual pupils which is often the focus of educational psychologist's work in school communities.

3.9 Implications of the research methodology literature on key issues for investigation

Research techniques have been critically examined and action research methodology has been identified as a method of investigating the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties in one secondary school using interviews, classroom observations and focus groups. Eden & Huxham (1996) suggest that action research involves an integral involvement by the researcher in an intent to change the organisation in which the research is carried out. A key issue for the present action research is - How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?

A further key issue for investigation is outlined by Winter (1989) as being central to the action research process in terms of the researcher being prepared for challenges to the researcher's own understanding and assumptions. A further key issue is therefore included - How did the research project influence the views and the perceptions of the researcher?

3.10 Summary of the research questions developed from the research literature and action research methodology

What are the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. (Do staff in a school who perceive high levels of EBD in their pupils espouse a within child model of behaviour difficulties?)

What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms?

Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties?

What classroom strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?

What classroom strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?

How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?

How did the research project influence the views and the perceptions of the researcher?

What is the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties?

Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties? (EBD is likely to perpetuate in situations in which there is a culture of blame and reluctance to accept personal responsibility .

Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?

Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties?

What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils' behaviour?

These key issues will be considered further in Key issues for research (chapter 5).

Chapter 4

Procedures.

4.1 Introduction

Key issues for investigation have been informed by the research literature and the literature on research methodology. This chapter considers how the school setting was prepared for the research, the process of ethical review, how data were collected using three action research cycles, how data were recorded, how data were processed and how data were shared with staff.

4.2 Preparation of the setting for the research

Participants are the staff of one secondary school who were willing to engage with the project in terms of agreeing to observations of their classes or participating in interviews. Following the local authority survey of behaviour difficulties a number of offers for educational psychologist systemic input were made to the SENCo who provided more than half of the responses in the survey. These offers were met with a non committal response and requests for further casework. During a routine visit in which the researcher met a head of year as the SENCo was absent further offers of systemic input were received in a favourable way.

A formal letter (appendix 2) was then sent to the Head teacher and SENCo offering to examine the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties in a range of curriculum areas.

A telephone message was received by the researcher accepting the offer of research into the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties.

4.3 Ethical review

Sheffield University ethical review procedures guided the research which was intended to be of value for the participants who have given their informed consent, harm to participants is avoided and confidentiality is respected.

Initially members of the senior management team were asked for their consent to the research project and invited to explore issues connected with pupils' behaviour difficulties. Following senior management agreement, information regarding the nature

of the research project was communicated to staff, pupils and parents through the school newsletter with the direct contact details of the researcher for further enquiries. After reading the participant information form, staff indicated whether they were willing to engage in the research project by signing a participant consent form.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with senior staff followed by a series of classroom observations. The research took a cyclical form in which information was gathered from the research literature, a framework for ethical review was agreed, the project was proposed to senior staff, initial data gathering took place and the key issues were identified and refined through examination of the research literature and data collection. In all cases the nature of the research project was explained and consent received before gathering and feedback of data.

Methods of recording data were subject to participants' agreement and included audiotapes, observation schedules, written records and written notes. It was intended that participants' responses would remain confidential in terms of collected data with no reference to particular individuals. It was anticipated that the research data could contain information in which participants were critical of each others' views and practices as indicated in the research literature (Miller, 2003). Preparing the data for feedback was directed by the researcher's intention to empower participants rather than demoralise them and information was shared in a way that was intended to avoid generating hostility between members of the school community and promote students' learning experiences by sharing information on teaching approaches and behaviour management strategies which could reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties.

It was proposed that all the data gathered would be confidential and all individuals treated respectfully. The research may be submitted for publication at some point in the future with no individuals or institutions identified.

A phone call was received formally agreeing to the project. Further details of the research proposal were outlined to senior management and it was agreed that the project

would be called Student Success and Competence (SCS). The title aimed to provide a positive focus and discourage pathologising specific groups or individuals as being responsible for the problems. The SCS project would include data collection using a range of methods - observations, interviews, focus groups. It was also agreed that everyone in the school community would be informed of the project through the school news letter with the researcher's direct contact details for further queries.

4.4 How data were collected

Preliminary work for this action research project was carried out in terms of ongoing educational psychologist's input for the school, a local authority survey of staff views on EBD (Lloyd Bennett, 2006), tutorial with Tom Billington followed by a presentation of the research proposal at Sheffield University and ethical review.

Following fifteen years of teaching and sixteen years practicing as an educational psychologist and researcher, the starting point for the research was a review of the research literature on emotional and behavioural difficulties. Action research was used to gather data in three cycles of the researcher's involvement with staff members of one educational community.

Cycle 1

Prior to the research the researcher provided support for the school from the Educational Psychology Service. Following the agreement of the head teacher for the research project, semi-structured interviews were held with members of the senior management team (the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, the Deputy Principal with overall responsibility for behaviour and the Head of behaviour support). The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (Senco) agreed to the role of providing a link between the researcher and staff members of the educational community. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the perceived nature of behaviour difficulties within the school community. The Senco identified Year 7 classes as particularly challenging and the researcher agreed to carry out classroom observations of a Year 7 group throughout the course of one school day.

Cycle 2

Classroom observations were followed by brief feedback sessions with the individual teachers and detailed feedback to the SENCo who was the key contact person for the project. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the SENCo and the newly appointed Assistant Principal. Further observations of Year 7 classes were carried out focussing on the lessons of two teachers with different teaching styles, contrasting responses of Year 7 pupils and similar lesson format.

Cycle 3

SEN focus group meetings were set up to provide opportunities for staff to explore and share successful strategies in reducing pupils' behaviour difficulties. Feedback on research findings regarding factors which may reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties was provided for the link professional who was the Head of Learning Support.

4.5 How the interviews were carried out

Following agreement of the head teacher and the Senco for the action research project to investigate the nature of behaviour difficulties, the Senco agreed to be the key contact person for the researcher. A working relationship between the researcher and the Senco had already been established.

A semi-structured group interview was held with senior staff to explain the nature of the research and explore how they perceived the issues regarding behaviour difficulties in the school. Descriptive questions were used to obtain a general account of staff views on the following issues – are there students who experience behaviour difficulties, what is the nature of their behaviour difficulties, what are the contributory factors and how have they been addressed so far? The second interview with the key link professional involved agreeing the name of the project and further discussion on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties and an appropriate focus for the research project. A third interview with the Senco and Behaviour Consultant decided the content of the second action research cycle. Interviews were exploratory and sought responses to questions regarding the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties and school systems such as the whole school behaviour policy. Interviews with the Key Stage 3 behaviour consultant and the new deputy principal were also carried out to understand their perspective on the nature of behaviour difficulties within the school. Interviews were structured in terms of aiming to understand how staff perceived behaviour difficulties and the interviews were unstructured in terms of encouraging respondents to express their views freely.

4.6 How the classroom observations were carried out

Classroom observations were used for gathering data on teacher /pupil interactions and behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms. Observations were carried out in the classroom as a natural setting in which teacher /pupil interactions occur. A narrative recording procedure was used in which the observer recorded in written form, what was seen occurring in the classroom. The researcher used an open framework with the potential to gather information on as many areas of classroom activities as possible – physical appearance of the classroom, lesson delivery, teacher management strategies and

the behaviour of pupils. The range of areas in the observation schedule used for recording information was suited to an inquiry which aimed at gathering information on as many aspects of classroom behaviour as possible recorded by one observer. Data were gathered from classroom observations data collections 5 and 8 during the second action research cycle.

The Senco who was the key link between the researcher and the school community proposed that the researcher carried out the observations and circulated information on the project to staff, students and parents (appendix 3) following ethical guidelines. Staff agreed to the observations and were asked to inform the pupils about the researcher carrying out classroom observations.

The Senco informed the researcher that she had arranged for one class group to be observed during a range of subject lessons throughout one day. Classroom observations were carried out by following one Year 7 group throughout a school day as part of action research cycle 2. The lessons observed (data 7) were Humanities, Technology, English, Science and Physical Education. During the observations it became clear to the researcher that there were variations in the pupils who were present throughout each lesson though all pupils were in Year 7. Variations in the pupils present in each subject lesson resulted in difficulties investigating the consistency of pupils' behaviour in different lessons. The implications of variations in the pupils present during classroom observations for the findings of the research are considered in the discussion (7.3 and 7.4).

A single observer may be able to attend to several behaviours as well as gauge an overall picture of classroom behaviour but can only record one aspect of the classroom at a time. Written recording meant that the observer could record or observe but not do both at the same time. Audio taping the lessons was found to be unsuccessful because it was not found possible to gather clear information from the recording of the lessons. The audio-tape recorded all the sounds in the classroom which came across as a confusing din. The use of a recording schedule (appendix 10) provided a flexible structure for

gathering data and was preferred over listing and ticking off categories of behaviour or event sampling which was thought to be too rigid and could result in a narrow picture of classroom activity, only providing information on one aspect of the classroom such as the behaviour of pupils or the behaviour of the teacher. Specific questions such as what is the observed behaviour of pupils during the lesson would have failed to take into account a range of factors including observer effects, teacher behaviour, lesson content and the role of teaching assistants. The information gathered was subjective and did not allow quantitative measures which could have aided comparison of specific aspects of the lessons observed but could miss providing a general impression of the dynamic relationship between the teaching staff and pupils.

The use of a single researcher using the same observation schedule during different lessons facilitated the comparison of one data collection to another but did not allow the opportunity to compare data gathered from different observers. Collected data was shared with the relevant teachers and they were given opportunities to express their views and reflect on the data. All the observations were carried out in the routine setting of the classroom and in order to reduce potential observer effects no special arrangements were made beyond the teacher and pupils accepting the presence of the researcher during their lesson.

For the present research, the researcher chose an unoccupied seat and avoided engaging with the participants beyond polite and formal interaction. The observer tried to accurately record the behaviour that was observed without making value judgements or focusing on particular individuals.

The classroom observation schedule (appendix 10) was developed from research literature (Clarke & Murray, 1996; Lloyd Bennett & Gamman 2000). A range of classroom observations had been carried out by the researcher and colleagues in primary and secondary schools using a similar observation schedule to the one used for the present research. However, for the present research, additional sections were included such as the recording of teacher's neutral comments as well as those perceived as

negative and positive. Also sections were added to record teaching assistants' behaviour and recording of staff views when the opportunity was available which was most often at the end of the lesson.

The classroom observation schedule took account of the following: observer effects; general classroom issues such as rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance; lesson delivery including clarity of instructions, involvement of pupils in class discussions, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses; teacher management included positive, negative and directive strategies; teachers' expressed views, teaching assistant behaviour and expressed views as well as a final section for additional thoughts. Staff were interviewed briefly at the end of the classroom observation and feedback was offered.

In order to aim to identify any possible bias in the interpretation of the data collected through observations, two teachers and three educational psychologists were invited to read the observation data and comment on the data collected as well as the observation schedule used.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the two teachers and they were provided with feedback on the classroom observations. During interviews with two teachers (data 10 and 11) which included feedback on the classroom observations it became clear that staff felt that they lacked opportunities to reflect on and share good practice.

An interview was conducted with the Humanities teacher (data 10) whose lessons had been observed and she was particularly critical of staff meetings.

'My concern is, and I have to be honest, you get the same people there who are full of all these bright ideas but are not actually teaching in the classroom. They dominate everything that goes on and you just feel like a spare part, and I am not prepared to be wasting my time. I am involved with behaviour for learning and I sit there and think its a total load of tosh, basically.'

This suggests that the teacher felt that she was not listened to and she did not feel valued by her colleagues. This view informed the setting up of SEN focus groups in action research cycle three.

4.7 How SEN focus groups were carried out

The third action research cycle involved arranging SEN focus groups which aimed to gather information from a number of staff, encourage staff to share ideas, support each other, take risks with new ideas and consider options. The focus groups were also intended to provide opportunities for all staff who attended the focus groups to feel that their views were being listened to as well as discussing issues related to pupils' behaviour difficulties.

The following three aims for the focus groups were discussed with the Senco and made explicit at the beginning of each focus group meeting:

- to provide a framework within which participants can use each other as resources in terms of providing new information and act as a sounding board for ideas
- provide time for staff to recognise their own good practice and share it with others
- highlight cooperative and positive processes within the group aiming to maintain and extend them

The focus groups were unstructured in terms of the specific problem areas which members of the group brought up for discussion and structured in terms of specified aims and ground rules for the meetings.

Ground rules were established to provide a format to encourage everyone present to contribute to the agenda of the meeting. There were five ground rules – take responsibility for your own learning, speak for yourself and not for others; all contributions are to be accepted without criticism, only the problem presenter judges the usefulness of the suggestions; any comments about individuals remain confidential; sessions will begin and end on time.

The link professional for the researcher advised on timing that was likely to be convenient for staff. She also circulated information to school staff about the SEN focus groups and the dates of the intended meetings as well as encouraging staff to attend. Between four and six members of staff attended each of the three focus groups. Prior discussion (data 12) with staff suggested that those who expressed an interest in attending the forums would be more willing to be open and frank if no members of the senior management were present though they accepted the presence of the Head of Learning Support whose openness and willingness to be honest about difficulties in school appeared to earn their acceptance.

The original format was proposed in terms of individual teachers being invited to present problem situations and identify a priority area of concern, with a clear definition of the problem area; a brainstorm in which the group present ideas for the resolution of the problem, problem presenters choose which solutions to implement; at follow up sessions presenters can choose to feed back to the group on the resolution of chosen problem areas.

The researcher aimed to achieve a permissive and relaxed atmosphere for staff to express their views freely which resulted in staff discussing not only strategies which were thought to be effective in reducing behaviour difficulties but also expressing critical views of school management of pupils behaviour difficulties.

Minutes of the focus groups were collated from transcriptions of audio recordings and circulated by email to all those who attended the forums after details of individuals were deleted to maintain confidentiality. Focus group members approved the minutes prior to sharing with senior management who expressed interest in the contents though no direct feedback from senior management was received by the researcher.

The focus groups provided teachers with a 'safe' opportunity to express their views which were subsequently circulated to senior management following the consent of the

staff who attended the focus group meetings. In order to avoid creating further conflict amongst staff, critical comments were excluded or expressed in terms of behaviour management strategies with the aim of ideas being received positively by staff who could not attend the focus group and inform them of strategies that could be useful for managing pupils with difficulties.

4.8 How data were recorded

In the present research data were collected over a series of interviews with staff, classroom observations and SEN focus groups using methods which were thought least likely to intrude on participants' behaviour. Video cameras which were not part of this school's culture were not used but data were recorded using audiotape recording and written notes.

When using an audio tape recorder during interviews and focus groups the researcher explained why the recording was being made and how it was going to be used.

Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the interview or focus group at any time and assured of the confidential nature of the interview. They were given the opportunity to discuss any questions or concerns about the study itself and request a copy of the transcript or final copy of the research report.

Most qualitative methods of analysis require transcription verbatim or near verbatim. Note taking interferes with eye contact and can be distracting. Audio taping or videotaping the interview can also be distracting and the obvious presence of a recording device in front of the interviewee may influence or inhibit responses. Subtleties of communicative interaction may be contained within the words as well as how they are spoken – pauses, interruptions, intonation and volume of speech may all contain variations in meaning (Atkinson & Heritage 1984, Potter & Wetherell 1987). All types of transcription are a form of translation and can never be a perfect representation of the interview.

For the present research interviews of forty five minutes or less were recorded by taking notes. With teachers' agreement longer interviews and focus group meetings were recorded on an audio tape and transcribed. Due to the volume of data it was not possible to use transcription notation and the researcher used written notes to record impressions of interviews and meanings from the data collections. This will have resulted in some loss of information in terms of the data recorded but it is hoped that the volume of the data taken from a number of sources (interviews with teachers, classroom observations and focus groups) and the recording of the researcher's impressions compensates for not using transcription notation.

Data from classroom observations were collected using an observation schedule and data from interviews with staff were recorded on audiotapes and then transcribed. Field notes were also made on the researcher's reflections. Observation data were shared with staff at the time of the observation. Staff comments on feedback of the information recorded provided additional data and opportunities to check shared meanings.

All the data collected from classroom observations were subjected to the scrutiny of 2 teachers and 3 educational psychologists. In addition the researcher looked for triangulation opportunities (Maxwell, 1996, 'collecting information from a diverse range of individual settings, using a variety of methods', p.93) to reduce the risks of systematic biases and chance associations.

4.9 How data were processed

Data were processed using content analysis in which the data are classified according to key issues for investigation which shaped the inquiry. This process was very time consuming and required decisions on what data could meaningfully be placed within each of the key issues for investigation. The researcher acknowledges that the recorded data could have been organised in a variety of ways. The key issues for investigation were developed from the research literature and informed by the availability of relevant data gathered from three action research cycles. The data was coded by the researcher according to its relevance to each of the key issues for investigation. Frequency counts of

data were not carried out as the study focussed primarily on gathering qualitative data which addressed the themes which were taken from the research and methodology literature.

Examination of the data involved sifting through the data using the key issues as a coding frame and the researcher conducted a creative synthesis of the data into evidence for each of the key issues for investigation. Validation in terms of checking selected findings with the research participants was carried out by feeding back the findings to teachers who were the research participants and providing copies of the recorded data to the link professional. The criteria for identifying the key issues for validation with staff were the sufficient availability of data from sources on different occasions and whether knowledge of the data would be likely to benefit the school community.

4.10 How data were shared with staff

The researcher worked closely with the key link professional (initially the SENCo and subsequently the Head of Learning Support) who fed information to senior management and communicated with staff regarding classroom observations and interviews.

Immediate feedback was provided for all staff who had classroom observations. Research findings were initially shared with staff who were the source of the data and personal details removed (e.g. names or identifying characteristics) before the data was discussed with link professional.

When giving feedback the researcher planned to avoid fuelling further potential conflict by omitting or rephrasing any critical views of members or groups in and around the school community towards other individuals or groups. The researcher did not view criticism as necessarily a negative approach to identifying and improving pupils' behaviour difficulties. The research process relied on goodwill and willingness of participants to trust and engage with the researcher. Participants' critical comments were rephrased prior to seeking agreement for feeding back the data to the school community. The researcher avoided feeding back critical comments on staff. For example regarding the school's electronic system for pupils' reward points

‘you have got all this nice fancy equipment and there are no guidelines..... it does not help to say to a child you are going to receive this thing...they want to see these things , it should be something now’ (data 22 p.5)

was reported in the following way - pupils achieving an agreed number of points should receive clearly defined rewards or prizes which are fairly immediate.

This may have resulted in some loss of information and distortion of the raw data but appeared more in keeping with ethical guidance in terms of avoiding harm to participants and helping to maintain participants’ confidentiality by reducing the risk of fuelling a hostile environment. The researcher also sought to avoid senior members of the school community investigating sources of information which could come across as critical of themselves and school practices.

Chapter 5

Key issues for research.

5.1 Introduction

The current study adopted Gates et al's (2000) definition of behavioural distress for the terms emotional behavioural difficulties and behaviour difficulties which are used interchangeably. Behaviour is viewed as referring to the total response of a person to a situation that s/he faces including the psychological and physiological elements. The expressions of these elements when perceived by the self and/or others as threatening, frightening, destructive or self destructive are described as behavioural distress.

The initial research question What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school? was revised in the light of findings from the research literature on behaviour difficulties and recommendations from the literature on action research methodology,

5.2 Key research questions

The initial key issue for investigation was '*what is the nature of emotional behaviour difficulties in one secondary school*'. The researcher's practice as an educational psychologist and a review of the research literature indicated that there is unlikely to be a straightforward and meaningful answer to this question. The question was therefore revised into two key issues for investigation '*what is the perceived nature of behaviour difficulties in the school*' and '*what is the observed nature of behaviour difficulties in the school*'.

The following key areas were identified from a review of the research literature and action research methodology as potential areas of investigation using action research for investigating the nature of pupil's behaviour difficulties in one secondary school.

What are the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. (Do staff in a school who perceive high levels of EBD in their pupils espouse a within child model of behaviour difficulties?)

What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms?

Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties?

What strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?

What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?

How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?

How did the research project influence the views and the perceptions of the researcher?

What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties? (EBD is likely to perpetuate in situations in which there is a culture of blame and reluctance to accept personal responsibility .

Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?

Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties?

What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils' behaviour?

These key issues were reconsidered following an initial examination of the research data which were coded by letters related to each key issue.

1. What are the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. (Do staff in a school who perceive high levels of EBD in their pupils espouse a within child model of behaviour difficulties?)

There appeared to be sufficient evidence from interviews with senior members of staff to provide an informed view on the question, What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff? The concept of 'perceived high levels of EBD' was avoided as it is imprecise.

2. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms?

There appeared to be sufficient evidence from classroom observations to provide an informed view of Year 7 pupils identified as particularly challenging by the Senco.

3. Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties?

This key issue was retained as there appeared to be sufficient information from classroom observations of Year 7 pupils to provide an informed view.

4. What strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks? Evidence was available from classroom observations and this question was therefore retained.

5. What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties? Cefai 1995.. There appeared to be sufficient evidence from classroom observations and focus groups to provide an informed view which could be of general interest beyond the setting of the research.

6. How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views? The research findings were presented in a form and style appropriate to members of staff in the school community. Evidence on how the research influenced school practices and views was taken from interviews with school staff and considered critically in the results of the research and the discussion of the results.

7. How did the research project influence the views and the perceptions of the researcher? Evidence was taken from the researcher's reflections. This key issue was considered to be relevant to reflections on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties which are included in the Discussion (chapter 7).

8. What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties. Evidence was available from an informal meeting between the researcher and the Principal in the playground and was not thought by the researcher to be sufficient to provide an informed view. Issues related to this question are considered in the Discussion (chapter 7).

9. Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties? (EBD is likely to perpetuate in situations in which there is a culture of blame and reluctance to accept personal responsibility . Situations in which professionals, parents and pupils ascribe causal factors of pupils' EBD to other people's behaviour are likely to result in negative outcomes for pupils' educational progress.)

Evidence was available from interviews with school staff and SEN focus groups. However this key issue regarding a culture of blame was rejected due to difficulties in reporting sensitive issues which could contravene the ethical procedures of the present research. Staff expressed critical views of other staff during semi-structured interviews and the researcher was advised by the link member of staff to avoid researching and reporting on critical views of staff. Data 4 Senco:

‘Can I say one thing as well. The staff that are taking this group, some of them are quite fragile. They are worn down by them so whatever you say . . . present

teachers in a very positive light. Not at all in a critical way because I think one more criticism and some of them . . .’

Therefore the researcher avoided feeding back critical comments of staff. Investigation of a culture of blame was considered by the researcher as being beyond the remit of the research project and would have required detailed discussions with senior management and subject teachers before such a project could be undertaken. Issues related to a culture of blame are considered in the Discussion (chapter 7).

10. Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school? Is the espoused policy and policy in practice different, what are the differences and why?

Evidence was available from interviews with staff. Staff expressed conflicting views regarding the existence of a whole school policy and the researcher met resistance from staff to discuss the policy and provide a copy of it. There appeared to be insufficient data to provide an informed view. However as the research literature suggests that a whole school behaviour policy is a key issue in pupils’ behaviour difficulties, the evidence that came to light is considered in the Discussion (chapter 7).

11. Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils’ behaviour difficulties? Evidence was available from interviews with staff. Eden & Huxham (1996) propose that there should be implications from action research which go beyond the domain of the project and the nature of the school site was specific to the setting of the project. This key issue was excluded from the investigation as the physical environment was particular to the development of the school which resulted from a fusion of two schools that were on separate sites. This key issue was therefore thought to be of limited relevance to schools which do not have a similar history and is considered in the Discussion (chapter 7).

12. What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils’ behaviour? Focus groups and interviews with staff aimed to provide opportunities for

staff to openly discuss difficulties they experienced within the school community as well as aiming to generate positive relationships between staff. Information from the focus groups was communicated to the school community through email. The researcher did not succeed in engaging all staff in the research project and a small number of staff (4-6) attended the focus groups and their views could not be taken as representing the staff group as a whole. Classroom observations were used to investigate the nature of teacher/pupils interactions.

There would have been difficulties in reporting sensitive issues regarding staff relationships which could contravene the ethical procedures in which all participants were treated respectfully. Staff expressed critical views of other staff during semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The researcher was advised by the link member of staff to avoid researching and reporting on critical views of staff. It would have been difficult to clearly identify the nature of relationships between all staff and identify factors in these relationships which impacted on pupils' behaviour. Issues related to staff relationships and how they impact on pupils' behaviour are considered in the discussion (chapter 7).

The data was analysed using code letters related to each of the key issues and then the research questions were revised in terms of improving clarity, the availability of sufficient evidence, the terms of the ethical procedures as well as relevance to action research methodology and the nature of behaviour difficulties.

The following six research questions were retained and evidence was taken from three action research cycles of data collection using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and focus groups. These questions were used as a coding frame for processing the data which are reported in chapter 6 on results.

- 1. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff?*
- 2. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms of Year 7 pupils?*

3. *Do pupils reported by staff as having behaviour difficulties exhibit them in all subject areas or are pupils' behaviour difficulties context specific?*
4. *What strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?*
5. *What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?*
6. *Did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?*

The data are not reported after each of the three cycles of action research as the data are viewed as cumulative and reporting after each cycle would have meant repeating the data from previous cycles when reporting on the data from the next cycle. The researcher aimed to increase the cohesiveness of the data by gathering evidence for the seven key issues from all of the three cycles of action research.

Issues related to the research questions will also be considered in the Discussion (chapter 7) followed by examination of each of the key issues.

Chapter 6

Results

6.1 Introduction

After preparation of the setting for the research in terms of engaging the willing participation of the headteacher, senior staff and a key member of the school community for communication and feedback purposes, three interviews were carried out to gather senior staff views on the nature of behaviour difficulties. Action research methodology was used in which staff members' freedom of thought and action was respected and an ecosystemic approach gathered information from several sources using interviews with staff, classroom observations and staff focus groups.

Data collection took place during three cycles of action research. During the first action research cycle the researcher carried out interviews with senior staff to investigate how staff perceived behaviour difficulties in the school. During the second action research cycle a series of five classroom observations were conducted. The second cycle of action research also involved further interviews to feedback on the observations followed by further classroom observations focusing on English and Humanities.

The third cycle of action research involved setting up an SEN focus group and giving feedback to the key link professional on what strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties.

The research data were examined in terms of the six key issues which were used as a framework for content analysis of the research data gathered from the three action research cycles.

6.2 Collection of data

The raw data are included in the appendices. (Each data collection is numbered and titled followed by the method used for recording and the approximate time taken to collect the data.)

The methods of recording were written record (WR); audio record and transcription (ART); notes (N).

Action research cycle 1			
Data number	Data collected	Method of recording	Duration
1.	Group interview with Behaviour Co-ordinator, Assistant Principal, SENCO.	WR. N.	1 hour
2.	Interview with SENCO (other senior staff did not attend).	ART. WR	1 hour 30 minutes
3.	Interview with SENCO and Behaviour Co-ordinator.	ART. N.	1 hour 30 minutes
4.	Interview with Key Stage 3 Behaviour Consultant.	WR.	$\frac{3}{4}$ hour
5.	Interview with newly appointed Deputy Principal.	WR.	$\frac{3}{4}$ hour
Action research cycle 2			
6.	Interview with SENCO	WR. N.	30 minutes
7.	Observations of lessons for Year 7 pupils.	ART. WR. N.	4 hours
8.	Feedback to SENCO on observations.	WR. N.	1 hour
9.	Further classroom observations of Year 7	ART. WR.	4 hours
10.	Interview with teacher and feedback.	ART. N.	1 hour
11.	Further interview with teacher.	ART.	1 hour
12.	Interview with SENCO	WR. N.	$\frac{3}{4}$ hour
13.	Feedback to English teacher	WR. N.	30 minutes
Action research cycle 3			
14.	SEN focus group.	ART. WR. N.	2 hours
15.	SEN focus group.	WR. N.	2 hours
16.	SEN focus group.	WR. ART.	2 hours.
17.	Record of feedback on research.	WR. N.	3 hours

Data collection for each research question.

Data were gathered for the following six key issues for investigation.

- 1. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff?*
- 2. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms of Year 7 pupils?*
- 3. Do pupils reported by staff as having behaviour difficulties exhibit them in all subject areas or are pupils' behaviour difficulties context specific?*
- 4. What strategies were observed as unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?*
- 5. What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?*
- 6. How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?*

6.3 What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff?

Senior staff were the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (who was also the key contact professional for the researcher), the Deputy Principal with overall responsibility for behaviour and the Head of behaviour support. The research question, 'What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff?' was developed from revision of the initial research question – 'What is the nature of EBD in one secondary school?' (this implies that emotional and behaviour difficulties is a unitary concept with a generally accepted definition).

Data were collected from semi-structured interviews (Action research cycle 1. Data 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). The purpose of the interviews was to gather a clear picture of how pupils' behaviour difficulties were perceived by senior staff within the school. The interviews were also used to discuss the nature of the project and agree on appropriate courses of action for the research. The semi-structured interviews were structured in terms of the researcher aiming to cover two points – establish communication with senior members of the school community and gather senior staff perceptions of the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. The interviews were unstructured in terms of the researcher not

imposing a framework on the responses of senior staff who were provided with an open opportunity to express their views. Content analysis was used to examine the data from interviews with senior staff and three categories of responses were identified - Groups of pupils with difficulties, individual students with behaviour difficulties and negative peer relationships.

Groups of pupils with behaviour difficulties.

Senior staff perceived some groups of students as particularly challenging.

Interview data 1 Deputy Principal:

‘We have got a small hardcore of students who challenge all teachers. Some pupils are extremely challenging and staff are afraid to challenge them , inordinate amount of effort and time spent on pupils with problems.’

Data 2 Senco:

‘Don’t get me wrong there is not a problem with behaviour with every teacher in every class. We have some groups that are challenging and some individuals that are challenging.’

‘Particularly with boys, and we have had a big issue of under-achieving boys here.’

Some groups of pupils were reported to show marked behaviour difficulties in lessons with supply teachers. Data 3 Senco:

‘We had an art teacher who has been off and we have had a lesson done by a supply teacher the other day and literally paint brushes were flying as missiles and children were painting their faces and hand-printing the walls.’

Some children were seen as experiencing behaviour difficulties as a result of poor intellectual ability. Data 2 Senco:

‘Children who perhaps have not got the intellectual ability to get high grades will have written themselves off and there is a huge issue there.’

Individual students with behaviour difficulties.

The Senco also perceived individual students as experiencing particular behaviour difficulties.

Data 2 Senco:

‘We do have children who don't conform and who are very difficult. There was a lot of activity going on and the children were all sitting, on task, fairly quiet in the room, teaching assistant there as well, and I was at the front of the classroom talking to a child. All of a sudden there was this hubbub at the back and I turned round and something had happened. He had leapt out of his seat and he was flailing his fists at the kid behind him. There was a fight going on in my class which I thought was well under control. He did that on a number of occasions, and over-reacts very aggressively to relatively small provocation.’

Researcher: ‘Is it somebody saying a derogatory comment about his family?’

Senco: ‘He would say, yes, but sometimes it wasn't something being said, it could be a look. So we have got the aggression. Very, very attention seeking, although he didn't have a statement, what he did was pull the time of the teaching assistants that were there for the statemented children away from the statements on to him because without that attention nobody else in the room could get on with their work. Do things like leave your seat, run round the room, run into cupboards, run out of the room. There was one occasion when he tried to attack another child and it took three of us to hold him and to stop him and get him out of the room. We are getting these instances so frequently the Head of Year has asked for him not to come back.’

Negative peer relationships. Staff perceived pupils' difficulties in terms of negative relationships between peers as being time consuming for teaching staff and interfering with teaching and learning in the school. Data 2 Senco:

‘It’s demanding because we have got one or two children that are disruptive a lot of the time but we have also got what we call the Eastenders mentality, particularly amongst the girls but some boys are involved with it as well. . . they are falling out amongst friends that actually becomes bullying. Children waiting in groups for other children and one gets picked on.’

‘We are having a lot of that. Years 7 and 8 at the moment are eating our time with relationship difficulties.’

Relationship difficulties were seen as taking large amounts of time and staff were experiencing difficulties managing the pupils with behaviour problems. Behaviour co-ordinator data 3:

‘The thing is what we are doing is because there is so much of it, mainly fire fighting, we are very reactive and what . . . stand back from it and . . . so close with our hoses. It is so demanding on time.’

In general, discussions with senior management indicated that they viewed behaviour difficulties as primarily located within specific groups of students as well as particular individual pupils. Pupils who had difficulty accessing the curriculum and ‘who have written themselves off’ were described as showing particular behaviour difficulties. Behaviour management strategies were seen as ‘fire fighting’ or crisis led. Social difficulties between pupils were reported and some pupils were described as reacting very aggressively to their peers.

Year 7

The Senco identified year 7 pupils as experiencing difficulties around school and being particularly challenging. Data 2 Senco:

‘This year's Year 7 is the weakest year that I can recollect having or that we have records to show and behaviour is particularly poor in the new Year 7.’

‘Behaviour is particularly poor in the new Year 7 - this year’s Year 7 are having greater difficulty than previous years.’

‘but if we are saying Year 7s are an issue, would it be perhaps profitable to track a group of Year 7s through a day and to try to pinpoint what actually does trigger the poorest behaviour?’

‘I am suggesting Year 7 because they are a weaker year, they are a challenging year. But also, if we can identify problems with Year 7 we have got five years still to sort out anything that we can.’

‘Regarding one particular Year 7 class ‘there are a number of teachers that are struggling terribly and some of them are very experienced teachers. We seem to be getting more children who are genuinely unable to cope with different children, different teachers, they haven't got the emotional maturity. Once it was accepted you came to secondary school, you moved around, you saw different teachers.’

The Senco perceived an increasing number of year 7 pupils as not able to cope with movement around a large school site and their behaviour was particularly poor. The Senco suggested that the researcher could track a group of Year 7 pupils throughout the course of one day.

The nature of behaviour difficulties in the school as viewed by local authority advisors.

Interviews were held with the Key Stage 3 behaviour consultant (Appendix 7 data 4) who was very critical of particular staff who were perceived as having very poor classroom management. This view was reflected in the interview with a local authority advisor for the school who had been newly appointed as deputy principal (Appendix 8 data 5). She expressed the view that some teachers who have been at the school for years may be ineffective and some teachers are reluctant to meet pupils' special educational needs. In summary senior staff in the school perceived some groups of students as particularly challenging and tended to locate behaviour difficulties within individual students or groups of students who were perceived as extremely challenging towards all staff. In contrast the behaviour consultant and newly appointed principal viewed behaviour difficulties in terms of poor classroom management.

Summary.

Senior staff at the school reported that they perceived behaviour difficulties as taking up a considerable amount of time with some groups of pupils as well as individuals who are particularly challenging. Low achieving boys and pupils with low intellectual ability who 'have written themselves off' experience behaviour difficulties. Relationships between pupils were also viewed as problematic.

Advisory staff in terms of the behaviour consultant and the newly appointed deputy principal who was an advisor in the local authority tended to perceive behaviour difficulties in terms of poor management by some staff.

The Senco perceived the present Year 7 as having particularly poor behaviour and suggested that the researcher observe the lessons of a Year 7 group throughout the course of a school day.

6.4 What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms of Year 7 pupils?

The key link professional for the researcher (Senco) identified the new Year 7 cohort as being

'the weakest year that I can recollect..... and behaviour is particularly poor in the new Year 7' (data 2).

It was agreed that the researcher would carry out classroom observations of a Year 7 group seen by the Senco as particularly difficult.

The recording schedule contained the following headings – observer effects; general classroom issues such as rules displayed, seating arrangements and general appearance; lesson delivery; teacher management in terms of positive, negative and directive; teacher/pupil behaviour. Additional sections were added to the observation schedule for recording discussion and feedback with teaching staff to provide an opportunities for the

observer to feed back on the observation and the teacher to express his /her views on the lesson.

Classroom observations were carried out by following one Year 7 group throughout a school day as part of action research cycle 2. The lessons observed (Appendix 11 data 7) were Humanities, Technology, English, Science and Physical Education.

Data from the first series of classroom observations during action research cycle 2. (Appendix 11, data 7). Observer effects were noted when one teacher told the class that the researcher was present to learn from them and watch them learn and introduced me to the class (data 7, lesson 1), otherwise the class appeared not to pay any attention to the researcher. At the beginning of lessons 3,4 and 5 the researcher spoke briefly with the teacher and sat on a vacant seat in the class and was largely ignored by the pupils and staff. In lesson 4 the teacher said that he would not use 'the ruler because we have a visitor' though he did on one occasion by crashing it down on the table with no visible effect on the pupils.

During observation of lesson 1 in terms of lesson delivery, tasks were explained clearly, pupils were involved in discussions, the newly qualified teacher was enthusiastic and encouraging, she made jokes, rewards were given out in terms of commendations and sweets (appendix 11, data 7, lesson 1). There were 22 pupils in the class, all pupils and the teacher appeared to enjoy the lesson and pupils willingly engaged in learning tasks. One pupil was given work to sit in a separate room at the beginning of the lesson (this same pupil was removed from lesson 4 by senior management following a request from the teacher). Following the observation the teacher reported that the class had been a 'nightmare' until she had identified ground rules with them ' don't get out of seat, don't shout out' and boundaries on behaviour had been made clear and firm.

During observation of the computer technology lesson (lesson 2) all pupils focused willingly on the task of designing 3 dimensional letters of their name. A small number of pupils had difficulty sustaining their concentration for long periods of time. The teaching

assistant reported that one pupil has particular difficulty staying on task. During the interview following the observation the teacher reported that in his view the pupils' behaviour difficulties change in different lessons partly because they know that teachers have different expectations. Disruptive behaviour when it occurs was perceived as more extreme than in the past and Year 7 was perceived by the teacher as no more difficult than other years.

During observation of English, (lesson 3) there were 15 pupils who were sometimes very quiet and every so often the noise bubbled up with moaning, disputes and talking to neighbours. A small number of pupils (8 approximately) focused on the task the majority of the time while the remainder ignored teacher's requests and had difficulty focusing on the task (of reading aloud to the class). Boys appeared to have more difficulty engaging in the task than girls, many of whom read their parts from a book with meaningful intonation. The teacher appeared tense throughout the lesson, she used many positive strategies (such as talking in a pleasant voice and giving praise) and no negative strategies (such as reprimanding and using sarcasm). She came across as being unable to engage the pupils' motivation and attention on directed tasks. During the interview following the observation the teacher reported that next week she may fail Ofsted because of this class.

During the observation of lesson 4 there was a graduate trainee teacher of Science who started the lesson with negative comments in a loud aggressive voice and tended to shout throughout the lesson. He used both positive and negative management strategies in approximately equal amounts and the pupils were largely quiet and appeared to be attentive in terms of sitting and facing the front of the class. On one occasion the teacher asked for support from senior staff, the pupil was removed from the class, she was heard being yelled at, her parents were contacted by telephone and she returned in tears. The pupils appeared to be intimidated into focusing on learning tasks, teaching a lesson came across as a war which needed to be won and during the interview after the classroom observation the teacher described the group to the researcher as 'one of the worst bunches.'

In lesson 5 the researcher observed a PE lesson. There were 20 pupils with different levels of involvement in a rounders game out on the school field on a sunny day. Observer effects were noted in terms of pupils who were not wearing PE kit approached the observer to talk about the school. The observer asked the pupils to follow the teacher's instructions. Generally there appeared to be a low level of pupil motivation to focus on the game. The teacher gave clear instructions, she did not use pupils' names or appear to connect in a personal way with the pupils.

The results of the observations were fed back and copies of the data were made available to the key link professional during a meeting which is described in this Results chapter under key issue 6 *Did the research influence school practices and views?*

Conclusions from the first series of classroom observations of Year 7 pupils.

In general throughout the lesson observations the general classroom appearance varied from shabby and untidy (lesson 1) to neat and well presented. (lesson 3). All teachers (including the science teacher) were observed to use positive strategies (speaking in quiet voices to the children, expressing warmth and reinforcing learning focused behaviour) as well as negative management strategies (sarcasm, shouting, criticism) though there were marked differences in the levels used – in lesson 1 the teacher was observed to use negative strategies on one occasion, in science lesson 4 the teacher used positive and negative strategies throughout the lesson.

Both intimidation as observed in for example, the science lesson and positive teaching strategies as observed in for example, the Humanities lesson appeared to promote learning focused behaviour. Pupils' behaviour was observed to vary considerably across different subject areas and teaching styles. The use of computer technology appeared to promote pupil motivation for focusing on classroom tasks.

Teacher/ pupil behaviour was observed as being most different in lessons 1 and 3. In lesson 1 the class (22 pupils) appeared to be work focussed but in English (lesson 3)

many of the pupils had difficulties staying on task and were observed by the researcher as appearing to behave in ways that disrupted their own and other pupils' learning. This suggested to the researcher that there were other factors in the learning situations which may be more influential, on pupils' learning, than classroom displays and number of pupils present. Pupils appeared to the observer to be particularly focused on the teacher's presentation and lesson content during the Humanities lesson (lesson 1).

The results of the classrooms observations on the nature of behaviour difficulties of one Year 7 group suggested to the researcher that there appeared to be key features in the Humanities lesson which promoted Year 7 pupils' attention on the lesson content. The researcher was unclear whether an atypical lesson had been observed or specific events prior to the lesson had been influential such as a 'pep talk' from a senior teacher. The classroom of the Humanities lesson appeared to the researcher to be unattractive and untidy suggesting that the physical learning environment was unlikely to promote pupil motivation.

The series of five classroom observations of Year 7 pupils suggested that pupil behaviour can be influenced by the pupil, their peers and the teaching environment as well as family factors (e.g. telephone call to the parent). The observations did not support the reported perceptions of senior staff that there is a hard core of pupils who challenge all teachers and behaviour is particularly poor in the new Year 7.

The researcher was not quite clear why the class of Year 7 pupils in lesson 1 (where there were more pupils in shabbier surroundings) appeared considerably more work focused than in lesson 3. The researcher was unable to identify influences on the positive behaviour of pupils in the Humanities lesson compared with the English lesson in terms of difference in class size, physical characteristics of the classrooms, lesson content or the teachers' gender (both were female). The observed differences in pupils' behaviour during the Humanities and English lessons may have been due to a variety of factors including chance circumstances on the day of the observations, variation in the mix of pupils or an erroneous impression gained by the researcher. Though the classroom

observations confirmed the findings of previous research that behaviour difficulties are influenced by situational factors the researcher had not anticipated finding evidence of what appeared to the researcher as being markedly different behaviour of Year 7 pupils during classroom observations of a Humanities and English lesson.

The observations, carried out in a single day, found observed differences in classroom behaviour of a Year 7 group in five subject areas. From the observations it was not possible to measure or take account of influential factors prior to the classroom observations such as the path of the relationship between the teacher and the class group. The two female teachers of lessons 1 and 3 whose lessons were broadly similar in content (ie. talking and recording rather than physical exercise, scientific experiments or computer technology) and different in terms of pupils' behaviour, agreed through the key contact professional to the researcher carrying out more lesson observations of Year 7 students to investigate further what factors could influence behaviour in these two settings.

The researcher carried out further observations to investigate the nature of behaviour difficulties in the classrooms of the Humanities teacher, the Information Technology (IT) teacher and the English teacher (Appendix 13, data 9). The researcher wanted to observe the lesson of the IT teacher to find out if the pupils' behaviour differed from the behaviour observed during the previous observation of this lesson and also gain an opportunity to access the views of the teacher on school systems for managing behaviour. The researcher acknowledges that part of the lesson observation during IT was spent in discussion with the teacher which does not constitute a classroom observation reflecting the messy nature of action research in the ecological setting of the school.

During the first series of observations (data 7) pupils' behaviour appeared to be considerably more focussed on the curriculum in the Humanities lesson than the English lesson. The second series of classroom observation of Year 7 pupils aimed to provide further evidence on pupils' behaviour and investigate the nature of factors in the learning

environment which influence the pupils' behaviour in lessons on these two subject areas of the curriculum.

Further classroom observations in action research cycle 2.

Further classroom observations were carried out in English, Information Technology and Humanities in order to provide data which may enable the researcher to identify factors in the learning environment which increase or reduce pupils' behaviour difficulties (Appendix 13 data 9). Individuals have been recorded as 'teacher (T)' or 'pupil (P)' to maintain confidentiality. The additional classroom observations could contradict or confirm the data from the initial observations (Appendix 11, data 7).

No observer effects were noted in the second series of observations and the pupils appeared not to be aware of the presence of an observer though it is possible that teachers' management strategies may have been influenced by feedback to the subject teachers following the previous observations.

Lesson 1, Humanities took place in a dingy mobile as before, perhaps a little tidier and 23 pupils sat in rows. The topic was Islam, and with regard to lesson delivery playing cards were drawn on the board and pupils were asked them to put in order and then they were rubbed off to see if the pupils could remember them. The teacher linked this rote learning approach to learning the Koran by heart.

The teacher spoke to the class about her expectations of their behaviour before they came in. When they were settled in the class the teacher got out sweets and said they were there as rewards. Three commendations were promised by the teacher for putting cards in correct order. The teacher /pupils interactions included,

'Well done for getting your work' (to a child who was returning to the exclusion unit) 'We have to be really quiet because pupil has remembered, everyone. He's going for the three commendations. 2 right, he's on the way, 3 right'. Class in absolute quiet and concentration while pupil wrote on the board. 'Miss you're

putting him off now' Teacher smiled and quietened. Pupil –'What's this to do with Islam?'

Teacher 'you wait to see my connection.'

'Go pupil.'

Teacher joked about her poor drawing ability.

Teacher engaged pupils in lesson by using their names, she shared quite adult subtle humour with them.; she smiled and made good eye contact.

' A sweet for the person who finishes first. Give everyone a chance and then when everyone is finished you'll get this' (sweet).

'I can't believe how fast this lesson is going and you're all working so well'.

One negative comment was heard, 'you've got to stop talking to me as if you are the only person in the class'.

The teacher made a number of directive comments - (eg. 'you've got a minute left').

The lesson was conducted like a quiz game and appeared very much pupil focussed with opportunities for pupils to write on the board. The teacher asked for their knowledge and valued their contributions. She invited pupil participation and drew out information from them which led them onto further information. Learning came across as a collaborative process in which the teacher used humour (joking about her poor drawing ability) and allowing herself to be quietened to aid a pupil's concentration.

The teacher read from a worksheet about the Koran before distributing them and made clear what the task was. Pupils stayed in seats and focused on tasks. The teacher ignored some low level behaviour when one child repeatedly drummed on the desk with his fingers.

The teaching assistants (TAs) sat next to two children, one TA wrote for a pupil while he pretended his water bottle was a torpedo/ water fountain.

Limited time did not allow a discussion with the Humanities teacher following the observation and so another time was agreed to feedback the results of the observation and gather the teacher's views.

During classroom observation of Year 7 pupils in the IT (Appendix 13, data 9, lesson 2) the task was explained clearly by the teacher and the pupils were largely focused on the task. This enabled the teacher to report his views to the researcher on the school's disciplinary procedures during the classroom observation. The data from the discussion with the teacher is considered in the Discussion chapter on the whole school behaviour policy.

During the observation of English (Appendix 13, data 9, lesson 3) there were 19 pupils grouped around tables. With regard to lesson delivery the teacher had considerable difficulty, at the beginning of the lesson, engaging the attention of the whole class to explain a task on the use of apostrophes. At any one moment there was nearly always some off task behaviour, some groups or individuals who were sitting and listening did not have this publicly recognised /reinforced by the teacher.

With regard to teacher management she occasionally used pupil names, she went round with stickers, some pupils appeared to tolerate it rather than value it, other pupils showed enthusiasm. The teacher made no negative comments and she constantly asked the pupils to be quiet, she did not become angry at being ignored by many of them, and repeatedly said 'ssshhh'.

With regard to pupil behaviour some pupils focused on task for short periods. 4 pupils moved around the class at their own volition, some pupils made noises and messed around, some pupils sat unacknowledged with their hands up. Boy walked out of class and then came back to the door and made comments. Paper was flicked across the room, 3 children stood by the windows, knocked on glass and made comments.

Pupils took parts and turns in reading from James and the Giant Peach. Pupils in groups focused mainly on each other exchanging comments and they played with

water bottles, swung on back legs of chairs, grinned at each other across the classroom, one child went over and drummed their fingers on the glass to attract the attention of someone they had seen on the playground.

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher showed a video of James and the Giant Peach and after a couple of minutes pupils settled and watched the video in silent concentration, one asked during the silence of the engrossed pupils ‘are we allowed to watch at lunch?’

In general the class seemed a little more curriculum focussed than on the previous observation (data 7). When the teacher was asked for her views she reported ‘the group have been a lot better, praise and stickers seem to really work with them’.

Additional thoughts of the researcher were that videos could be used more as a valued reward, pupils seem to assume that the way they behaved was perfectly acceptable and appeared not to be guided by any classroom rules. These ideas were discussed with the English teacher after the lesson. The English teacher invited the researcher to observe her next lesson with another group of Year 7 pupils who she perceived as particularly problematic.

The English teacher invited the researcher to observe her next lesson (Appendix 11, data 9, lesson 4) which was also with a Year 7 group of pupils. In lesson 4 (English with the same teacher) there were 19 Year 7 pupils at the beginning of the lesson, and there were two doors in the class, one went to a stock room leading to a further room and one to an outside corridor.

The teacher spent considerable time saying ‘Year 7 sssshhhhh’ many pupils ignored her and focussed on playing around and amusing each other. The teacher appeared overwhelmed by the large proportion of pupils displaying off task behaviour – noises, comments, movement around the room. She continued to make a number of positive comments with little effect e.g. ‘Why don’t you come and sit there, thank you pupil that’s very nice of you’, the boy sat down and threw a pen behind him.

The teacher praised and spoke to pupils politely and there were very few negative comments which may have been influenced by the presence of an observer.

The teacher commented 'People are wasting time, stop throwing things, those people who are working put their hand up.'

2 boys came in late without being asked for, or giving, an explanation

3 boys on a table to my right sat quietly attending to T without an acknowledgement

2 pupils took it upon themselves to leave the room but were stopped by TA and T

Pupils moved around the room at will

5 pupils walking around the room

7 pupils walking around the room

pen was thrown

water bottles beaten on sides of tables

6 pupils at one point left the classroom apparently of their own volition

At one table a boy and girl were taking turns kicking each other under the table, the girl gave a loud scream and there was a sudden silence followed by a more calm atmosphere for several minutes.

One pupil said 'run out J run.'

Another pupil with paper dart said 'aim, fire.'

Pupils continued coming in and out of the room.

3 pupils who were behaving badly suddenly got down to some work.

2 pupils re-entered the class followed by TA.

1 boy sat appropriately.

1 boy used mobile phone.

(A senior staff member entered the room requested by the teacher through a TA, several children said 'Oh MissIts Miss' Low level disruption

continued..... Teacher -'Some people have done their work' – and named pupils.

Class may have quietened slightly with the senior teacher's presence, she slipped in seamlessly, did not have a big input and slipped out quietly having moved around the room and spoken to some of the children. Her behaviour contrasted

strongly with the senior member of staff called in by the science teacher (Appendix 11 data 7, lesson 4).

Pupil swung on chair and scraped ruler on the table.

At one point a pupil said 'its gone all quiet' in a rather worried voice.

The teacher said 'turn to page 22, can we get on with it now, we need to listen to the person reading.'

(some children read out as requested and ignored silly comments of others)

TA took 3 pupils out, 16 were now in the room at this point.

Continued noise, cracking of plastic water bottles, sneaking over and picking up other pupils' water bottles. The teacher wrote the names of 9 students on the board.

'Hopefully in a minute I will be able to put more names on the board' (sarcasm?).

The teacher asked a pupil to move and he refused to do so, TA moved his books and bag but pupil still refused to move and did not appear to experience any negative consequences.

Pupil prepared a paper aeroplane, almost threw it, decided not to, kept it under the table, took it out, said 'test flight' and threw to nearest corner of the room, retrieved it. Table with 3 pupils threw books across the table at each other, focussed back on the work. Boy took out a paper aeroplane and swung on the back of his chair. Another boy made a paper aeroplane.

The end of lesson bell rang and 3 boys who stayed out of the lesson with the TA came to the classroom windows, shouted, banged on the windows, tried to pull open the catch on the windows and appeared to think it was all hugely entertaining.

The teacher locked the extra door to the stock room and she called out pupils by name for sitting sensibly and many were given a sweet as they left the classroom. Children outside the window were joined by other children from different classes who stood at the windows, banged on the glass with their hands, yelled comments. Children inside became increasingly agitated. Eventually other staff came and discouraged children from banging on the classroom windows but with limited lasting effect.

Some children continued to stay behind, eventually each child stayed quiet long enough to be called out to go for lunch.

With regard to the teacher's expressed views the teacher had invited me to observe and said they were her most difficult class and this kind of lesson occurs several times a week.

The researcher asked if she could get them to line up and enter in an orderly fashion as problems started at the beginning, she said that some line up and the others just stay outside and continue to mess around. We discussed developing a set of rules with the class and ways of reinforcing pupils positive behaviour when they were focused on task. The pupils who read aloud could have benefited from more support and reinforcement from the teacher. When the researcher asked about the behaviour policy the teacher said 'it is no longer operating'.

The researcher's additional thoughts were the use of water bottles could be something they earn, as part of a whole school strategy. No clear sanctions or rewards were observed in lesson 4, pupils seemed to behave in a silly way and calm themselves prior to total disruption rather than directly respond to the teacher's requests for quiet. There was no single source of disruption observed in the class and it was most unhelpful to have pupils who had been sent out, banging on the windows at the end. The teacher was unable to engage the attention of the class, she stayed amazingly calm, appeared resilient and avoided becoming a target for pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Other professionals' views on the classroom observation data.

In order to aim to reduce any possible bias in the interpretation of the data collected through observations, two teachers and three educational psychologists (EPs) were invited to read the observation data and comment on the data collected as well as the observation schedule used.

One EP commented that comparison of lessons was difficult due to the wide ranging nature of the data collected for each lesson. All professionals commented on the ability of the Humanities teacher to engage the pupils in the lesson (e.g. good productive teacher/pupil relationship) and the difficulties experienced by the English teacher in data collections 5 and 8 (e.g. the teacher did not take charge of the class at the outset, lack of incentives for positive behaviour and disincentives for negative behaviour). One teacher questioned the curriculum relevance of showing a video in data 9, lesson 3 and suggested that it was simply used as a behaviour management strategy. On the other hand video could be used as a springboard for discussion about characterisation and interpretation. The science teacher's (data 7 lesson 4) lack of time or interest in the observer seemed to be modelled in his lack of time or interest for the children. The use of sweets as a reward by some teachers is highly questionable for physical health reasons (e.g. tooth decay and potentially increased energy levels for next lesson).

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Conclusions from the second series of observations of Year 7 pupils during English and Humanities.

These observations confirmed the findings of the previous observations in terms of the contrasting approaches of the two teachers and the marked difference of pupils' behaviour and their observed reluctance or keenness to engage in the learning tasks.

Based on classroom observations in which the behaviour of pupils varied considerably in different lessons, it appeared to the researcher that during the observations in the Humanities lesson, the Year 7 pupils responded well to feeling valued by the teacher, being shown palpable rewards at the beginning of the lesson, taking an active part in the lesson by trying to remember the playing cards and writing them on the board. The Humanities teacher used a variety of methods to entertain pupils by engaging them in the curriculum whereas the pupils in the English lessons observed tended to be entertained by interacting with each other.

As part of action research cycle 2, these observations were followed by semi-structured interviews with the individual teachers of Humanities and English (data 10, 11, 13) to provide detailed feedback on the observation data and gather further information on the teacher's perspective of the classes observed.

The results of the observations were discussed with the Senco in detail and raw data was provided without naming individual teachers. She appeared keen to hear the results but she was unwilling or unable to comment on the findings preferring to focus on five case histories of pupils who were experiencing a range of difficulties in the school. The descriptions focussed on individual characteristics of the pupils – ‘on medication for ADHD, while play fighting hit another child, sexualised behaviour, poor handwriting’.

6.5 Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties?

Perceptions of senior staff were gathered from interview data 1, 2 and 3 during action research cycle 1. Evidence of pupils' behaviour was collected from two series of classroom observations – data 7 and data 9 during action research cycle 2.

During semi-structured interviews with senior staff, the deputy principal reported that some groups of pupils are particularly challenging for teachers (data 1) and the Senco wanted the researcher to focus on Year 7 groups (data 3).

Considerable differences in the behaviour of Year 7 pupils were observed in different lessons during action research cycle 2 involving classroom observations. Year 7 pupils were observed to be particularly responsive to activities involving the use of computers and video. They also appeared to be influenced to a considerable degree by the teaching strategies used in different lessons. In the English lessons the researcher observed Year 7 pupils' behaviour difficulties in terms of - exchanging comments, playing with water bottles, swinging on back legs of chairs, throwing paper aeroplanes, moving around the class. Whereas in the Humanities lessons Year 7 pupils were observed to have a tendency to focus on the curriculum task presented by the teacher and appeared to

respond to the classroom environment in terms of feeling valued, being entertained and having a clear set of classroom rules.

It is possible that the classroom observations took place on a day when the most disruptive students were excluded from the class and therefore the observer erroneously concluded that pupils' behaviour was markedly influenced by situational factors in the classroom rather than personal characteristics of individual pupils. The researcher observed one Year 7 group throughout the lessons in the course of one school day, and on another school day observed the same group in lessons 1, 2 and 3. Then following an invitation by the English teacher, the researcher observed another Year 7 group during lesson 4. The number of pupils in each lesson varied and formal comparison of the behaviour of individual pupils in different lessons was not part of the research. The classroom observation schedule allowed flexibility for the researcher to focus on a range of factors in the classroom. The behaviour of Year 7 pupils was observed to be influenced by contextual factors in terms of the availability of computer technology, video and the learning environment created by the teacher.

In contrast to environmental factors in pupils' behaviour difficulties, evidence of within child behaviour difficulties can be considered with regard to one pupil who was excluded from the lesson due to behaviour difficulties. The pupil collected her work from the Humanities classroom and worked in a separate room for lesson 1 but not for lesson 3. It could be argued that she could be seen as primarily a cause of disrupting the learning in the class when she was present, this could be interpreted as evidence for a within child model of behaviour difficulties. However the observed behaviour of this pupil when she collected her work in lesson 1 was calm and accepting of teacher's requests suggesting that this pupil's behaviour varied in different situations though she was perceived as difficult by teachers in lessons 1, 3 and 4 as well as being observed to be reluctant to focus on learning tasks. It is possible that this pupil's behaviour difficulties were triggered by the presence of other pupils and the authority of a teacher. Situational factors such as working in isolation from her peers and under supervision of teaching staff with threats of exclusion may have reduced the pupil's behaviour difficulties.

The data from the second series of classroom observations (data 9) confirmed that pupils' behaviour appeared to be influenced by contextual factors such as the way teachers present the tasks, the use of technology in the classroom, having an agreed set of classroom rules and whether pupils feel valued. The class groups of Year 7 pupils who were perceived by the Senco as particularly challenging were not observed to have behaviour difficulties during classroom observations of all lessons throughout the whole lesson.

6.6 What classroom strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?

Evidence of unsuccessful classroom strategies was gathered from interview data 2 and classroom observations (data collections 7 and 9). If teachers do not differentiate curriculum tasks then pupils may be reluctant to focus on the curriculum and experience behaviour difficulties. The Senco reported in data 2

‘So it is very often in the bottom groups where the behaviour is worse and of course within class if tasks aren't more differentiated, if they can't do the work then they do tend to behave poorly.’

Observation of the strategies used by the English teacher and the behaviour of Year 7 pupils in her lessons suggested that the strategies she used were unsuccessful in promoting pupils' learning. During the classroom observations the English teacher spoke to the class in a calm and friendly manner, often making requests which appeared reasonable to the observer. Very few critical or hostile comments were heard. The teacher's directions were clear and easy for the pupils to follow. However the pupils in the majority of her lessons tended to focus on disputes and interpersonal relationships between the pupils with only a minority of pupils focussing on the curriculum throughout the lesson except when a video was shown. The pupils appeared to the observer, to accept their off task behaviour as normal and one of the pupils expressed concern when the class became quiet. The researcher observed that the teacher employed many positive strategies in trying to focus pupils on the curriculum but lacked effective negative

strategies and sanctions as well as lacking valued rewards to engage pupils in curriculum tasks. There appeared to be a lack of emotional investment and engagement between the English teacher and the classes of Year 7 pupils was observed. The pupils tended to focus on their relationships and interactions with each other rather than attend to the teacher and focus on the curriculum.

Similarly in the PE lesson of data 7, the teacher and pupils did not appear to have an emotional link which resulted in the pupils being interested in listening to the teacher's directions. The PE lesson observed was the last lesson on a Friday and the teacher did not address the pupils by their individual names. Both these factors could have contributed to the limited nature of the teacher/ pupil relationship. The PE teacher gave clear instructions to the pupils but had not appeared to bond with them in a personal relationship. After the observation the PE teacher reported 'they are a very difficult group who are always having petty disagreements among themselves and asking me to sort them out'.

Identifying certain pupils as having emotional and behavioural difficulties was also reported by one teacher as unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks. The Humanities teacher reported during semi-structured interview (data 10)

'I just think that there are kids in this school that you can work with, but they have been written off because they have gone too far down the negative path of labelling and that.'

Interview data 2 with the Senco suggested that if a teacher is late for a lesson the pupils are likely to show more behaviour problems. Senco:

'if you don't know the layout of the school you are likely to be late going from one lesson to another. That's a recipe for a hard lesson. You have got 30 kids standing outside a room for ten minutes bubbling up nicely, when the teacher does arrive you can imagine what he has to deal with.'

In summary the following factors were observed to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks – the use of positive strategies such as speaking to the class in a calm and friendly manner without effective use of rewards and sanctions; lack of emotional investment and engagement between the teacher and the pupils as observed in the English and PE lessons.

The following factors were reported by staff as being unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks – lack of differentiated work, labelling pupils as having emotional and behaviour difficulties and lessons not starting on time. During classroom observations pupils not focusing on curriculum tasks appeared to be closely linked with pupils experiencing behaviour problems.

6.7 What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?

Data on what strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties were gathered from three action research cycles using interviews with senior staff (data 2), classroom observations (data 7 and 9), interviews with teachers (data 10) and SEN focus groups (data 14 and 16) which were set up to encourage staff to share good practice and information. Content analysis was used to examine the content of the data from the action research cycles and develop categories or themes of successful strategies or approaches which appear to help reduce or overcome pupils' behaviour difficulties.

The themes that emerged from content analysis were - access to the curriculum, preparing the pupils for learning, behaviour support staff, additional resource base, consistency, agreeing a set of rules, firm boundaries, clear guidelines, building relationships, the use of technology in the classroom (video and computers) and finally the use of rewards.

Access to the curriculum.

Evidence was taken from three action research cycles which included interviews with staff, classroom observations and SEN focus groups.

Data 2. Senco on underachieving boys:

‘but its things like setting short term targets, having a larger number of short, focused activities rather than asking them to do one thing throughout the whole lesson. Giving lots of feedback.’

Data 7. During classroom observation of the Humanities lesson, the teacher provided pupils with opportunities to participate in the lesson by trying to remember all the playing cards and drawing on the board while the rest of the class attended with interest.

SEN focus group, data 14.

provide an accessible activity that they can start straight away at the beginning of the lesson, using interactive whiteboards (not all classrooms have these), giving them anagrams on words from the subject area, doing a quiz.

SEN focus group, data 16.

Pupils can respond to well-planned lessons with a variety of tasks. The lessons can be broken up into three sessions, each session with a different activity.

Teachers who pitch the lesson appropriately at the right level for the students and differentiate the subject matter for pupils can help to reduce behaviour difficulties.

Preparing the pupils for learning.

Staff expressed mixed views about successful ways of preparing pupils at the beginning of a lesson -

Data 2. Senco:

‘Start with the Head of Year, he wants the children to come to the class, stand behind their desks and sit down when they are told to sit down and already two terms in, these groups have totally written the agenda in their own way. Get that

group control even at the beginning of the lesson and the lesson goes downhill from there sometimes.'

Data 10. 'Avoid allowing pupils to sit with their friends.'

Data 9 lesson 4. Feedback and discussion following classroom observations, teacher's expressed views: Researcher asked if the teacher could get them to line up and enter in an orderly fashion as problems started at the beginning, she said that some line up and the others just stay outside and continue to mess around.

Data 10, interview with teacher: the Humanities teacher reported that pupils line up outside and she talked to them before they came in so that they were prepared for the lesson.

SEN focus group data 14

'I have a problem slightly because I like to start my lesson with everyone standing behind their chairs and everyone being quiet, so you have got to marry the two. Is it worth not worrying about having them standing behind their chairs but actually getting them in, getting them quiet and getting them settled first, and actually giving them something to do. Perhaps that is what you need to be giving.'

SEN focus group data 14. Settling pupils down at beginning of lesson- getting pupils to stand behind their chairs, try to avoid starting with a confrontation which leads to a negative atmosphere, greeting them by name as they enter, provide an accessible activity that they can start straight away eg. Using interactive whiteboards (not all classrooms have these), giving them anagrams on words from the subject area, doing a quiz.

Different views were expressed by teachers, one teacher finds lining pupils up outside at the beginning of the lesson and talking to them is a successful way of preparing the pupils for the lesson and another teacher views this strategy as unsuccessful in reducing behaviour difficulties.

Behaviour support staff.

Staff reported that school staff were in favour of using trained teaching assistants as behaviour support staff and they were readily available when the problems occurred -

Data 3 Senco:

‘You can't do the job if you don't know the school, you don't know the teachers and you don't know the children and a problem crops up on Monday afternoon and I am not back in until the next Monday morning. So what we spent the time on was skilling up the working . . . for these people who were already in school as teaching assistants and they formed a behaviour team. So they are not qualified teachers and they have done some short courses but they haven't got psychology degrees or anything like that. They are just very good.’

One teacher explained that teaching assistants need to be used effectively and close communication between teachers and teaching assistants was desirable. The teacher perceived that difficult children respond well to adult attention and teaching assistants played a key role in identifying areas of difficulty in the classroom and working closely with the class teacher. Pupils' desire for attention was seen as a key factor in behaviour difficulties.

Data 10 Teacher:

‘I am quite happy for them to help me with my classroom management, if they see things, to deal with it, it comes through me anyway eventually so if there is a particular problem they will come up to me after the lesson and say I had this problem with this area. At the next lesson I deal with it. So they are bringing it to my attention and they are also going round the difficult kids and giving them the attention they need because most of it is attention oriented.’

The role of an additional resource base for pupils with difficulties.

Data were gathered from an interview with Senco and a focus group

Data 3 Senco:

‘We have been running a blue room which is a room that children can be referred to if their behaviour is consistently bad . . . a detention . . . and they go there for a day to be bored silly just sitting in a little booth and just copying out. Some children don't like it and don't go back but a lot of children actually like to go in there. . . . dead activity’

Researcher: 'We had a similar sort of system . . . they have what they call a Student Support Centre'.

Senco 'Yes, that's what we are calling ours'.

Researcher: 'They have a really nice kitchen and toilet facilities and kids just love the toilet facilities there. Nice loo paper, nice towels. They see things like that and kids love being there. They make toast . . . discuss behaviour management programmes. An opportunity to develop some social relationships for them.'

Focus group data 16 . Head of Learning Support:

'It depends why they are there. What has happened is that extra resource base has become a doss area for kids who don't want to work. If kids have got family problems and they need a one to one, they are very upset about something, you take them in, a one to one in the mentoring room and they have a cup of tea and you sit down nicely with them. However, if you are out of maths because you have been a pain in the butt for the last half a term, or whatever it is, you should be sitting silently working.'

A school with an additional resource base with pleasant surroundings for pupils who are in distress and are likely to benefit from individual adult attention was perceived by staff as beneficial. One member of staff acknowledged that there is a danger that pupils could display behaviour difficulties in order to access the pleasant surroundings of the resource base.

Consistency.

Teachers expressed concerns regarding the inconsistent management of pupils' behaviour by school staff on a number of occasions (data 1, 2, 3, 14 and 16).

Data 1 Deputy Principal:

'Consistency is our biggest problem'.

Data 2 Senco:

'I go into some classes where everything is absolutely quiet and the teacher is in total control but then you ask yourself is there much interaction going on, the learning is very formal in that class. And then you go to other classes and its

chaos. The children are out of their seats and you ask yourself, can learning take place when there is so much going on in the class, possibly, I don't know, but then there is a whole continuum across the school.'

Data 3 Senco:

'Consistency and that's the old cherry isn't it. How do you know what your methods are and compare them to any other teacher.'

Data 16 Focus group:

'That's where you need everybody reinforcing each other and you need all the teachers in the school to know that that child should be in detention when they are actually on the playground and the people on duty say, you are down here for a detention, what are you doing up here. That's when you want the consistency, isn't it.'

'Consistency - everyone should be consistent in their approach. Consistency with behaviour clear expectations from students and consistent, persistent correction/reward. Teachers actively backing up TAs/all staff when disciplining. Consistency in dealing with behaviour. Consistency with behaviour treatment - all should treat the bad behaviour the same way.'

'This site is so huge. Yes, that would be brilliant if we could do that.'

Staff reported the need for consistency in managing pupils behaviour as a key factor in pupils' behaviour difficulties but there did not appear to be a planned strategy for achieving staff consistency across the school.

Agreeing a set of rules with the pupils.

The teacher of Humanities was interviewed in an attempt by the researcher to understand the process by which she had achieved the observed behaviour in two Humanities lessons of Year 7 pupils in which they were task focussed and no behaviour difficulties were observed by the researcher. The data is quoted extensively because it gives an indication of the importance of agreeing a set of rules as well as describing the process by which the rules were agreed with the class.

Data 10 interview with teacher:

‘I would have to say that that group is the one that I enjoy teaching the most in the school now, but when I first started I was absolutely lost to know what to do, how to cope with them, because when they first came in they would be rolling all over the floor, they would be swearing, they would be fighting and because I am new to the schoolso I went to my head of department and I said to him, "Look, I am really struggling with this class", (all the behaviour systems that they have here didn't work), "and I just don't know what to do). He said, "Just lay the laws down to them". So that was the help I got, it wasn't what rules or anything, so I thought, right - I am going to agree with this class what is acceptable in this lesson and what is not.’

‘So, what I did was, at the very beginning, I started putting (I know you said to me they were all very negative rules), but I started to put all the rules on the board that I considered to be acceptable for my classroom, and then I got them to agree that they were acceptable rules. Things like, they would not get out of their seat, they would not fight, they would not roll on the floor, they will not chew, and all that, and then for, it must have been three weeks, every single lesson. Three times a week, for about three weeks.’

‘The first couple of lessons it was a hard, hard way of getting through it. I would write them up, we would go through them one by one, the whole class would agree, yes, that is acceptable. And things like chewing, I would get to the chewing one - "No you are not going to chew in my lesson" and they would all say, yes, so I said, "Right, everyone who's chewing now get up and put it in the bin". First of all they didn't do it, but now they do it.’

‘To begin with I had the rules up on the board, and then I asked them if there was any more. Then I would write the rules up when they were in the classroom and they would tell me what I was writing up, so they were already agreed rules but they were telling me to identify the fact that they knew what they were.

Then I would say, "What rule have I missed off here?" and then they would say, "The chewing", or "Don't get out your seat", "Put your hand up", and then obviously once I put them up on the board, then when they started to step out of line I issued a warning straight away and I would point to the rule, "You have just

broken this rule". "That means now you are on a formal warning." "Oh, you have just broken it again. That means another one." So I take them up the ladder, and particularly difficult students within the first couple of lessons were out of my lesson.'

Firm boundaries.

The recommendation of firm boundaries for reducing behaviour difficulties was gathered from interviews with teachers and an SEN focus group. One way teachers can help pupils understand that there are firm boundaries on their behaviour is for staff to ensure that when a pupil is given a sanction of some kind, the pupil actually experiences the sanction rather than succeeding in avoiding it.

Interview data 10 Teacher:

'I would ensure that they came for detentions. If they didn't turn up for my detentions, then they would go for a half an hour one with my head of department. So I followed the structure that way. I don't do this with every class. This is the only class that I do it with. I have other classes that don't need to have this sort of structure, because they respond to my instruction anyway.'

'I am a firm believer that children need to have boundaries. When they know what the boundaries are, then they don't step over them. If they don't know what the boundaries are . . .'

The desirability of teachers having firm boundaries was also mentioned during the SEN focus group data 16:

'If you don't behave, you have got a detention this afternoon. And the last teacher who teaches the group of kids, get out your planners please, thank you. Anybody that's plainly got a detention, they stay in that class. They don't go out, they stay there. They do their detention and at quarter past three they go home. All the other kids go home. It will make sure they have got their planners. If you don't have your planner then you stay anyway.'

Clear guidelines.

During an interview with one teacher it was suggested that a lack of clear guidelines has contributed to some pupils' behaviour difficulties.

Data 10 Teacher:

'I just think that there are kids in this school that you can work with, but they have been written off because they have gone too far down the negative path of labelling and that. I know people have put time with them, but because they have not had the clear guidelines in the first place, that's where they have lost.'

Building relationships with pupils.

Some teachers described how effectively talking with pupils and giving them attention contributes to building a positive relationship between the teacher and some of the more difficult pupils.

Data 10 Teacher:

'When they came in for a detention with me, rather than growling I would sit down and talk to them, so I had an individual conversation which I can't do in the lesson. So building up relationships in the detention time. One of the most difficult girls in the class, she has just come in now and had a chat with me, just before you got here.'

Teachers praising pupils could also be seen as contributing to building a positive relationship between the teacher and pupils.

Interview with teacher data 10:

'Attention. They absolutely love it. They like to feel special. If I go round to one of them and I say, "That looks really good" I will have about five or six of them saying, "Can you look at mine, does mine look good?" They crave that acceptance.'

Staff also mentioned that the more difficult pupils can respond better in one to one situations in which the pupil is given individual attention from the teacher. SEN focus group, data 14:

‘It is not possible to build a relationship with every student that you teach, pupils respond better 1:1, it is very few who continue to be abusive when they have been removed from the class and given individual attention, a sympathetic approach can provide students with an opportunity to talk about all sorts of problems outside school.’

The availability of separate resource rooms so that staff can meet with individual students was reported to be helpful. SEN focus group, data 16.

‘Opportunities for building relationships are also assisted by additional resource rooms so that staff can meet with pupils individually.’

The use of technology in the classroom (video and computers).

The use of technology in the classroom was observed to help reduce or overcome pupils’ behaviour difficulties. During English lesson 3 (data 9) the teacher was observed to have considerable difficulty engaging the attention of the whole class as some pupils made noises, flicked paper across the room and made comments to other pupils across the classroom. When a video of James and the Giant Peach was shown the Year 7 pupils gradually became quiet and the whole class watched the film in silent concentration. The Year 7 pupils in the IT lessons (lesson 2 in data 7 and 9) were observed to be largely task focused and the availability of computer technology may have contributed to the pupils’ ability to engage in curriculum tasks rather than difficult behaviour. In general pupils’ concentrated on tasks involving the use of computers throughout the lesson though a small number of pupils had difficulty staying on task for the whole lesson.

The use of rewards.

During interviews and SEN focus group meetings, teachers reported that rewards could or should be provided for pupils who behave well, as well as for pupils who experience behaviour difficulties. Some staff felt that it was unfair to well behaved pupils when rewards were provided for pupils with behaviour difficulties. Data 2 Senco:

‘There are people, though, who think that we should have an expectation that children will be well behaved in class and get on with their work because that's

what they are here for and that by rewarding naughty children for being good you are perhaps lowering the standards. Why not reward the kids who are doing well and trying hard instead of giving this privilege to children who are failing.'

Teachers also reported that rewards should vary according to the chronological age of the pupils. Older pupils who do not like being recognised for anything do not respond to stickers but may respond to a quiet word such as , "Here, I'm impressed", or "That's excellent" Data 10

'So the rewards that I actually give them, is having a quiet word with them when nobody's listening. I will say they much prefer just the praise side of it. You can't give them stickers.'

During the SEN focus group (data 14) staff described what they perceived as an effective reward system.

'Pupils behaving well should be noticed and rewarded with points, pupils achieving an agreed number of points should receive clearly defined rewards or prizes which are fairly immediate. Points could be given for effort, classwork and homework. Points could also be given for showing kindness and consideration towards others and settling down to work at the beginning of a lesson. Each pupils' number of points could be clearly accessible to them e.g. scores should be shown when pupils log on using a school computer. An agreed coding system could be used for adding comments to the points (7 out of 10 correct). Students with a high number of points could be publicly rewarded as an incentive to others. Rewards can also be a sweet given out at the end of the lesson and applauded by the class. Printed reward stickers. Long term rewards – trips to MacDonalds, pizza party.'

Technology was perceived by one teacher as helpful in rewarding pupils, as reported in an SEN focus group data 14 .

'Points reward system in which a central school data base is kept with the names of pupils and the number of points each one has achieved. The points can then be converted into rewards such as getting classroom equipment from the school

shop. The reward system should be meaningful to students and not be too complex.'

In summary data from all the action research cycles contributed to identifying what strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties. Successful practices and strategies were identified under the following headings - access to the curriculum, preparing the pupils for learning, behaviour support staff, additional resource base, consistency, agreeing a set of rules, firm boundaries, clear guidelines, building relationships, the use of technology in the classroom (video and computers) and finally the use of rewards.

6.8 How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?

It was hoped that the results of the research could be used to influence school practices and views as well as improve the educational experiences of both the teaching staff and the students through the process of data feedback to the participants and the researcher attempted to provide opportunities for discussion on the implications of the research (Thompson 2006). Prior to feedback the research data were depersonalised in terms of removing individuals' names and shared with the staff who had been the source of the data. The data was then shared with the key contact person for the school whose role included passing on the information to the school community. How research influenced school practices and views will be considered in terms of the data from the three action research cycles.

Action research cycle 1.

The perceptions of senior staff on the nature of behaviour difficulties were gathered during action research cycle 1 in which senior staff reported their views of behaviour difficulties in the school. An interview with the Key Stage 3 behaviour consultant regarding the action research project and the consultant's views on behaviour difficulties in the school was carried out (data 4). The consultant was critical of school staff and one particular teacher who did not act on the advice provided by the consultant who agreed with the researcher that when we give advice teachers may not act on it.

A semi-structured interview was carried out in which the researcher outlined the nature of the research project with a newly appointed deputy principal (data 5) and she reported her views of the nature of behaviour difficulties in the school. The newly appointed assistant principal listened with interest to the research project but rejected offers of collaborative working making it clear to the researcher that she perceived the school's difficulties with pupils' behaviour largely in terms of inadequacies of the teaching staff and she saw it as her job to sort these difficulties out.

It is possible that senior staff benefited from opportunities provided by the researcher, to reflect on their views of the nature of behaviour difficulties though there was no clear evidence that the opportunities to reflect on this issue influenced school practices and views.

Action research cycle 2.

How the research influenced school practices and views will be considered in terms of the data from action research cycle 2.

Feedback from the classroom observations was offered to individual teachers at the end of the classroom observation and copies of the completed schedules were made available to the link professional after names of individuals were removed from the observation schedule data. Interviews with the English and Humanities teachers were held to feedback on the classroom observations and detailed feedback was also provided for the key link professional who set up the classroom observations.

During two sessions of feedback on the classroom observations to the Senco who was the key link professional (data 8 and 12) the link professional appeared to listen with considerable interest but would not discuss the findings and avoided discussion by changing the subject to list characteristics of individual pupils who she wanted to refer for educational psychology assessment.

Following the classroom observations the researcher carried out further classroom observations during action research cycle 2 and detailed feedback was provided to the Humanities and English teachers on the classroom observations. Data 10 feedback to the Humanities teacher; in response to the feedback the teacher said ‘I think I would agree with that’ and described how difficult the class were when she first started and the process which she undertook to improve their behaviour. It is possible that the researcher’s positive views of the teacher’s classroom strategies provided encouragement for the Humanities teacher though there is no clear evidence that the research influenced her practices and views.

Feedback on the classroom observations was provided for the English teacher who exclaimed ‘But that’s exactly how it is’ indicating that the recorded observations of the English lesson were an accurate picture of the lessons but then added that she did not have that class anymore (data 18). The English teacher had become the Head of Learning Support and the key contact professional for the researcher. As part of her new role she will be observing good practice in classrooms and gathering ideas on improving pupils’ behaviour.

In summary there is no clear evidence from the data in action research cycle 2 that indicates that the research influenced school practices and teachers’ views.

Action research cycle 3.

Three SEN focus groups were held and the minutes of the focus groups were first circulated to staff who were present at the focus group and following their agreement, the minutes of the focus groups were circulated to all staff throughout the school using email communication. The researcher intended to influence school practices and views through the dissemination of the research data.

In general staff who were present at the first focus group (data 14) complained about senior management and the inadequacy of systems within the school for managing

pupils' behaviour difficulties. Furthermore staff expressed criticism of the pupils' difficulty in approaching learning tasks, inadequacy of school reward systems and senior management approaches to behaviour difficulties as well as being critical of the strategies suggested by the researcher. Appreciation of the focus group was expressed by one teacher in terms of an opportunity for stress release 'to be honest this is a stress release for me so I am happy' (to attend another forum).

After the first focus group the researcher observed a more positive demeanour in the focus group members which may have been influenced by the circulation of behaviour strategies taken from the audiotape recording of the focus group, (data 14). The researcher did not circulate a transcript of the meeting which would have included senior management being heavily criticised by focus group members. During the second and third focus groups staff were more positive and generated ideas on pupil management. The SENCo had also accessed funding for rewarding pupils.

During the second and third focus groups, staff shared practices that they perceived as helping to resolve pupils' behaviour difficulties (data 15 and 16). This suggests that staff adopted a more solution focused approach after the first focus group suggesting that the supportive format of the first focus group and the opportunity to offload negative views about the school may have had a positive influence on staff's ability and willingness to reflect on tackling behaviour difficulties.

During the development of SEN focus groups on three occasions of data collections (14, 15, 16) staff views of a predominantly within child view of behaviour difficulties, in terms of complaining about the unreasonable behaviour of individual pupils, developed into a more situational understanding in terms of suggesting classroom strategies to reduce or overcome pupils' behaviour difficulties. Two members of staff demonstrated understanding of behaviour difficulties beyond a within child view: a teacher described extreme erratic behaviour of a pupil, very disruptive in her lesson but added

'he will sit with the head of department.....he can be very polite on some days'.

A different teacher about another pupil,

‘he is in the army cadets so he must behave himself at some stage’.

‘The day I am working with them in science, I have got problems. Whether I do a practical, whether I do theory with them, it’s a problem. But then I say to them, right we have done that now, let’s do that work on a poster. And I have got a completely different group of kids. Immediately they can sit and draw little pictures and they can manage it. And they are in control of their work.’

There were indications of changes in staff perceptions regarding the nature of pupils’ behaviour difficulties – a within child view giving way to a more situational understanding of behaviour difficulties but this could have been due to a variety of factors in the school community including the influence of the new deputy principal.

Staff appeared to be receptive to situational solutions for pupils’ behaviour difficulties e.g. ‘there is an assertive discipline approach where you say to a child, the rule is you don’t throw paper on the floor. You have broken that rule. You chose to break that rule. Either pick it up or leave the classroom, and then you go away. You are giving them two options really and then you go away, you don’t get drawn into the argument. You come back and see if they have done that’.

During the focus groups, staff shared what they considered to be good practice:

‘I give them these (stickers) if they do get points, I do them at home but I do think it might be worth school producing some.’

At the end of action research cycle 3 feedback was provided for the key link professional on strategies and teaching practices which may help to reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties. It was difficult for the researcher to meet with the key contact person who appeared to avoid meeting with the researcher to receive feedback on the data gathered from the action research cycles on approaches which may help to reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties (appendix 21 data 17). Data on what strategies and teacher practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties were sent to the key contact professional in the school (appendix 22).

Summary

In general staff who were given feedback during semi-structured interviews listened with interest and appeared to agree that the data from the observations were an accurate reflection of the lessons in which they were observed. During the feedback interview with the English teacher (data 13) she exclaimed after the feedback 'but that's exactly how it is!' However the researcher did not gain a clear picture of whether the teachers' practice was informed by the research data. The researcher found that staff were reluctant to engage in a discussion on how their teaching practices could be improved following their understanding of the data on the classroom observations. The researcher described the data in a matter of fact way and did not collude with staff in identifying behaviour problems as being caused by characteristics within individual pupils. How individuals appear or what is said during interviews may not be an accurate reflection of views or practices following the interview. Evaluation of the research was therefore limited to the teachers' responses to the research data and the impressions gained by the researcher during the feedback.

In addition the action research was not the only initiative being carried out in the school community, there were staff meetings on 'behaviour for learning', developments on the reward system of points and training on promoting positive behaviour provided by two primary health care workers, a newly appointed deputy principal and principal as well as the role of the key stage 3 behaviour consultant in the school.

Staff evaluation of the action research cycles was based on responses from staff during feedback of the research findings, comments by staff and informal impressions gained by the researcher. It was not possible for the researcher to formally evaluate and monitor changes in Year 7 pupils' behaviour in subject areas throughout the school. Informal observation which may suggest positive changes in teachers' behaviour were as follows: When the English teacher did not attend a meeting with the researcher who went to find her and observed her taking a quiet and attentive Year 7 class.

Some staff voluntarily attended focus group meetings after school and they continued to attend after the end of the third action research cycle. In addition to many negative comments about the school management and systems in place some staff made positive comments about attending the SEN focus groups.

The use of a video observed during an English lesson (data 7) had a dramatic effect on pupils' concentration on task, gradually halted interactions between pupils and disruptive behaviour in the classroom which had distracted the pupils from attending to the teacher. This data from the classroom observation was feedback to the English teacher. During routine EP visits to the school the English teacher was informally observed to increasingly use videos in her lessons. This unsystematic feedback was based on the researcher's subjective impression and the use of video to keep the pupils quiet is unlikely to promote curriculum learning in terms of understanding lesson content, expressing ideas and considering alternative interpretations or building the relationships between the teacher and pupils. However videos could perhaps be useful as an effective learning tool for promoting pupils' attention on curriculum tasks and reducing behaviour difficulties.

In summary the evidence of how much the school benefited from the action research is somewhat limited, as it was not possible to evaluate changes in the school following the action research cycles or isolate causal effects on teaching practices of initiatives within the school and teachers were reluctant to reflect on the data, with the researcher, on how they could improve teaching practices. The action research project was one of many initiatives and though the results of the action research were communicated to all members of school staff via email through the key link professional, not all members of staff were engaged in the first and second action research cycles and not all staff members chose to attend the SEN focus groups.

Informal impressions gained by the researcher suggested an increase in the use of information technology, an improved use of the on site resource reducing the incentive for pupils to exhibit behaviour problems in order to be able to work outside the classroom

and improved classroom management by the English teacher which promoted pupils' ability to focus on tasks. These observed 'improvements' may only have occurred during the researcher's involvement with the school and are likely to have been influenced by many factors or initiatives, one of which, may have been the data from the action research project.

6.9 Summary

Data from three action research cycles have been considered in terms of evidence for six research questions which were:

- 1. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff?*
- 2. What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms of Year 7 pupils?*
- 3. Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties?*
- 5. What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?*
- 6. How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?*

These research questions as well as the key issues outlined in chapter 5 'Key issues for research', will now be considered in the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 7

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Gates et al's (2000) definition of behavioural distress for the terms emotional behavioural difficulties and behaviour difficulties has been used in this research project. Behaviour is viewed as referring to the total response of a person to a situation that s/he faces including the psychological and physiological elements. The expressions of these elements when perceived by the self and/or others as threatening, frightening, destructive or self destructive are described as behavioural distress. This definition of behaviour difficulties accepts that people differ in their views of what is perceived as behaviour difficulties.

The initial research question 'What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?' was revised following practice as an educational psychologist and a review of the literature on research and methodology. Twelve key issues were identified which will now be considered in this chapter. Key issues 7 –12 were not included in the results (chapter 6) as the evidence available from the action research was found to be limited. All of the key issues will be discussed and the information available from the research on key issues 7 –12 is also considered in this Discussion chapter.

1. Issues related to the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff.
2. Issues related to the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms.
3. Issues related to how environmental factors may be influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties.
4. Issues related to strategies observed as unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks.
5. Issues related to strategies and teaching practices which appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties.
6. Issues related to how the research influenced school practices and teachers' views.
7. Issues related to how the research project influenced the views and perceptions of the researcher.

8. What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties?
9. Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties?
10. Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?
11. Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties?
12. What is the nature of relationships between staff and how they impact on pupils' behaviour?

Key issues 4 and 5 were seen as particularly relevant and useful for feeding back to school staff. Elliott (2005) points out that the ultimate test of disciplined based knowledge is whether it helps educators to improve the educational value of students' learning experiences.

7.2 Issues related to the nature of behaviour difficulties as perceived by senior staff

The views from the semi-structured interviews with senior staff in action research cycle 1 cannot be taken as representing the whole school community but indicate the recorded views of members of senior management at the time of the interviews.

In contrast to the local authority staff (behaviour consultant and newly appointed principal who had not yet taken up her post) senior staff at the school tended not to focus on the influence of situational factors in pupils' behaviour difficulties such as teaching strategies. Interviews with the Senco indicated that Year 7 pupils were perceived as being particularly challenging in the school community in terms of behaviour difficulties. The researcher agreed with the key link professional to observe one Year 7 group that was perceived as particularly challenging, during lessons throughout one school day as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) advocate that action research involves collaboration between participants and researchers.

7.3 Issues related to the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms

Quantitative data on specific aspects of lessons could have strengthened the comparability of data taken from different lessons but may have resulted in reducing the data to a narrow focus on a particular aspect of the classroom such as the behaviour of the pupils. The observation schedule was very wide ranging which tended to reduce the comparability of the data from one classroom observation to the next. The teacher/ pupil relationships were observed to vary considerably from one lesson to another. The data from the observations did not take account of the development of the teacher/ pupil relationship prior to the observation.

Though the Senco had arranged for the researcher to track one Year 7 group throughout the day, there were variations in the number of pupils present in each lesson indicating that the same group of pupils were not observed in all lessons. It is possible that the pupils in the humanities lesson constituted a very different group to the pupils in the English lesson and this could account for the contrast in behaviour during the observations of English and Humanities. However during an interview with the Humanities teacher after the observation she said that the group had been most difficult prior to agreeing on classroom rules. This suggests that both the groups of Year 7 pupils observed during Humanities and English contained pupils who experience behaviour difficulties and the observed differences in pupils' behaviour were influenced by the teacher /pupil relationship. The observed differences in their behaviour appeared to be due to environmental factors such as teacher's management of pupils and lesson delivery.

Discussion and feedback with the teachers at the time of the observation means that some of the time during the classroom observations was spent in talking with the teacher. This was particularly so during the IT lesson in which the pupils largely focussed on curriculum tasks and the researcher gathered information from the teacher on school systems for managing difficult behaviour whereas it was not possible to gather the views of the Humanities teacher at the end of the observation and a separate time was arranged.

This reduced the comparability of the data further but allowed the researcher to understand the teacher's views which could impact on the data from the observations. The science teacher was reluctant to engage with the researcher following the observation which meant that the data collection was influenced by teachers' willingness to engage with the researcher.

7.4 Issues related to whether environmental factors are influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties

The data from the present action research project appears to lend weight to the view that pupils' behaviour is significantly influenced by the context in which the behaviour is displayed.

The classroom observations provided data on classroom behaviours of teachers and groups of pupils. Detailed observations of an individual pupil in different class settings would have provided more clear evidence of pupils' behaviour difficulties being context specific or 'within child' but findings may not have been generalisable to other pupils.

It could be argued that pupils with severe EBD were already excluded from lessons prior to classroom observations and therefore the researcher wrongly assumed that there were situational factors in all pupils' behaviour and there were no pupils who have behaviour difficulties which are not influenced by situational factors. The researcher's experiences as an educational psychologist suggest that even the pupils described as having extremely severe behaviour difficulties respond to individual attention from a sympathetic adult and engage appropriately in one or more subject area of the school curriculum. Pupils feeling liked and valued appear to be key factors which influence their behaviour in school.

7.5 Issues related to strategies observed as unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks

During classroom observations the following strategies were observed to be unsuccessful in encouraging Year 7 pupils to focus on curriculum tasks - A lack of personal engagement between the teacher and the pupils, providing rewards which are not valued by the pupils and sanctions that appeared to be ineffective. All the classroom observations were carried out on Year 7 pupils who were seen by the Senco as particularly challenging and experiencing difficulty coping with the demands of a large secondary school. Therefore the findings of the observations may not generalise to other pupils in different school settings and other Year groups.

The results of the action research cycles reflect some of the findings in the local authority survey on helpful and unhelpful practices in meeting the needs of pupils with EBD (Lloyd Bennett 2006). Many of the unhelpful practices related to the curriculum – long written exercises, lack of help for pupils and lack of flexibility. In the action research unsuccessful strategies included lack of differentiation, lack of emotional engagement between teacher and pupils and lack of effective use of rewards and punishments.

7.6 Issues related to strategies and teaching practices which appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties

Different views on successful strategies were reported by teachers particularly in terms of getting pupils to line up outside the class at the beginning of the lesson. Perhaps the nature of the teacher/ pupil relationship underpins the pupils' responses to being asked to line up outside the classroom. A teacher who engenders in pupils the desire to listen and receive praise from the teacher, may respond positively to this strategy and a teacher who has lessons in which the pupils tend to focus on each other and do not readily engage with the curriculum do not respond well to this strategy.

Classroom observations of Year 7 pupils suggested that clearly agreed rules, emotional engagement between the pupils and the teacher which resulted in the pupils feeling

valued as well as an entertainingly delivered curriculum appeared to be key aspects in reducing and overcoming pupils' behaviour difficulties. These findings may not generalise to other pupils in different school settings.

The results of the action research cycles reflect some of the findings in the local authority survey on helpful and unhelpful practices in meeting the needs of pupils with EBD (Lloyd Bennett 2006). Helpful practices related to staffing, firm discipline structure, clear behaviour strategies and guidelines. The findings from the action research cycle overlap and extend the findings from the local authority survey in terms of staffing (behaviour support staff and an additional resource base), discipline structures (consistency, agreeing a set of rules, firm boundaries and clear guidelines). This is unsurprising as the secondary school in which the action research was carried out, was included in the local authority survey.

7.7 Issues related to how the research influenced school practices and teachers' views

Action research demands an integral involvement by the researcher in an intent to change the organisation though the changes may not be in the way they were intended (Eden & Huxham, 1996). During the research, the researcher continued to provide an educational psychology service for schools including the secondary school in which the research was undertaken and this meant that there tended to be a blurring of boundaries between the role of researcher and educational psychology practitioner. In providing educational psychology services for schools, an EP may experience pressure from the school to 'solve' the school's problems by removing disruptive children (Farrell et al, 1996) rather than staff willingness to engage in a collaborative investigation of school factors which contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties. The researcher's established relationship with some members of the school community in terms of being the school EP was seen as a double edged sword in that, at the beginning, it provided the researcher with prior knowledge of the nature of the school community but also clouded the boundaries between the action research into the nature of behaviour difficulties and educational

psychology service provision which was influenced by the school's desire to refer pupils for funding through a statement of special educational needs.

The advantage of this dual role was that the researcher had inside knowledge of the school community before and during the action research cycles. The disadvantage of this dual role was that when the key contact professional, who was also the Senco and subsequently the Head of Learning Support, experienced discomfort hearing the results of the research they avoided discussing the results and referred more individual pupils for assessment. The dual role of the researcher in terms of being the school's educational psychologist resulted in the blurring of boundaries between researcher and practitioner which partially involved carrying out individual assessments for pupils and providing evidence for the local authority on pupils' special educational needs. If the researcher's involvement with the school had been purely in terms of the action research the visits that were arranged in the school could have focused entirely upon investigating the key research issues.

The researcher as educational psychologist practitioner had experienced difficulty in meeting with staff at pre-arranged times in terms of staff not being available for the meeting or arriving late and gained an impression of the school as a large fluid institution with changes of staff, absences, implicit and explicit agendas as well as complex inter-staff relationships. The complexity of the school community resulted in staff needing to prioritise their time and their involvement in the action research project was usually not at the top of their agenda. It is possible that if the research had been carried out by a researcher whose involvement with the school had focused entirely on research there would have been little difference in the school community's willingness to engage in the research and act upon the results.

SEN focus groups in action research cycle 3 provided staff with opportunities to reflect on their practice. However one member of staff who attended a focus group (appendix 20 data 16) presented a problem area and was unwilling or unable to stay for long enough to hear the solutions suggested by the group. One of the many possible explanations for this

was that she valued the opportunity to express her view of the problem area but did not seek solutions to resolve it.

In summary the evidence for changes in the school community as a result of the three action research cycles is somewhat limited as most staff expressed interest in the content and findings of the research during the first and second action research cycles but were reluctant to reflect with the researcher on developing their practice in the light of the research findings.

The action research project gathered data from staff who were willing and able to engage with the research which could have involved up to sixty-four qualified teaching staff. Limited numbers of staff actively engaged in the research project and the link professional communicated the findings to all members of staff but the researcher was not able to gather evidence of whether staff paid attention to the findings or if staff used the findings to inform their practice. The research did not identify actions in the school community which clearly resulted from the three action research cycles and dissemination of the research data.

7.8 The school community's readiness to change

Jennifer & Shaughnessy (2005) questioned schools' readiness to address change in terms of cultural, organisational and managerial factors. They proposed three models of readiness – the circular model reflects an organisation that is self aware and responsive and operates from a clearly focussed rationale; the corkscrew model reflects an organisational culture that fluctuates, sometimes being able to identify action through self reflection but the action is not always clearly focused; the string model reflects a fragile organisational culture having limited self evaluation and experiences difficulty in identifying a clear course of action. The string model resonates with the present school in which the action research was conducted. The local authority survey identified a high number of responses from teachers who were concerned about students' behaviour difficulties and perceived students with behaviour difficulties as requiring education in a separate setting from mainstream school. Staff reported that they viewed behaviour

difficulties as located within certain individual pupils or groups of pupils and behaviour problems could be viewed as separate from the learning environment (Lloyd Bennett, 2006).

The researcher encountered some informal situations which could suggest that the research findings such as the data from classroom observations had contributed to school practices. When the Head of Learning Support who was also the English teacher failed to attend a pre-arranged meeting with the researcher, the researcher went to the classroom where she was taking a Year 7 class and there was quiet concentration on the lesson topic in contrast to the behaviour of Year 7 English lessons during classroom observations. However this could have been a chance occurrence and does not constitute clear evidence that the research findings informed school practices or teachers' views.

Interviews with the behaviour consultant (data 4) and the newly appointed deputy principal (data 5) indicated that they perceived staff as not taking account of emotional literacy in their teaching. There is an abundance of materials on emotional literacy (e.g. Smith, 2004; Rae, Nelson & Pedersen, 2005) and the current challenge for professionals outside the school community is to persuade teachers whose performance is measured on results of pupils' achievement on academic tests to weave the active ingredients of emotional literacy into their teaching programmes. Davies (2005) points out that there has been limited official attention in government documents given to the emotive aspect of the teaching role and yet it is greater focus on the affective aspects of professional practice that is likely to serve best the growing number of EBD pupils that in turn would result in more effective schools and classrooms. Materials on developing emotional literacy for schools are currently readily available though encouraging their use in classrooms may be a challenge.

The findings of the current research suggest that encouraging participatory learning, liking and valuing the pupils and using an entertaining approach to deliver the curriculum are active agents in promoting the pupils' learning environment and reducing pupils' behaviour difficulties. However there was no clear evidence to indicate that the action

research project has influenced school practices and teachers' views within the educational community in which the research was carried out.

7.9 Issues related to how the research project influenced the views and perceptions of the researcher

Two assumptions were made by the researcher prior to the research project – based on fifteen years of teaching (including eight years in a special school for pupils with EBD) and 13 years practicing as an educational psychologist.-

1. The researcher knows what behaviour difficulties are.
2. Behaviour difficulties can be separated from learning and treated as a separate entity.

If it was possible for the researcher to hold an objective view of the nature of behaviour difficulties, classroom observations of teachers' behaviour suggested that the researcher's view of what constituted difficult behaviour was not shared by the teachers observed. Classroom observations confirmed findings from the research literature (Cornwall 2004) that there is no single agreed definition of pupils' behaviour difficulties – what may be acceptable to one teacher may not be acceptable to another teacher or perhaps accepted by the same teacher on a different occasion.

Gates et al's (2000) definition of behavioural distress allows for individual views of what is perceived as frightening, destructive or self destructive. The observed behaviour of pupils during classroom observations in terms of getting out of their seats, making noises and flicking paper were not perceived as frightening by the researcher but were perceived as destructive in terms of disrupting the pupils' educational development.

The observed behaviour of pupils tended to be recorded in terms of their engagement or disengagement with the curriculum. Therefore it appears to be inadvisable to view behaviour and learning as two separate concepts. Low level behaviour difficulties such as getting out of a seat and making noises can be perceived as disrupting pupils' learning in

the same way as overtly aggressive behaviour such as attacking a teacher. Pupils' behaviour difficulties were observed to be influenced by the relationship between the pupils and the teacher which appeared to the researcher as being at the heart of pupils' learning.

One of the key issues for the action research was to identify factors which appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties. The researcher assumed that situational factors in pupils' behaviour were significant in contrast to the views expressed during interviews with senior management and requests for provision of educational psychology support to the school using a within child model of behaviour difficulties. The researcher anticipated uncovering some situational factors, for example teaching strategies which influence pupils' behaviour. The researcher had not anticipated the dramatically contrasting behaviour of pupils observed in English and Humanities lessons or the observed differences in effectiveness of the teachers in terms of their varying ability to engage the Year 7 pupils in the curriculum. During the action research, the researcher found no evidence for behaviour difficulties being entirely located within individual pupils.

Woolgar (1988) pointed to methodological difficulties in terms of reflexivity in which the position of the researcher affects the phenomenon and preconceptions draw attention to certain things and lead us to disregard others. It is possible that the researcher found no evidence for behaviour difficulties being entirely located within individual pupils because the research focused on investigating situational factors in EBD.

Classroom observations (data 7, 9) of behaviour difficulties perceived by the researcher confirmed that pupils' behaviour is significantly influenced by situational factors. The data gathered from classroom observations contradicted the expressed views of senior management during semi-structured interviews regarding behaviour difficulties seen as characteristics of certain pupils. Behaviour difficulties as reported by senior staff during semi-structured interviews, in terms of singular causal within child factors were contradicted by data collected from classroom observations. Conversely classroom

observations confirmed senior management views that Year 7 pupils had difficulties regarding interactions between peers but only in some of the lessons observed by the researcher (e.g. English and PE, data 7 and 9).

The researcher took care when feeding back on observations to the link professional (who was also a member of senior management). The researcher reported the data from classroom observations in a humble but matter-of-fact fashion and the link professional listened with care but returned to focusing on individual pupils' difficulties blurring the boundaries between researcher and practitioner and focusing attention away from teachers' classroom management.

While classroom observation (data 7 lesson 4) suggest that pupils can be intimidated into focusing on learning tasks, the teacher's behaviour could be a very negative role model for the students. Sanctions as well as rewards help to reduce pupils' behaviour difficulties.

The success of the Humanities teacher in engaging pupils' active interest and participation was inspiring. Interviews were used to develop the researcher's understanding of positive classroom behaviour which was successfully promoted by one teacher's approach in which the children appeared to feel valued by the teacher and entertained by the delivery of the lesson (data 7 lesson 1, data 9 lesson 1). The Year 7 pupils observed during the Humanities lessons responded to being valued by the teacher and all Year 7 pupils appeared to seek entertainment in school either from the teacher, the curriculum or from interacting with their peers.

An interview with the Humanities teacher informed the researcher that the teacher had established basic classroom rules with consistency, firm boundaries, clear expectations and she also reported that she had worked hard at building relationships with the pupils. The teacher used aspects of popular culture in her lessons e.g. referring to situations in television serials and using terms similar to those which may be found in television game shows (data 7 lesson 1 'he's going for the 3 commendations, 2 right he's on the way, 3

right’). The Humanities teacher adopted a collaborative approach in which the pupils were encouraged to have a central role in the delivery of the lesson.

The researcher’s interpretation of the data indicated that there was no evidence in the research data to support the view of EBD entirely in terms of individual pupil pathology disconnected from situational factors. In addition clearly agreed rules and rewards as well as building positive relationships between the teacher and students appear to be at the heart of successful classroom management.

Five further key issues for consideration.

The researcher found limited evidence for the following five key issues during content analysis of the three action research cycles and these key issues will now be considered.

8. What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils’ emotional and behavioural difficulties?
9. Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties?
10. Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?
11. Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils’ behaviour difficulties?
12. What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils’ behaviour?

7.10 What was the role of the Principal in managing pupils’ emotional and behavioural difficulties?

The contact between the researcher and the Principal was limited to communications via the link professional and an informal meeting on the playground in which the Principal said that sometimes it pays to go around with your eyes closed. This was not included in the reported findings of the research as it was a spontaneous remark which was not substantiated by the findings of the three action research cycles. The researcher did not succeed in engaging the principal directly in the research. If the Principal had responded

to the researcher's attempts to engage with him through the key link professional (appendix 5 data 2), the researcher may have been able to access data from the whole staff group though the data from staff may have been influenced by the researcher's relationship with the Principal and some staff (e.g. the Humanities teacher data 11) would not have felt able to express their views freely.

7.11 Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties?

Teachers expressed critical views of each other, individual pupils and groups of pupils. This action research project did not gather the views of pupils or their parents. Informal observations during school visits and comments by teachers following the publication of a very negative Ofsted report on the school during action research cycle 3 suggested that many parents held critical views of the school. There appeared to be a tendency for teachers to blame the inadequate school systems and to identify certain pupils as causing behaviour difficulties. However this may not constitute sufficient evidence for identifying a culture of blame within the school and was not included in the researcher's remit for the action research project on the nature of behaviour difficulties.

7.12 Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?

The researcher experienced considerable difficulty gathering information on the development and implementation of the whole school behaviour policy. Due to the scarcity of information on the behaviour policy it was not possible to provide a meaningful view of the policy and its implementation. However the school behaviour policy was seen by the researcher as a potential key feature of the school's management of pupils' behaviour difficulties. Clearly described school and classroom rules and procedures, and consequences define the expectations of success in schools using unified discipline (Algozzine & Algozzine, 2005).

During the investigation it became clear that the school did not have a whole school behaviour policy which was fully agreed and implemented by everyone and this could be a key factor in some of the behaviour difficulties perceived by staff and observed by the

researcher. The researcher made repeated attempts to see a copy of the report (data 2, 3) but consistently received evasive answers from staff – ‘I don’t have a copy with me at the moment, it’s not operating, its being revised, following the behaviour co-ordinator presenting it to staff the principal has withdrawn it because he has been advised that it focuses too much on sanctions’. The researcher did not gain access to the policy and did not succeed in contributing directly towards the development of the policy. It is possible that a culture of blame (Miller, 2003) in which staff were critical of each other prevented the development and adoption of a whole school behaviour policy. The inability of the school community to develop and agree a whole school behaviour policy could be seen as a significant factor in pupils’ behaviour difficulties, a sign of tensions in staff relationships within the school as well as a lack of leadership. The absence of a whole school policy on behaviour could also contribute to the perceived and observed inconsistencies in staff management of pupils’ behaviour.

A local authority survey (Lloyd Bennett, 2006) found that secondary school teachers tended not to mention the role of whole school behaviour policies in contrast to primary school teachers who perceived their behaviour policy as having an important role in managing pupils’ behaviour. The secondary school in which the action research took place clearly experienced marked difficulties developing and implementing a whole school behaviour policy.

7.13 Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils’ behaviour difficulties?

During interviews with senior staff (data 2 and 3) it was reported that the secondary school site is spread out over an area which used to contain two separate schools. This results in teachers and pupils taking several minutes to move between lessons. If a teacher is not ready to engage the pupils at the beginning of the lesson the Senco reported that the pupils were likely to experience behaviour difficulties during the lesson. The researcher was not able to carry out formal observations of the school community at break time and between lessons and identify whether the layout of the school contributed

to behaviour difficulties. The researcher's movement around the school confirmed that it could take several minutes to move from one part of the school to another but there were no formal findings in the research that substantiated or refuted this view.

7.14 What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils' behaviour?

Critical views of subject teachers were expressed by the newly appointed deputy principal (data 5) and critical views of systems set up by senior management were expressed by teachers during individual interviews and SEN focus groups. For example Data 3 Senco:

‘We have been running a blue room which again is the Head's idea of something which came from his old school which is a room that children can be referred to if their behaviour is consistently bad . . . a detention . . . and they go there for a day to be bored silly just sitting in a little booth and just copying out, and he seems to think that was quite effective at his old school but it isn't here. Some children don't like it and don't go back but a lot of children actually like to go in there. . . . dead activity’.

The researcher did not report back on these critical views because the researcher wanted to remain neutral and avoid fuelling conflict between staff. There appeared to be a lack of open debate between staff on school policies and a lack of supportive relationships between staff across the school which resulted in sanctions for behaviour problems not being fully implemented (data 16). The responsibility for ensuring that pupils attended a detention was passed up through senior management but came back down to the subject teacher if this was unsuccessful. Supportive relationships between staff may have been present between certain groups of staff such as within subject departments or informally but there appeared to be a lack of cohesion across the school which could have contributed to staff not being consistent in managing pupils' behaviour difficulties.

The nature of staff relationships was excluded from the current research enquiry following advice from the key link professional who reported that some staff felt worn down and would not welcome views that could be perceived as critical of them (data 3). In the course of the classroom observation feedback meetings and interviews with staff, critical views of other staff were expressed suggesting negative relationships between some subject teachers and senior staff. There appeared to be a lack of communication between senior management, subject teachers and outside agencies including the researcher. The researcher initiated meetings with the deputy principal, the school's behaviour co-ordinator and the local authority behaviour specialist. The deputy principal was interested in the researcher's approach (e.g. the observation schedule used) and research findings were circulated through the key link professional using the school's email communication. The deputy principal clearly communicated to the researcher that she felt it was her role to sort the school behaviour issues out without the help of the researcher. The local authority behaviour specialist was very critical of staff practices which she saw as contributing to pupils' behaviour difficulties and she did not respond to the researcher's invitations to work together (data 4). The behaviour co-ordinator in school was responsive to the researcher's approaches but the behaviour policy which he had developed and presented to staff was withdrawn by the Principal following the advice of the local authority behaviour co-ordinator and consequently viewed the matter of being out of his hands.

It appeared to the researcher that school managers (data 1, 2, 3), subject teachers (data 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16) and local authority advisors (data 4, 5) were critical of each other and unable to cooperate and move forward together in terms of improving pupils' behaviour. The instances of negative relationships between staff identified during action research prevented the development of a whole school behaviour policy and may have contributed towards pupils' behaviour difficulties in the school. The instances of negative relationships included staff attributing causation of problems to others and this discourages individuals in tackling the problematic issues and appears to be a significant factor in the inability to work towards solutions.

7.15 Consistency of behaviour management in the school

The lack of consistency of teachers in managing pupil behaviour was a recurring theme throughout the three action research cycles (data 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 16) during the action research project. The English teacher who had not developed a set of consistently applied rules was observed to struggle to engage the Year 7 class in the curriculum (data 7, 9). During the classroom observations of English lessons the pupils paid little attention to the directions of the teacher who had not established an agreed set of rules to guide Year 7 classes of pupils. In the absence of a clear set of rules the pupils followed their own inclinations focusing on interacting with their peers and they were observed to give limited attention to the curriculum. When pupils have learned that rules can vary according to classroom circumstances and when rules are inconsistently applied by different teachers they may take the view that ‘only a fool obeys blindly’. Shah (2003) provides a view from outside the research literature on the limited desirability of following rules blindly.

The Humanities teacher consistently re-inforced the rules and paired this approach with building positive relationships with the pupils resulting in the pupils having an emotional and educational investment in following the rules in Humanities lessons. The English teacher had not successfully established rules for behaviour in the classroom. Lack of consistency in establishing rules in all lessons means that pupils have to read the classroom situations and adapt their behaviour according to their natural inclinations and the teacher’s management style. Without an emotional investment from the teacher in the teacher/ pupil relationship, pupils may have limited interest in following teachers’ instructions and favour engaging in interactions with their peers. School staff who practice consistency using a single set of rules are likely to be more successful in engaging the pupils in learning than schools in which staff employ rules that are applied inconsistently. When staff groups apply an agreed set of rules throughout the school, pupils have more opportunities to remember the rules and are more likely to be guided by them.

7.16 Generalisability

Action research tends to be intrinsically connected to the context in which the research is carried out. In terms of generalisability Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest that the key to utilising knowledge from action research in a different setting is to follow a two step model. Firstly understand the contextual conditions under which the knowledge was created and secondly in order to transfer this knowledge to a new setting it is necessary to understand the contextual conditions of the new setting and how they differ from the setting in which the knowledge was produced. Teaching strategies and practices observed as successful for Year 7 pupils in the school community who participated in this research may have relevance for other school communities who have a similar context of falling roles, school discipline problems and staff absences.

7.17 Personal experiences of the researcher

Two teaching experiences of the researcher were thought to be relevant to the present study. The researcher remembers a lesson in a secondary school which involved a difficult class going out on the field, the pupils were all made to line up in an orderly fashion and considerable time was spent getting the class quiet. With the reward of going outside the class eventually became quiet and carried out the researcher's requests but when out on the field they ran around and ignored my instructions perhaps because they had achieved their reward and were given no further investment in behaving 'well'. If the application of a set of classroom rules is not underpinned by the teacher building positive relationships with pupils and making them feel valued then pupils may be encouraged to behave in an appropriate manner but only to a limited degree. When the Humanities teacher spoke to the researcher towards the end of the classroom observation (data 7 lesson 1) the Year 7 pupils in her class continued to behave appropriately and focus on the curriculum. This suggests that the pupils had internalised positive behaviour which was encouraged by the Humanities teacher through her success in building positive relationships with them. It appeared that learning had become a collaborative and enjoyable process in which pupils readily engaged with the teacher in promoting a learning environment. The pupils that were all allowed out on the field did not have a similar investment in following my requests.

The researcher/ teacher also remembers a sense of foreboding regarding two particular pupils perceived as particularly challenging to teachers and having powerful influences on their peers. They were getting a bad name amongst school staff and on the edge of exclusion while in year 7. They were due to be in the researcher/ teacher's next tutor group the following year. When the new class arrived the researcher/ teacher made considerable efforts to build positive relationships with these two pupils valuing their contributions in class and building their self esteem. This contributed to the pupils showing fewer behaviour difficulties in the classroom and achieving success on the curriculum as they went up through the school. While it is not possible to attribute the two pupils' success to any particular action carried out by the researcher/ teacher, making an effort to like the pupils and showing the pupils that they were liked seemed to have a beneficial effect on them. Valuing and liking pupils appeared to be key factors in the teaching of Year 7 groups by the Humanities teacher and could be seen as effective prevention strategies for reducing or overcoming behaviour difficulties. Algozzine & Algozzine (2005) suggest that prevention strategies for controlling problem behaviours are preferred to general behaviour management approaches because of the potential to reduce the development of new and current cases of school related problems.

There are views which are held by people outside and within the education system in which the strict application of rules is highly valued. Miller et al 2000 suggested that the strictness of the classroom regime may contribute to the causes of difficult behaviour in school. It is possible that when pupils feel liked and valued by school, this is a far more effective tool for creating a positive learning environment than applying a strict set of rules.

It appeared to the researcher when reflecting on the data from the classroom observations (data 7, 9) that Year 7 children come to school primarily for entertainment. In the Humanities lessons the teacher presented the curriculum in an entertaining way and the pupils were observed to engage readily in the lesson content. In the English lessons Year 7 pupils were observed to engage in entertaining each other, apparently showing less interest for the curriculum task. Depending on the nature of the learning environment

pupils can be entertained by the teacher, the curriculum or by interacting with each other. The researcher's daughter said that at least other pupils who messed around provided some entertainment when the lessons got boring. She was in the higher level sets and also pointed out that disruptive behaviour was very annoying when it got in the way of learning something she considered important.

7.18 Findings that contradict the research literature

During discussion after the classroom observation, the Humanities teacher reported that she had developed negatively phrased rules with the pupils which appears contrary to some approaches to promoting positive behaviour in which all rules are positively phrased (e.g. Canter, 1992).

The results on the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms of one Year 7 group questioned the value of wall displays in the classroom as a key aspect of being a motivating influence on pupils' learning and negatively phrased rules were reported by the teacher as effective in reducing behaviour difficulties. Both intimidation and positive teaching strategies appeared to promote learning focused behaviour. Pupils' behaviour was observed to vary considerably across different subject areas and teaching styles. Year 7 pupils' behaviour was observed as being most different in lessons 1 and 3. In lesson 1 the class (22 pupils) appeared to be work focussed but in lesson 3 (15 pupils) approximately half of the pupils had difficulties staying on task and were observed to behave in ways that disrupted their own and other pupils' learning. This suggests that there are other factors in learning situations which may be more influential, on pupils' learning, than classroom displays and number of pupils present. Classroom observations during IT suggested that lesson content appeared to be an important factor in pupil motivation with pupils being particularly responsive to computer technology.

Pupils were very focused on the lesson (data 5 lesson 1) in one of the shabbiest and untidiest of the classrooms suggesting that well presented classrooms used by Ofsted teams as an indicator of a school's effectiveness is not crucial in encouraging pupils' learning and reducing their behaviour difficulties. Primarily pupils' motivation to engage

in tasks appears to be influenced by the pupils' relationship with the teacher in terms of pupils feeling liked and being entertained.

Macleod (2006) calls for a rejection of punitive policies and practices. However the current research suggests that punitive measures have an important role to play in the management of Year 7 pupils. In one of the most curriculum focussed classes observed, the teacher later reported (appendix 14, data 10) that she had developed a series of rules phrased in a negative way – 'don't get out of your seat' – and these had been instrumental in improving pupils' behaviour. Whereas positive management strategies – rewarding and praising – used by the English teacher in classroom observations (data 5 lesson 3 and data 8 lessons 3, 4) were observed to be unsuccessful. However when sanctions and agreed rules were used in accordance with rewarding and praising (data 7 lesson 1 and data 9 lesson 1), these combined strategies were observed to contribute towards encouraging pupils to engage in curriculum tasks. Classroom observations suggested that the strategies of rewarding and praising pupils needs to be backed up by previously agreed and re-inforced rules with sanctions.

As the data analysis was conducted it became increasingly clear that behaviour difficulties are interlinked with pupils' approaches to learning tasks. Behaviour difficulties can not be viewed as separate from pupils' learning behaviour and the classroom environment.

Knivsberg, Iversen, Nodland & Reichelt (2007) used standardised test materials to obtain information on high risk children's behaviour and skills. Social problems, attention problems, anxiety and depressive traits were the most frequently reported behavioural problems. Knivsberg et al's approach is based on a within child model of behaviour difficulties. In the present action research project no evidence was found for behaviour difficulties being entirely located within individual children.

7.19 Methodological and other limitations of research

Limitations of the research are considered in terms of indexicality; inability to identify changes in the school community resulting from the action research; the subjectivity of the researcher; difficulty of comparing data from classroom observations and the use of content analysis on the data related to key issues for investigation.

King (1996) pointed out that the 'self' is in a constant state of flux which has implications for the research evidence gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interview data was collected using audio tape and then transcribed which means that in one way the interviewee's views are 'set in stone' in terms of not reflecting the individual's changes in thinking or capacity to hold several viewpoints simultaneously. Woolgar (1988) identified indexicality in terms of descriptions being tightly tied to specific situations and circumstances.

Dissimilar views can be expressed by individuals on a variety of occasions. The wide range of staff views on pupils' behaviour difficulties were collated but were not seen as representing the educational community. Individual staff members within the community are likely to hold specific views which may change according to changing circumstances. Staff can take different views in order to oppose, agree with or maintain ambivalence towards an expressed viewpoint which suggests that the recording of an expressed viewpoint can only be taken as representing the expressed view of an individual in a particular setting and at a particular time. In addition these views also may or may not be held by other staff in the school community. Interviewers tend to assume that participants are telling it like it is. However in informal dealings we do not take each other at face value, we question, disagree, bring in counter examples, interpret and notice hidden agendas. Woolcot (1995) recommends that researchers focus on what they are getting and accept that all pictures are incomplete and subject to interpretation.

Identifying changes in the school community resulting from the action research was problematic as there were a number of initiatives operating within the school during the action research project. During an interview with the newly appointed deputy principal

(data 5), emotional literacy and valuing achieving pupils was perceived as a key aspect of reducing behaviour difficulties. The deputy principal reported her agenda as being to sort out behaviour and management systems, encourage greater teacher responsibility for meeting a wide spectrum of meeting pupils' needs and she perceived staff as tending to have a within child view of behaviour difficulties. She was not responsive to working in collaboration with the researcher. The action research was one of many initiatives including the appointment of a newly appointed deputy principal in the school. It was not possible to isolate what effects if any the research had on the school community. After the action research project an Ofsted inspection identified serious weaknesses within the school and a new principal was appointed. This suggests that none of the initiatives including the action research resulted in improving pupils' behaviour.

The developing attitudes on the part of staff noted during focus groups (staff appearing to become more reflective and able to generate strategies for promoting the learning environment) are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors e.g. new senior manager, involvement in the research project, changes of staff and personal reflection. It is therefore unwise to attempt to identify singular causal factors in the development of the school community resulting from the influence from the research. Due to the complex nature of the secondary school (in terms of staff relationships, hierarchies and difficulties working together to develop a whole school behaviour policy) it is unlikely that causal relationships between actions taken and results of those actions can be identified

Data recording, processing and writing up the results can only be a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory (Dey, 1999. Woolgar, 1988) as all representations can be augmented by further displays of the phenomenon. The action research project could continue indefinitely as one of the school's initiatives for resolving behaviour difficulties.

Professionals can be viewed as reflective practitioners working in indeterminate zones of practice where each situation has specific constraints with a number of alternative viewpoints (Argyris, 1989 & Schon, 1987). This suggests that action research is unlikely

to achieve a definitive truth about an educational setting- what may be viewed as effective practice on one occasion may be seen as lacking on another occasion. Groups are made up of individuals who may have constantly changing views and perceptions of pupils' behaviour difficulties which staff may or may not be prepared to articulate in various settings.

The researcher acknowledged that data does not speak for itself and is subject to interpretation. In particular the recording of data from classroom observations were subject to the researcher's focus of attention and interpretations. Popper (2002) proposed that there is no such thing as pure interview data or pure sense experience: all perception is interpretation in the light of experience, in the light of expectations and theories. Since we can never know for certain, there can be no authority or any claim to authority, for conceit over our knowledge, or for smugness regarding the development of our scientific knowledge. It is likely that one cannot observe or measure a situation without changing it and 'realities' in terms of researcher's views and conclusions are socially constructed.

Classroom observations focused on Year 7 pupils who were perceived by the key link professional as presenting particular difficulties. This view cannot be seen as representative of all staff and it was not shared by the IT teacher who reported finding a number of Year 8 classes particularly difficult (data 9 lesson 2). Behaviour strategies that were observed to be successful for Year 7 pupils may not be successful with different age groups or future Year 7 pupils questioning the generalisability of the results. The nature of teaching strategies and pupils' behaviour was explored using an observation schedule in action research cycle 2 and the contrasting nature of English and Humanities lessons was confirmed by further observations of these lessons for Year 7 pupils. Though opportunities for triangulation were sought by collecting data on more than one occasion, there may be limited generalisability to other settings and groups in other school environments.

Classroom observations were exploratory and wide ranging which to some degree reduced the comparability of the observation data. The Senco had identified one group of Year 7 pupils for the lesson observations and it was found that there were variations in the number of pupils in each lesson observed which could be partially explained by some pupils being excluded from some lessons but not others. Variations in the number of pupils in Year 7 groups observed made direct comparisons between pupil behaviour in different lessons problematic. Direct comparison of behaviour in lessons was also restricted by the wide ranging nature of the classroom observation schedule. The researcher was particularly interested in teacher/ pupil relationships and teaching strategies which appeared to influence pupils' behaviour in different ways. The researcher's interest in this area could have resulted in biased recording of classroom observations.

Quantitative data would have promoted the comparison of data in different lessons but could have restricted and reduced the data collected which was intended to be exploratory and wide ranging. Opportunities to interview teachers and feedback on the observation were sought by the researcher following the observation schedule as this provided potentially valuable additional information on the behaviour observed but depended on the teachers being able and willing to speak to the researcher.

Identifying key issues for investigation and the use of content analysis involved arranging the data in terms of each of the key issues. At times data could be used as evidence for more than one key issue. For example when staff expressed critical views of each other this could be seen as evidence for a culture of blame, a lack of consistency between staff and negative staff relationships impacting on pupils' behaviour. The researcher continued to sift through the data for evidence which could be used to inform the key issues for investigation and content analysis of qualitative data may benefit from continued analysis so that all shades of meaning throughout action research findings are represented in the results of the analysis.

7.20 Recommendations for further research

The researcher pursued unsuccessfully opportunities to contribute towards the development of a school behaviour policy and met reluctance and avoidance on the part of staff to share the policy with the researcher. There was also a lack of clarity amongst staff who at times reported that the policy was no longer operating or that it was in the hands of senior management because it had focused too much on negative sanctions. A lack of implementation by staff of a commonly agreed whole school behaviour policy is likely to have contributed to pupils' behaviour difficulties and resulted in lack of consistency in managing behaviour. Staff expressed negative views of other staff members' ideas and practices, these views and the difficulties experienced in staff working together are likely to have contributed towards the lack of a whole school behaviour policy. The researcher/ practitioner will continue to look for opportunities to encourage staff to cooperate in working together. Tracking individual pupils throughout the school day and gathering information from pupils on the perceived benefits and penalties of challenging teachers' authority may provide information which could usefully inform school staff.

Staff who attended the SEN forums appeared to become more positive and able to generate potentially valuable ideas for promoting learning environments. Staff are likely to benefit from further opportunities to engage with each other in generating solutions to problems encountered in the school setting and share good practice.

7.21 Conclusions and recommendations

Adopting Gates et al's (2000) definition of behavioural distress for the terms EBD and behaviour difficulties has provided a basic framework for investigating the perceived and observed nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school.

Year 7 pupils were described by senior staff in one secondary school as particularly challenging and classroom management strategies were observed to be influential on

pupils' behaviour in different subject areas. The findings from the present study suggest that the key factors in classroom management of Year 7 pupils

Action research involving observations, interviews with teachers and focus groups identified several factors which were thought to reduce pupils' behaviour difficulties: - having an agreed set of rules with firm boundaries and clear guidelines; consistent use of sanctions as well as rewards; access to the curriculum; preparing the pupils for learning; behaviour support staff; the presence of an additional resource base; consistency; building relationships; building positive relationships with students which includes liking and valuing pupils.

The factors which appeared to reduce pupils' behaviour difficulties in the present study are closely related to the literature on a number of behaviour intervention approaches. Algozzine and Algozzine (2005) carried out school-wide behaviour interventions based on consistency, clearly described school and classroom rules and clear expectations. Hayes, Hindle and Withington (2007) carried out an action research project in a large secondary school which aimed to build positive relationships between staff and pupils by increasing teachers' positive feedback statements to students in the classrooms. Montgomery (1999) advises on coping with children with EBD in the primary classroom and recommends methods which are calming, firm, fair, supportive and constructive to avoid diminishing their sense of self-worth.

Parenting programmes such as the one developed by Webster-Stratton (Webster-Stratton and Herbert 1994) aim to develop a positive relationship between the parent and child by teaching specific strategies such as increasing the parent's positive comments on the child's behaviour as well as following through with consequences of ignoring parental requests. Parents who have decided that a rule or command is important should reinforce it consistently which will help children to accept it.

Rogers (2007 a) provides advice for managing pupils' behaviour in the school environment. A whole school approach is preferred which is based on a common set of preferred practices employed by staff to carry out day-to-day behaviour management and discipline. Building positive relationships through friendly approaches to students, encouraging them to focus on learning tasks and avoiding a negative confrontational style are recommended strategies for teachers to use (Rogers, 2007 b).

Canter & Canter (1992) developed 'assertive discipline' which advises on developing a small number of positively phrased, observable classroom rules which should be clearly and consistently reinforced by teachers. There is also advice on how to praise students effectively and identify consequences for rule breaking which aim to avoid direct confrontations between teachers and students.

In addition to the factors found in the literature on interventions for reducing pupils' behaviour difficulties, the use of technology in classrooms (video and computers) were observed to have a powerful influence on the pupils in Year 7. Pupils feeling liked and entertained appear to be two important positive factors in the relationship between teachers and pupils.

Further input for schools could focus on preparing pupils in primary school who are due to transfer to secondary school. Research could help to identify the nature of difficulties experienced by pupils entering Year 7 and ways in which they can be prepared for making the most of their educational opportunities in new settings. Pupils in Year 6 at primary school may experience difficulties developing coping strategies when they transfer to secondary school where pupils are expected to attend lessons in different classrooms with peers who may be unfamiliar. Pupils who may be vulnerable to having difficulty focusing on the curriculum may benefit from careful preparation before transferring to secondary school which could include additional visits to become familiar with the secondary school site; changing classes for different lessons in Year 6; understanding an agreed set of rules which will be reinforced by all teaching staff in their new school setting; access to key staff who can listen to the pupil's concerns; strategies

for difficult situations they may encounter and help to resolve their difficulties. Plans to develop academy schools within local authorities could usefully take account of Year 7 pupils' who may have difficulties adapting to a secondary school environment.

The researcher could make use of the research data by seeking to publish the results of the data on ways of reducing or overcoming behaviour difficulties. In this way other school communities could benefit from the research findings.

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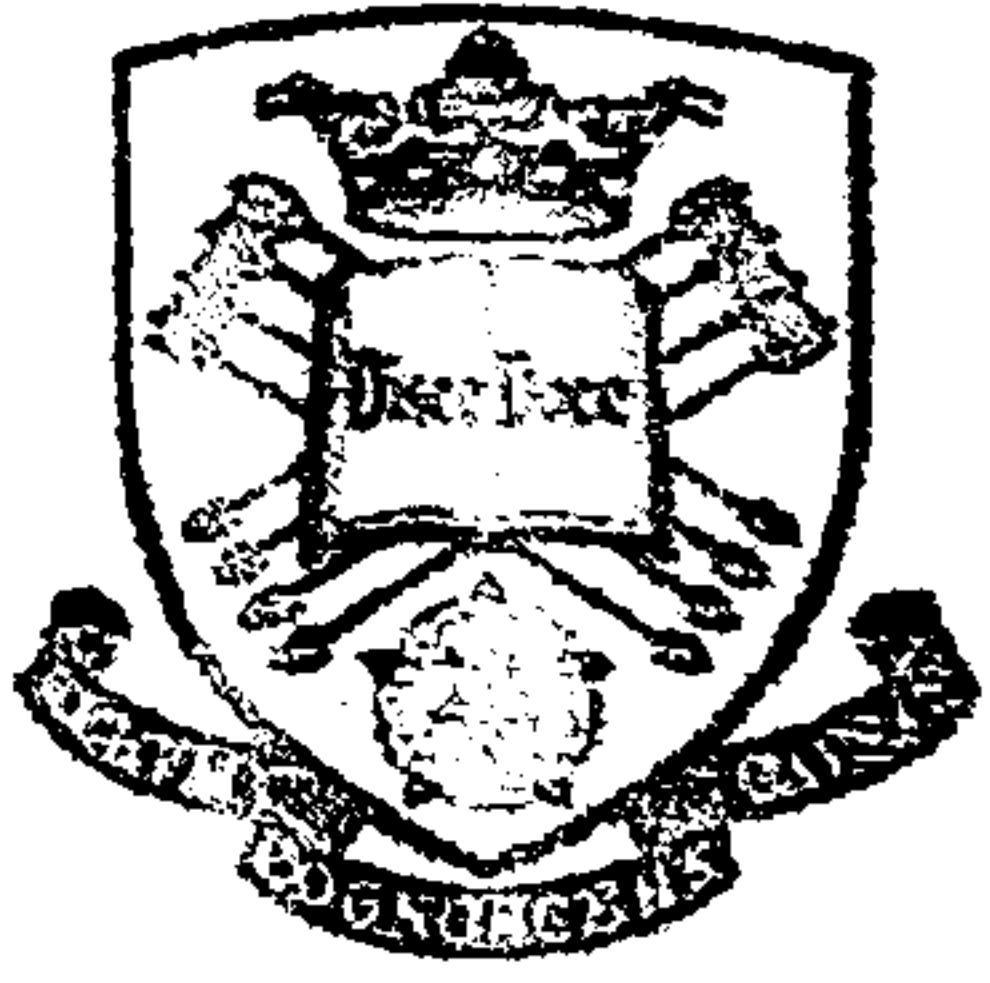
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Appendices

It was not possible to include all the appendices in the thesis. Therefore a sample of appendices indicated by a star (*) was included with the appropriate page numbers.

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Dear Peter

Re: What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project. The reviewers have now considered this and have agreed that your application be approved with the following suggested, optional amendments (ie it is left to the discretion of the applicant whether or not to accept the amendments and, if accepted, the ethics reviewers do not need to see the amendments):

The main ways of data gathering would seem to be observations and interviews with teachers and students. It is not clear at present with what purpose and from whom. Once this has become clearer, at each stage of the data gathering for the action research spiral, it is recommended that Peter discusses with his tutor again whether it may not be necessary, from an ethical point of view, to obtain written rather than just verbal consent for the interviews. In the case of pupils, this would also involve written parental consent. Even if only verbal consent is obtained, it would be good practice to provide all the interviewees with clear written information on the objectives of the research and their part in this.

For the observations, some further thought is recommended on the nature and purpose of these observations. A clear script which gives this information, adjusted for pupils and teachers, could be used in obtaining consent for such observations. Again, further discussions with the tutor may be needed as to whether written consent is necessary for the observations, once the nature of the observations has been more clearly defined.

You may now proceed with your project. Please find attached the relevant forms giving ethical approval.

Could you please return to me a signed hard copy of Part B – Declaration of the Ethics Application Form for our records.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Jean Booker

Jean Booker
EdD (Educational Psychology) Course Secretary

Participant Information Sheet

Date: ...08.06.2006.....

1. Research Project Title:

What is the nature of behaviour difficulties in one secondary school?

2. Invitation paragraph

'You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.'

3. What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the project is to examine the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties and gather ideas on overcoming these difficulties with the aim of promoting students' positive learning experiences.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You are invited to participate as you are a member of the school community.

5. Do I have to take part?

'It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without penalty or loss of benefits, and without giving a reason.'

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

The research is likely to be carried out over a period of one year, it will involve classroom observations, meetings and interviews depending on your availability during the routine activities of the school. Your views and students' will be recorded by the researcher. The information will contain no personal details of any individual or organisation and will be subject to your scrutiny and agreement before it is shared with other members of the school organisation. The research is being carried out as part of a doctorate course in Educational Psychology.

7. What do I have to do?

You will be invited to meet with the researcher and express your views at a time which is convenient to you. The researcher may also ask to observe you during routine school activities.

8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There will be no risks or disadvantages for participants taking part in the research.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Hearing other people's views and ideas and sharing your ideas for promoting students' learning experiences and managing difficult behaviour may benefit you and the school community.

10. What happens when the research study stops?

You will be informed when the research is concluded and asked for your agreement to share the information with others in the school community.

11. What if something goes wrong?

Except for meeting with the researcher the research involves no additional activities to your usual role in school. If you have any complaints please discuss them with the researcher.

Sheffield University's Registrar and Secretary is the designated official person at the University responsible for receiving complaints brought against the University.

12. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is disseminated will have all personal details removed so that no individuals can be identified.

13. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the research will be available to all participants when it has been collated and no individuals will be identified in the report which will form part 2 of a doctorate course in Educational Psychology.

14. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being conducted by a member of Peterborough Educational Psychology Service as part of continuing professional development.

15. Who has reviewed the project?

Sheffield University Research Ethics Committee/ Departmental Ethics Review Procedure.

16. Contact for further information

Peter Lloyd Bennett, Educational Psychology Service, Bayard Place, Broadway, Peterborough PE1 1FB.

Thank you for taking part in the research.

The participant will be given a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and, if appropriate, a signed Participant Consent Form to keep.

Appendix 5 Data 2 Interview with Senco to discuss the nature of the research project.

Researcher (R) I am just wondering if there is a system that we could use to include the head teacher in how we are going to keep him abreast of what we are doing?

Senco (S) He has delegated behaviour to V and V reports back to him at senior management meetings so I don't think he will actually come in person but I can ask him if he would like to and I can send him the minutes as well so that he is informed and he is quite happy for you to do this. Obviously now V has been asked to teach at this time we have got a member of staff who is on long term sick leave and he has got an examination group which V has taken over so that they don't lose out.

R So, I called it student confidence and success to give a positive spin on it. I don't want to start to identify a group of kids that need sorting out, but have a holistic view. Its more of a whole school thing rather than identifying a specific group. We may end up identifying a specific group but perhaps we could have a holistic view before we get there. If you want to change that name, that's fine.

S Its your project. Its fine for professionals. It does not trip off the tongue when there's children to identify with.

R So can we think of a better one?

S I am awful at doing this and we have so many groups around the school.

R There is a thing currently called "resilience". There is a view that what we want our students and our own children to develop is this resilience and I thought of resilience but that is an even harder word.

S If you just wanted to call it SCS, because that has got all the letters that success has got in as well.

R So it is hoped that the research and findings will be useful to the school.

S We are looking at behaviour, our own behaviour systems and staff classroom skills, all sorts of things because we appreciate that we have got a problem and I don't think that makes us different from many other schools in Peterborough, but it is certainly something that we are aware of.

One of the things we are looking at - I don't know if you have a chance to go into W - but I believe W have improved dramatically under the new head and he has set up a reward system. I feel that we concentrate a lot on sanctions and if you use the psychology that there should be one complaint to three praises, we don't do that, and V is going over to W to look at their systems as well. That's one way of trying to reverse that and give the good kids the praise, the time, the rewards rather than just taking sanctions against the naughty ones because when they give up, they don't care what they do and perhaps to some extent we have got that situation.

R We need a quick chat about the school behaviour policy, didn't we. Were you going to have a look for the latest copy of it?

S As V is not here, he has got that. So I haven't got a copy of it.

R You mentioned rules not always being applied consistently across the school.

S No, because teachers have their own thresholds of what they will allow in class. One thing we don't have time to do is go into each other's classes and observe each other's lessons, which I think would be useful. We have talked about perhaps videoing some classes and using them as training sessions.

R That's an interesting idea.

S We have got teachers who are quite happy for that to be done. Don't get me wrong, there's not a problem with behaviour with every teacher in every class. We have some groups that are challenging and some individuals that are challenging.

R I suppose sometimes as a teacher you have to decide whether to make an issue of chewing or wearing a hat or whether to focus on the class.

S There's the whole of that as well because you can easily get side-tracked by secondary behaviour from learning which is the primary goal, isn't it, and strategic ignoring of certain behaviours is a common classroom strategy. But it is a question: what do some people strategically ignore and what do some not. Everybody is an individual so you will never get total consistency but I go into some classes where everything is absolutely quiet and the teacher is in total control but then you ask yourself is there much interaction going on, the learning is very formal in that class. And then you go to other classes and it's chaos. The children are out of their seats and you ask yourself, can learning take place when there is so much going on in the class, possibly, I don't know, but then there is a whole continuum across the school. And you will find it, you will find some excellent practice here and you will find classes where teachers are really struggling.

R I suppose if a class is totally well behaved, doing what they are told, that does not necessarily mean that they are internalising that positive behaviour, does it. So they leave the classroom and they just go bananas because they haven't got a teacher saying, "Do this, sit there".

S That's quite a possibility. What we do have issues around site with lots of children who are reasonably well behaved in class but where incidents occur out of class (in the free areas) and in our stairways which are narrow two storey, you have got children going up and coming down the same stairway, children dropping things from above on other children. So that's the building really. Just keep telling the Council we want a new building.

R I suppose what you want is to get all your students to have an investment in looking after each other, in a sense, don't you.

S Looking after each other, looking after the campus and we don't have that sort of ethos in school which is another issue, I think.

R There is a lot of stuff now about emotional intelligence and emotional literacy and I wonder if we could draw some of that into the project.

S I think it would be a good idea. Over the last three years we have had an increasing number of students with special needs, not all students with special needs have got behavioural difficulties too, but they are generally young for their age, they find the whole business of ten different teachers in ten different classrooms and to relate to a lot of people, very difficult so it is very often in the bottom groups where the behaviour is worse and of course within class if tasks aren't more differentiated, if they can't do the work then they do tend to behave poorly. So there is an issue of the profile of the school if you like, we are getting more children with special needs and this year's Year 7 is the weakest year that I can recollect having or that we have records to show and behaviour is particularly poor in the new Year 7.

R Is that because they feel that they don't have any chance of succeeding in terms of the curriculum or do they feel like failures and therefore what's the point in trying?

S I think it is a whole mixture of things. I think, for example, in English, we have sets. The bottom set has always had differentiated work, usually taught by myself or J M, the other special needs teacher and the schemes of work are specially written for low ability children, and the children we have had in the past with special needs have coped with the work. This year, J is teaching both bottom groups and she is finding that even those specially written schemes of work are proving to be too difficult for the children, so we need differentiation plus this year, so there is an issue there. It is in terms of relating to the number of teachers and the number of different rooms and the rules within those rooms, the science lab, the rules are different there, in the technology room to the sports hall so the whole of that they find very difficult. The four groups that I support have got the same teaching assistant with them all the time in an attempt to give them greater continuity, to have one person with them that they can identify with. They are finding transition between primary and secondary harder. The children seem less able to cope with that transition, even though, within the O, we do quite a lot of work on it.

R This is specifically about your Year 7 group?

S This year's Year 7 are having greater difficulty than previous years. We have got SATs results as well which indicate its a weak group. Plus our reading tests, our screening tests and even more detailed tests indicate this weaker year group. We have got more in the literacy group this year so I think there's plenty of evidence to show that it is weaker. We are starting to plan for that already, knowing this is going to be a weak

year going through, and we are thinking about alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4. We have been building this up over the last couple of years and certainly for this year's Year 7 I think we will need to have a range of options other than GCSE.

R You have got some of those in already haven't you, with various other students further up at the moment, who are struggling academically and I got the impression you are doing stuff about it?

S We are doing stuff about it. It depends on the student. It has a varying degree of success.

R I suppose it is bound to. You can't succeed for every single student.

S We do courses in house. We do the Youth 4 scheme and the excel club in house. We send students out on increased flexibility courses at the Regional College and on link courses, and although the courses themselves, I am sure, there is nothing wrong with, what you are actually asking is for your weakest, least articulate students to get a bus to a building the other side of town and go and work with a completely different group of people. It is a huge challenge. We support them initially but, ultimately, we can't afford the staff to take them and stay with them every week, and its when they start to be left unsupported that they drop off the courses, or they don't go, and that is where it breaks down.

R Can the courses themselves not provide additional staff?

S I don't think that's the issue. Its more to do with the children getting themselves there and that's the difficult part. If they were in a special school a lot of work would be done on independent travelling and social skills that you need, and money skills that you need, to do all these things, and in mainstream secondary on the GCSE treadmill we aren't able to devote as much time and attention to learn those skills. Our students still need them.

R So they are struggling academically and in terms of life skills?

S Some are, although I have to say that there is an issue with other children and behaviour as well. Children who haven't got that stress.

R In a way its the intelligent behaviour problems that you really want to worry about, isn't it? They can really mess up the system.

S Certainly in the school, things like league tables. They are the ones that could be grade C and above who are most likely to fail because they are not focused on learning.

R And sometimes its not cool to learn, is it? Some kids think you could put yourself up for bullying from your peers if you appear interested in what's going on in school.

S Particularly with boys, and we have had a big issue of under-achieving boys here and one of our young teachers has been given a responsibility point to address that, and he

has done it with training sessions for staff, looking at the sort of lessons boys respond best to and mentoring them, and we closed the gap quite a lot last year.

R Is that things like PE and practical stuff?

S He is a PE teacher, but its things like setting short term targets, having a larger number of short, focused activities rather than asking them to do one thing throughout the whole lesson. Giving lots of feedback and, of course, the mentoring.

R We said the data was going to be confidential and all individuals treated with respect. It may be at some point for publication but there won't be any reference to individuals or institutions at all. Under data collection, there are different ways, questionnaires, observations, interviews, focus groups and so on, that's fairly flexible. The data I have to collect then goes through the university. They are rather picky about what's acceptable as a research design and what's not.

S So really, apart from methodology, what we need is to establish a focus whether you are going to work on focusing on individuals, the whole school, the systems in school, the year group.

R There is no reason why it shouldn't be several of those or one of those at a time or whatever fits in with the organisation of the school. We were talking about the possibility of informing parents through the school bulletin?

S I don't see why not. A bulletin has just gone out. It tends to go out once a term, but we are not going to be doing anything practical for a little while yet. The next bulletin will be fine.

R The question is what shall we do? The areas we talked about are a group of kids who are challenging to everybody.

S We have got a small hardcore of students who challenge all teachers.

R And then we have got the under-achieving boys.

S Who are being worked with and identified.

R You mentioned the rewards for students who are doing okay. Where are they? What sort of systems can reinforce kids to be okay?

S There were letters sent home. There were commendations, but the system of commendations works well in Year 7, less well in Year 8 and by Year 9 the children, as you say, think its not very cool to collect commendations. I think setting up a system of rewarding students that will still have some sort of value higher up the school would be a really useful thing to do.

R Could that be done by asking the students themselves? Saying what rewards do you value?

S I think that would be a really valuable thing to do actually.

R So, what we could do is have a list of rewards that are available now and generate their view of how valued they are, and then a list of their suggestions.

S That would be quite useful. We don't use tangible rewards so if children win prizes we have achievement evenings, so departments give them prizes or if they get lots of commendations they will win a prize. About half the children tend to achieve and be invited to these evenings, which means half the children aren't getting anything and then we do things, for example, the tutor group that raised the most money for Children in Need were taken out to Macdonald's, which I think is a punishment, but they loved it. Maybe we could be thinking of introducing that for the group that got the most praise for its behaviour and be using that as a consistent approach throughout the school so that treats are given to reward groups that have behaved well. There are things like that we should be thinking of. There are people, though, who think that we should have an expectation that children will be well behaved in class and get on with their work because that's what they are here for and that by rewarding naughty children for being good you are perhaps lowering the standards. There are some staff that don't approve of children going out on courses at Key Stage 4 because they say you are rewarding their bad behaviour, not that they only go out for bad behaviour - some of them go out because they can't access the curriculum, but I have colleagues who will say, why not reward the kids who are doing well and trying hard instead of giving this privilege to children who are failing.

R I suppose the sorts of rewards that kids are getting who are achieving are the A-Cs. I suppose that's a long term thing and it only happens in one year but they are gaining those rewards and that recognition, whereas the kids who that get the Ds and the Fails or whatever.

S But working on that basis you are automatically saying that 50% of the children who perhaps have not got the intellectual ability to get high grades will have written themselves off and there is a huge issue there. If that's the case you can assume that low groups are automatically always going to be challenging which is an awful premise to work from.

R What's the point in trying because I am not going to succeed? That's the group where you need the Macdonald's and the sweeteners for things that make them feel that life is, school is worth trying.

Are we still expecting K?

S It doesn't look as if he is coming.

R I don't know how much time you have planned.

S I teach after break.

R What time's that?

S Break starts at quarter to 11.

R Shall we aim to finish by about half past-ish.

S That's fine.

R So if I do some minutes from our meeting now, and do some sort of main headings about what we have talked about and then if I send you the list you could have a chat with V and K.

S Can I suggest another perspective we could look at. Our Chair of Governors came in a couple of weeks ago and she tracked a middle ability Year 11 student through a day. She was quite shocked at some of the behaviour that she saw. Would that be another way of doing it because then you perhaps get perspectives from a child's point of view as well? What is their menu during a day. If you want to track a child and observe their lessons for a day.

R What aspects shocked the most?

S The off-task behaviour, the challenging behaviour and rudeness of some of the Year 11s to certain members of staff. The fact that staff did not always challenge that. The use of personal stereos in classes - that wasn't challenged by staff as well. The Head is banning them after Christmas, completely. They are not supposed to be in school. Certainly in higher years they are slipped in, the kids have got their headphones dangling out the top of their shirts. If the teacher is occupied with another group of students they go into the ears so the children aren't hearing what the teacher says. They are being banned after Christmas, but of course when you are trying to stop something that has been allowed to become established it will be interesting to see just how much of a battle we have over that. That was a Year 11 group, but if we are saying Year 7s are an issue, would it be perhaps profitable to track a group of Year 7s through a day and to try to pinpoint what actually does trigger the poorest behaviour. And I can tell you some of those things now. It would be things like supply teachers.

R Supply teachers have a tough time.

S Christmas has come early and you're the turkey. When their normal teacher is off and they are going to have a cover teacher children look to see who comes through the door and they size them up and if it's somebody from outside of school they are not going to know their names, they are not going to know the behaviour systems, they are not perhaps going to know the subject area. If it's somebody within school they are still sizing them up to see what sort of seniority this person has, do they know our names, so there is all of that going on and I think a school with a high absentee rate - ours isn't that bad - but where there are lots of cover and supply lessons, there are always difficulties.

But as I say, to observe these children with different teaching styles in different subject areas, in different classroom layouts and see what's working and what's not working. The structure of the school day. We have actually changed it so we have a longer morning and a shorter afternoon because disruption is always worse after lunch. So over the years we have tried loads of things but I think it would be really useful to have somebody come in and do an impartial observation and actually trying to focus on what's working and what's not working.

R A really useful thing to do. If the research gets too narrow and you only come up with answers to questions that you ask. If your questions are too narrow at the beginning you are missing a whole range of possibilities. What about the system of rewards? What do you think about asking students what they value? Any ideas how that could be looked at?

S It could be done in tutor time. If you did a questionnaire that could be completed within fifteen minutes, tutors could perhaps ask their tutees to complete it in a registration session.

R We are assuming a level of literacy which you would get in Year 7?

S Obviously there are some children that might need support some support so when its being done we might have to put some teaching assistants in to support those who can't do it easily. We have got 60 children on the Special Needs Register in Year 7 spread through eight tutor groups.

R So there's 60 in Year 7 alone?

S Yes.

R But you use them all, this is a very effective group. You have got three or four teaching assistants in one class?

S No, one class we have two in. The others only have one. Some have none at all. What happens is we have four classes where the students are average and above ability and they are not supported in any way. Then we have four classes where the students are identified as being middle ability or no ability and we put support into those classes.

R You mentioned last time the possibility of a bottom up approach but you felt the Headteacher may not be receptive to that.

S I have not approached him on that.

R I see TAs here who bring kids in when they are up in the air, they calm them down, have a joke with them, they diffuse all the potential crap that's flying around, and it would be interesting to get a perspective on the school from that viewpoint.

S I think they see a lot. There is an issue - I am concerned they are not treated as the spy in the camp in terms of them feeding back information about teachers that might be

derogatory, so there's an issue there, plus I think an impartial observation by someone like yourself who is highly qualified would have a greater standing. So I am not saying their views should not be considered - I have got some really able teaching assistants and their views are well worth taking into consideration - but I think for you to go in cold and see things in the first instance would be really useful.

R Can you imagine bringing them in or involving them at any point?

S Not all groups with children who are poorly behaved have teaching assistants. The lower ability groups do, and that is where most of the bad behaviour is but there are some higher groups where children still behave in a challenging way. Yes, they could definitely have a role to play.

R So I am going to track a group of students through the day. Do you want to discuss these things?

S I would have to discuss that, obviously, with the management team and the Head of Year. I am suggesting Year 7 because they are a weaker year, they are a challenging year. But also, if we can identify problems with Year 7 we have got five years still to sort out anything that we can, whereas I don't see much point in focusing on Year 11 who are going in May to do their exams. I think it would be beneficial to look at the lower school.

S So, what sort of students would you be looking at? Those that have challenged and are still challenging, those that were once challenging and seem to have focused themselves, or bright, able students that have sailed through the whole system?

R What helped you and what didn't help you.

S It probably would be interesting, yes.

R There are all sorts of possibilities.

S The possibilities are enormous and I think the difficulty with behaviour is that you can talk about it for hours without actually implementing anything and we are looking at really positive strategies that we can implement, I think.

R There is no agreed definition of bad behaviour, is there? What's bad behaviour on a Friday afternoon when you have really had enough is different from what's bad behaviour on a Tuesday morning when things are rolling along. This is how we are as human beings. We see things differently at different times and we are different from each other and we interpret children's actions in different ways.

S I think the most experienced teachers also plan their lessons differently for Friday afternoon, knowing that the children aren't going to be such receptive learners.

Unfortunately, in a big school like this, unlike primary schools when you tend to put your literacy hour at the beginning of the day every day, because of the timetable differences you can't leave your English staff on timetable on Friday afternoon so there will be a year group who have got academic lessons in the afternoons and on a Friday afternoon as well because that's the way that secondary schools are managed and that's how the curriculum works.

R And who teaches those difficult students on a Friday afternoon. Who gets that part of the timetable? Is that when most of the absences occur?

S Staff absences? If there is a pattern. We did have one teacher - who's now left - that Fridays were a definite pattern, but if there is a pattern its not one that I can see and our staff absence is not terribly high really through sickness. I wouldn't have identified that as a major difficulty. Planned staff absence for courses and conferences and projects and various other things is an issue that management are looking at very hard because that still needs covering as a supply and I think you have got to get the balance between doing all these proactive things and giving children lots of supply lessons which we know isn't good for them.

R Its the whole thing that students have about supply, if you have got something saying supply teacher its just target. Its like putting a bullseye on your forehead.

S The only relaxed thing about supply is that you can go home at 3.15 and not plan for the next day.

R Do you have supply teachers that work in your school?

S Fairly regularly, yes.

R So they are almost part of the staff, or doesn't it work quite like that?

S I wouldn't say they are almost part of the staff but we do have regular supplies, so they are obviously not so frightened off by behaviour that they say they will never darken your door again. That's an indication that behaviour here is certainly no worse than behaviour in most other secondary schools.

R I suppose if you have got supply teachers who are coming in and they are familiar with the layout of the school - you have got to know where you have got to go, for a start.

S It helps. For a start, if you don't know the layout of the school you are likely to be late going from one lesson to another. That's a recipe for a hard lesson. You have got 30 kids standing outside a room for ten minutes bubbling up nicely, when the teacher does arrive you can imagine what he has to deal with.

R So, I'll go through what we talked about and I will come up with some - how do you want to do it. Do you want to have a chat first, and get back to me.

S Can I go back to V because now he's got this extra teaching on his timetable and arrange another meeting at a time when I know he can be free.

R Okay. I want to go at a pace you are comfortable at, not my impatient, wild enthusiasm.

S So, if I feed back to V. I need to talk to you about N as well. I have completed the form more or less. I haven't got the consent form back from his parents because it only came yesterday and I sent it with his older brother, but it hasn't come back to me. The Head of Year who has got the record of all the things this child has been involved in is off with flu at the moment so its probably best if I give you all those things at the same time rather than send them.

R Is he actually excluded?

S He's not excluded but he is not in school at the moment. He goes to Fletton in the afternoons. When he came back in, he was reintroduced to school and he was removed from his first three consecutive lessons. So, he was asked to stay at home.

S He's potentially someone who could be part of this thing on behaviour. I don't know how useful that would be.

S I don't know if we will get him back in. He is just so volatile.

R How many kids are there who are like him?

S We do have children who don't conform and who are very difficult. There was a lot of activity going on and the children were all sitting, on task, fairly quiet in the room, teaching assistant there as well, and I was at the front of the classroom talking to a child. All of a sudden there was this hubbub at the back and I turned round and something had happened. He had leapt out of his seat and he was flailing his fists at the kid behind him. There was a fight going on in my class which I thought was well under control. He did that on a number of occasions, and over-reacts very aggressively to relatively small provocation.

R Is it somebody saying a derogatory comment about his family?

S He would say, yes, but sometimes it wasn't something being said, it could be a look. So we have got the aggression. Very, very attention seeking, although he didn't have a statement, what he did was pull the time of the teaching assistants that were there for the Statemented children away from the statements on to him because without that attention nobody else in the room could get on with their work. Do things like leave your seat, run round the room, run into cupboards, run out of the room. There was one occasion when he tried to attack another child and it took three of us to hold him and to stop him and get him out of the room. We are getting these instances so frequently the Head of Year has asked for him not to come back. Now to observe him on the first morning back, if he were to come back in, perhaps would not be fair on anybody and whether or not we do

get him back in I don't know. To be fair to you I need to have that list of all the incidents that he has been concerned with. There have been Child Protection issues as well.

R Sexual, physical?

S Physical. Going back to primary school, no longer on the Child Protection Register. We did try to involve Social Services last year but they said there wasn't sufficient grounds for them to become involved.

R And is that from his father, mother, step-father?

S What happened is that he was refusing to go home because he said he was frightened of what would happen. And it was quite late in the day. Social Services refused to get involved. Parents had come in to take him home. We had explored the idea of him going home with another member of the family but there was nobody that was able to take him. So mum and step-dad came in and he was literally hanging on to the wall and refusing to go with them. It took myself and W half an hour at least to persuade him to go with them. He was fine. He came to school the next day.

R I think you have told me this before. I don't know if it was about N or about somebody else, about somebody refusing to go home. What was his parents' first reaction. Did they see that he didn't want to go home?

S Oh, yes. You couldn't fail to see. They tried to talk to him about it.

R Do you think he was going to get a good hiding when he got home?

S I don't think they would have done that because we were so aware of the fact that he was frightened I think they would have realised. Social Services, I believe, followed it up with a phone call to say that the school were concerned and the parents need to be aware. A warning shot across the bow. Anyway, he's at home a lot at the moment and has been put forward for part time. So, if I get that information to you. I am coming in on Monday and Tuesday of next week anyway, so if I don't do it before Friday I will get it off to you.

R I will be working until Christmas Eve.

S Hopefully you will get that before then. I haven't got it all together now. It was parents evening last night and I was trying to do it between parents but not very successfully.

R Do you have a lot of parents come?

S Not a huge number. A busy spell at the beginning, and then a couple came in later. I had about forty minutes in the middle where I didn't see anybody.

R We always used to comment that you never see the parents that you want to see.

S I wrote to all the parents of children on the Special Needs Register because they are the ones that are perhaps least likely to come in. Your A Star pupils' parents nearly always come in because they are getting that really positive message, aren't they.

R Usually, probably, when they come home they are asked, how did you get on? Have you got any homework?

S So one of the strategies I am using to try and overcome that is to actually write a personal letter from me to all the parents of kids on the Special Needs Register, saying, I'm going to be there and would really like to speak to you, would you come and see me. And I still only got about 20% response, which isn't as good as I would like it to be. Its not really working.

R But that's not bad. It could be better, but it could be worse as well. Shall we leave it there?

S Yes, that's fine.

Appendix 11 Data 7 Lesson 1

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class	7Y2		
Time	8.00-9.45 a.m.	No of pupils	22
Subject	Humanities newly qualified teacher	TAs	2

Observer effects

T has turned observation to her advantage and said to class I was here to learn from them and to watch them learn, also introduced me to class and reinforced this.

General classroom issues (e.g. rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Mobile 7. Very shabby mobile, slightly untidy, some work on the walls.

Lesson delivery (e.g. clarify of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Explained topics clearly. Pupils involved in discussion. T gave out commendations (blue stickers). T made jokes about her own drawing ability. Class did not get noisy when teacher turned to talk to me.

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (e.g. shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

Teacher smiled and commented, 'that's right, well done, good thinking, you've got the answer, here's a sticker for your work, you are working nicely, well done for putting your hand up'.

Negative (e.g. tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Teacher, 'Why do you have to shout?'

Directive (e.g. clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

Teacher commented -make sure you have something to write with, if you know the answer put your hand up, you are all expected to complete this for homework,

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Interactions between teacher and pupils were positive, pupils carried out requests made by the teacher. A positive rapport was observed.

Teacher's expressed views

Class were a nightmare, altercations, getting out of seats. T identified ground rules and discussed them with children, e.g. don't get out of seat, don't shout out. Put rules up on board. Boundaries had to be made very clear. Each lesson one student gets a Snickers bar at the end of the lesson and T explained in detail that it goes to different students, not always high achievers. TAs are very helpful - her support system, What helped was two TAs and someone to send pupils to, otherwise T turned the class round on her own. School staff need a system to share successes.

TA's expressed views

Additional thoughts

Pupils engaged in lesson, at no point were told be quiet or shouted at.

Appendix 11 Data 7 Lesson 2

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2

Time 9.45-10.45 a.m.

No of pupils 22

Subject D&T

Experienced teacher had taught in Guernsey but returned to present school, researcher not sure why perhaps looking to be promoted.

TAs 1 - effective, worked mainly with one pupil

Observer effects

I was introduced to class, teacher did not know I was coming but after explanation of the research he was happy for me to observe.

General classroom issues (e.g. rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Computer Suite, each child had access to their own computer. No information was hand-written.

Lesson delivery (e.g. clarify of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Tasks design 3D letters of your own name and draw a map of the route from home to school. After introducing the tasks, the teacher moved around the class speaking in a pleasant tone to individual pupils.

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (e.g. shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

T smiled, showed a sense of humour

T commented 'that's looking better, fine, would you like some help

Negative

Directive (e.g. clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

e.g. can you be quiet please while I'm talking
one person talking, excuse me . . . thank you

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Focused on tasks, discussed with neighbours. Small number of pupils had difficulty staying on task for long periods and became restless but focussed on their work when T requested.

TA's expressed views

One particular pupil needs high level of support to stay on task.

Teacher's expressed views

Pupils tend to respond particularly well to working with computers. Another class have half their IT time in an ordinary classroom and they are less well behaved.

Additional thoughts

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class	7Y2	
Time	11.05 a.m.-12.05 p.m.	No of pupils 15
Subject	English	
Experienced female teacher	TA	1

Observer effects

Teacher did not introduce me or acknowledge my presence except when I spoke to her.

General classroom issues (e.g. rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Room 22. Mobile, well decorated, good display on walls. At beginning class asked to stand behind their seats, took considerable time for everyone to do this, some children particularly encouraged by others who were already standing up. Reece refused to stand up, was ignored by teacher. TA spent most of lesson with him.

Lesson delivery (e.g. clarify of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Pupils chose to be characters and read their part from a book. Pupils put their hands up and were chosen by name - "_____ you're standing nicely". While reading girls readily engaged in different ways people can speak - admiringly, loudly, rudely. While reading aloud boys contributed little on this.

Teacher management

Positive (e.g. shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

Danger of students who were carrying out requests being ignored, just avoided by T who occasionally made positive comments when some pupils followed her requests.

T appeared calm throughout the lesson.

Negative (e.g. tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Teacher appeared tense throughout.

Directive (e.g. clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

T continued to repeat instructions for tasks and asked the class to be quiet.

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

When T spoke P said "what" in an unpleasant fashion and turned to talk to neighbour behind him, did some work, made verbal negative comment to neighbour, swept items off his desk onto floor, reluctant to write his answers though appeared capable of some writing. Two pupils feinted blows at each other. Pupil said "he's not getting no jelly babies tonight", quietened by teacher. Pupil turned and took equipment from other pupil's desk. Pupil swept more books on floor and started sliding himself under desk, Pupil pushed other pupil's chair with his foot. Teacher said TA will take pupil next door because 'I think he's spoiling the lesson'. Pupil went out quietly with TA, P got on with his work. P sat leaning on back legs of chair, staring with blank eyes in front of him. Class had periods of being very quiet, every so often noise bubbled up in terms of moaning and talking to neighbours. A small number (8) focused on task majority of time. Pupil fiddled with pen, flicking the end repeatedly so that it jumped out of casing. At almost any time three or more pupils were not engaged in task.

Teacher's expressed views

She felt that next week during inspection she may fail Ofsted because of this class.

TA's behaviour and expressed views

TA sat next to one pupil and tried to engage him in work, finding the place in his book, talking to him about the work

Additional thoughts

Teacher seemed keen to follow punishments through, I wondered if she would have bothered if I had not been there. Did pupil behave badly in order to get sent out of the lesson?

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2

Time 12.05-1.05 p.m.

No of pupils 20

Subject Science

Graduate trainee teacher

TAs 2

Observer effects

I sat at the back, after introducing myself. Teacher had very little time or interest in observer. Said to class he would not use "the ruler" because "we have a visitor".

General classroom issues (e.g. rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Science lab sat in two rows. Discussion about eggs and sperm in reproduction, children responded sensibly and asked questions.

Lesson delivery (e.g. clarify of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Teacher started with negatives, used a loud, aggressive voice - "some of you don't have your books", "you haven't got your book".

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (e.g. shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

Explained how one child had done well in the test and then included everyone else in the praise.

Negative (e.g. tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Sarcasm "Can I carry on now you've finished". Used a ruler to crack down on the table. Children made as much noise moving chairs back at end of lesson. Three children turned to look at me, perhaps expecting me to be shocked, had little effect. About the fifth time I've said this now. Sorry? - you will be. Shouting, used loud voice.

Directive (e.g. clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Class were largely quiet and attentive. Two girls flounced and challenged teacher's requests. Girl who was sent out of English was sent out again. Came back with a senior member of staff. They went into a separate, yelled at the girl like she had lost her temper, went back through lab. Returned with girl who looked chastened. Teacher said she had spoken to girl's parents and modelled polite behaviour. Excuse me Mr Girl sat down crying, consoled quietly by friends. Second girl also returned and sat quietly. Teacher spoke to first girl encouragingly, pointed out positive things she had done well.

Teacher's expressed views

At end I commented to teacher how maturely they had appeared to respond to subject of reproduction and he replied that they were "one of the worst bunches".

TA's behaviour and expressed views

TA wrote for a boy who paid no attention to what she was writing.

Additional thoughts

Whatever I said to the teacher he corrected, qualified or disagreed.

Appendix 11 Data 7 Lesson 5

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2
Time 2.10-3.10 p.m. **No of pupils** 20
Subject PE

Young experienced female teacher

TAs

Observer effects

Unfortunately, several pupils wanted to talk to me rather than engage in PE. I sent them back to rounders game.

General classroom issues (e.g. rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

On the field, sunny day. Some pupils not in kit.

Lesson delivery (e.g. clarify of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Clear instructions. Teacher did not use names or connect in a personal way with pupils.

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (e.g. shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

Gave clear instructions

Negative (e.g. tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Directive (e.g. clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

Repeated requests several times

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Teaching style was mainly directive. Pupils had difficulty engaging in activities, many minor disputes among them.

Teacher's expressed views

They are a very difficult group who are always having petty disagreements among themselves and asking me to sort them out.

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TA's behaviour and expressed views

TA sat observing.

Additional thoughts

Difficulties in peer relationships may be prevalent in Year 7 groups

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2

Time 8.45 – 9.45

No of pupils. 23 , 1 collected work and stayed outside.

Subject Humanities

Newly qualified teacher

TAs. 2

Observer effects; appeared minimal, CT more confident

General classroom issues (eg. Rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Dingy mobile as before, perhaps a little tidier. Class sat in rows.

Lesson delivery (eg. Clarity of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

T spoke to pupils who were lined up outside the class reminding them about working and behaving well. In the classroom she showed them sweets which would be given for rewards at the end of the lesson.

The topic was Islam, T read from worksheet about Koran before distributing them, made clear what task was. T put numbers of cards up on board and asked them to say them in order then rubbed them off to see if anyone could remember them. T linked this rote learning approach to learning the Koran by heart.

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (eg. Shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

Well done for getting your work (to a child who was in the exclusion unit)

Engaged them in lesson by using their names, shared quite adult subtle humour with them. Smiled and made good eye contact.

Negative (eg. Tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

'you've got to stop talking to me as if you are the only person in the class'

Directive (eg. Clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

You've got a minute left

Drew out information from them and led them onto further info. Student focussed and T appeared to value pupils' contributions.

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

T spoke to class before they came in, got out sweets and said they were there as rewards

Promised 3 commendations for putting cards in correct order

We have to be really quiet because P has remembered, everyone. He's going for the three commendations. 2 right, he's on the way, 3 right. Class in absolute quiet and concentration while P wrote on the board. 'Miss you're putting him off now' T smiled and quietened. Child -What's this to do with Islam? T 'you wait to see my connection'. 'Go Danielle'

T joked about her drawing ability.

'A sweet for the person who finishes first'. Give everyone a chance and then when everyone is finished you'll get this (sweet).

'I can't believe how fast this lesson is going and you're all working so well'.

Children stayed in seats. One pupil drummed on desk with his fingers,

Teachers expressed views

Interviewed at a separate time

TAs' behaviour & expressed views

TAs sat next to two pupils, new TA again wrote for child while he pretended his water bottle was a torpedo/ water fountain

Additional thoughts

Lesson conducted like a quiz game or game show on television. T asked for their knowledge and valued their contributions.

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2

Time 9.45 – 10.45 am

No of pupils: 21

Subject ICT

Mature male teacher

TAs 1

Observer effects: none observed

General classroom issues (eg. Rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Computer suite, pupils worked in pairs or individually on keyboards

Lesson delivery (eg. Clarity of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

Design a house and garden. Clear verbal explanation of task

Teacher management

Positive (eg. Shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

T praised and spoke to pupils politely (maybe observer effect?)

Generally calm and measured.

Negative (eg. Tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Directive (eg. Clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

Clear instructions

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Pupils focused on task.

One pupil sent inappropriate material to another and was sent by teacher to work outside room with his TA.

Teachers expressed views

A small group of 10 Year 7s spent Tuesday to Friday in the seclusion unit and this has calmed the group down.

Regarding staff communication there is no formal system except email. A staff bugbear is the large number of emails that do not apply to yourself

T. works in a number of departments and this is a problem when departmental meetings all happen at the same time.

T. finds a number of Year 8 classes difficult 'in science I shout most of the time'.

Following the mini Ofsted of 2 days, the inspectors produced a report to senior management which was critical of senior staff about to retire this term, T. felt this was a bit unfair. A key problem has been consistency.

Behaviour policy has proved very cumbersome and heavy on paperwork –

Name on board, formal warning, pupil fills in green form, yellow form results in departmental detention, red exit form to unit or Head of department.

Heads of Year have overview and most parental contact, form tutors also have parental contact. Pastoral work is carried out by form tutors.

Next year year groups will be placed together, departments and groups will be linked(?)

Every room will have a different number. There is a lot of administrative work.

Withdrawal of disruptive students seen as very positive by T for the rest of the pupils staying in the class. Lakeside will be a school within a school for Key stage 3 with the aim of re-integrating the pupils.

TAs' behaviour & expressed views

Went and worked outside with one pupil

Additional thoughts

I wonder what the TAs think regarding helpful and unhelpful strategies for reducing behaviour problems. It would be useful to meet with them, explain a bit about the project and give them a short questionnaire to complete perhaps with their pupils. Also could pupils be given a scenario of disruptive behaviour and describe their responses to it.

Appendix 13

Data 9 Lesson 3

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class 7Y2

Time 11.05 – 12.05

No of pupils: 19

Subject English

Mature female teacher

TAs 3

Observer effects: some pupils looked in my direction occasionally

General classroom issues (eg. Rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

Seating had changed, pupils were grouped around tables but this did not seem to alter their behaviour.

Lesson delivery (eg. Clarity of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

T had considerable difficulty engaging the attention of the whole class, task was presented on the use of apostrophes

At any one moment there was nearly always some off task behaviour, some groups or individuals who were sitting and listening did not have this publicly recognised /reinforced by the teacher.

T showed video of James and the Giant Peach and after a couple of minutes pupils settled and watched video in silent concentration, one asked ‘are we allowed to watch at lunch’.

Teacher management management of pupils

Positive (eg. Shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)

T occasionally used pupil names.

T went round with stickers, some pupils appeared to tolerate it rather than value it, other pupils showed enthusiasm.

Negative (eg. Tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Directive (eg. Clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

T constantly asked the pupils to be quiet, kept her cool, repeated sssshh.

Teacher/ pupil behaviour

Some pupils focussed on task for short periods.

4 pupils moved around the class at will, some pupils made noises and messed around, some pupils sat unacknowledged with their hands up. Boy walked out of class and then came back to the door and made comments. Flicked paper across the room, 3 children stood by the windows, knocked on glass and made comments.

Pupils took parts and turns in reading from James and the Giant Peach. Pupils in groups focused mainly on each other and played with water bottles, swung on back legs of chairs, grinned at each other across the classroom, one child went over and drummed their fingers on the glass to attract the attention of someone they had seen on the playground.

Class seemed a little more curriculum focussed than on previous observation.

Teacher's expressed views

The group have been a lot better, praise and stickers seem to really work with them.

TAs' behaviour & expressed views

Sat at table with 4 boys including M from Mrs C's lesson,

Additional thoughts

Could videos be used more as a valued reward, pupils seem to assume that the way they behaved was perfectly acceptable, appeared not to be guided by any classroom rules. The first job could be to agree some basic rules with them.

Classroom observation schedule

Secondary School

Class Year 7

Time 12.05-1.05

No of pupils: 19

Subject English

Mature female teacher

TAs 3

Observer effects:

There did not appear to be any

General classroom issues (eg. Rules displayed, seating arrangements, general appearance)

There are two doors in the class, one goes to a stock room and one to an outside corridor.

Lesson delivery (eg. Clarity of instructions, involvement of pupils in discussion, match of pupils to task, teacher positioning and movement around class, eliciting pupil responses)

T spent considerable time saying ‘Year 7 sssshhhhh’ many pupils ignored her and focussed on playing around and amusing each other.

T overwhelmed by large proportion of pupils displaying off task behaviour – noises comments, movement around the room.

Teacher management of pupils

Positive (eg. Shows warmth, encourages, compliments, consistent, sense of humour)
‘Why don’t you come and sit there, thankyou B that’s very nice of you’, boy sat down and threw pen behind him.

T praised and spoke to pupils politely (maybe observer effect?)

Generally calm and measured.

Negative (eg. Tense, shouts, aloof, sarcastic, threatening, inconsistent)

Threatened to keep the class in at lunchtime

Directive (eg. Clear instructions delivered, boundaries on behaviour)

‘People are wasting time, stop throwing things, those people who are working put their hand up.

Teacher /pupil behaviour

2 boys came in late without being asked or giving an explanation

3 boys on a table to my right sat quietly attending to T without an acknowledgement

2 pupils took it upon themselves to leave the room but were stopped by TA and T

Pupils moved around the room at will

5 pupils walking around the room

7 pupils walking around the room

pen was thrown

water bottles beaten on sides of tables

6 pupils at one point left the classroom apparently of their own volition

At one table a boy and girl were taking turns kicking each other under the table, the girl gave a loud scream and there was a sudden silence followed by a more calm atmosphere for several minutes.

One pupil said ‘run out J run’

Another pupil with paper dart ‘aim, fire’.

Pupils continued coming in and out of the room

3 pupils who were behaving badly suddenly got down to some work

2 pupils re-entered the class followed by TA

1 boy sat appropriately

1 boy used mobile phone

(Senior staff member entered the room requested by T through a TA, several children said ‘Oh MissIts Miss’ Low level disruption continued. Miss.... ‘Some people have done their work – and named pupils. Class may have quietened slightly with her presence, she slipped in seamlessly, did not have a big input and slipped out quietly having moved around the room having spoken to some of the children.)

Pupil swung on chair and scraped ruler on the table.

At one point a pupil said ‘its gone all quiet’ in a rather worried voice.

Turn to page 22, can we get on with it now, we need to listen to the person reading (children read out ignoring silly comments of others)

TA took 3 pupils out, 16 left in room

Continued noise, cracking of plastic water bottles, sneaking over and picking other people’s bottles up.

T wrote the names of 9 students on board

‘Hopefully in a minute I will be able to put more names on the board’ (sarcasm?)

T asked child to move and he refused to do so, TA moved books and bag but child still refused to move and did not appear to experience any consequences.

Boy prepared a paper aeroplane, almost threw it, decided not to, kept it under the table, took it out, said ‘test flight’ and threw to nearest corner of the room, retrieved it. Table with 3 children threw books across the table at each other, focussed back on the work.

Boy took out aeroplane and swung on the back of his chair. Another boy made a paper aeroplane.

Lesson bell went.

3 boys who stayed out of lesson with TA came to the classroom windows, shouted, banged on the windows, tried to pull open the catch on them, thinking it was all huge fun. Extra door to the stock room was locked.

T called out children by name for sitting sensibly and many were, given sweet as they left the classroom.

Children outside window were joined by other children from different classes, stood at windows, banged on the glass with hands, yelled comments. Children inside became increasingly agitated. Eventually other staff came and discouraged children from banging on window but had little lasting effect.

Some children continued to stay behind, eventually each child stayed quiet long enough to be called out to go for lunch

Teacher's expressed views

Invited me to observe and said they were most difficult.

I asked if she could get them to line up and enter in an orderly fashion as problems started at the beginning, she said that some line up and the others just stay outside and continue to mess around.

I suggested developing a set of rules with the class, T seemed interested.

T said 'the behaviour policy is no longer operating'.

TAs' behaviour & expressed views

I think TA told the T that one of the pupils attacked her physically outside the classroom.

Additional thoughts

Use of water bottles could be something they earn, have to be a whole school strategy
No clear sanctions or rewards in class, pupils seemed to behave in a silly way and calm themselves prior to total disruption.

Children who read aloud could have done with more support.

No single source of disruption in the class.

Most unhelpful to have pupils banging on the windows at the end

T unable to engage attention of class, stayed amazingly calm and appeared resilient.

Adapted from the following: (additional details and 'thoughts' added)

Appendix 14a Key issues for content analysis

Data were processed using content analysis in which the data are classified according to key issues for investigation which shaped the inquiry. (section 4.9 How data were processed).

(1) What are the expressed views of key members of the school community on the nature of pupils' behaviour difficulties. (Do staff in a school who perceive high levels of EBD in their pupils espouse a within child model of behaviour difficulties?)

(2) What is the nature of behaviour difficulties observed in the classrooms?

(3) Are environmental factors influential on pupils perceived by staff as having behaviour difficulties (related to key issues 1 and 2 above) ?

(4) What classroom strategies appear to be unsuccessful in encouraging pupils to focus on curriculum tasks?

(5) What classroom strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?

(6) How did the research influence school practices and teachers' views?

(7) How did the research project influence the views and the perceptions of the researcher?

(8) What is the role of the Principal in managing pupils' emotional and behavioural difficulties?

(9) Is there a culture of blame in which staff, parents or pupils blame other people for causing behaviour difficulties? (EBD is likely to perpetuate in situations in which there is a culture of blame and reluctance to accept personal responsibility .

(10) Is there a whole school policy on behaviour and how is it implemented throughout the school?

(11) Does the layout of the school and the nature of the building contribute to pupils' behaviour difficulties?

(12) What is the nature of relationships between staff and how may they impact on pupils' behaviour?

Appendix 14b Data 10

Feedback on classroom observations and interview with teacher

(The numbers related to key issues are identified in brackets.)

Researcher (R) Thanks for agreeing to participating in the project. Yours was the first lesson that I observed in the school within this research project and the group was identified as a particularly problematic, difficult group of kids. The perception in the school was that there are certain pupils, or certain groups of pupils, who behave so badly that everybody is struggling with them and they are disrupting everyone else. So I was interested, coming to your group and finding that actually that wasn't what I was seeing. What I was seeing was a group of children who were keen to learn, were engaged in the task that you were setting, had a kind of emotional capital in behaving well and focusing on what you were doing. At no point did you say, "Be quiet", "Shut up" trying to get on with the lesson. They were engaged in what you were presenting and what I was interested in was the techniques and the ways of managing the group that you seemed to be using. The ones that I observed were talking to them before they came in so they lined up and you prepared them for the lesson. You also mentioned on the first observation that this was a horrendous group and you worked hard, agreeing rules and what was acceptable etc. Using almost what I might call a "game show" approach which is "ladies and gentlemen, your task today is . . .", valuing their contributions so that you're not teaching and telling them, you are drawing out from them their knowledge and building on that knowledge to go to the next stage of learning. Lots of positives, the occasional critical comment, what came through at the last one was that in fact, you are not alone in this, M was particularly irritating and you said to him - I can't remember what you said - you said something to him, and he was about to give a retort, or did, and he was nudged by the child next to him, saying, "Shut up", "Be quiet" and he did. So clearly you have got what I call emotional capital with that group. (7)

Teacher (T) I think I would agree with that. I would have to say that that group is the one that I enjoy teaching the most in the school now, but when I first started I was absolutely lost to know what to do, how to cope with them, because when they first came in they would be rolling all over the floor, they would be swearing, they would be fighting and because I am new to the school . . .(1)

R This might be normal!

T When I asked them to do anything they were saying, "I'm not doing that" (1) and I had two weeks of it and then I had to come to the decision that I either did something very drastic with this group or I was going to suffer with this for the whole year, and as far as I was concerned there was no way I was going to suffer with it for the whole year. I decided that I was going to be the teacher in the class. My motivation is because I really care, so I was looking for ways that were going to suit them because I looked at them, their needs, because we have the register, I looked at the mix of class, some able students and some with dyslexia, other

students that were on drugs to keep them on an even plane, and so I went to my head of department and I said to him, "Look, I am really struggling with this class", (all the behaviour systems that they have here didn't work), "and I just don't know what to do). He said, "Just lay the laws down to them". (5) So that was the help I got (12), it wasn't what rules or anything, so I thought, "Right - I am going to agree with this class what is acceptable in this lesson and what is not".

R Did anyone at any point direct you towards the Behaviour Policy of the school?

T We were given it at the beginning, obviously, so we are told what the behaviour policy (10) is, but as far as I am concerned you can't apply that policy to every single lesson and every single student, because they are individuals and need to be treated in a way that is going to motivate them(4) , rather than saying, "Well if you don't do this, this is what's going to happen". So, what I did was, at the very beginning, I started putting (I know you said to me they were all very negative rules), but I started to put all the rules on the board that I considered to be acceptable for my classroom, and then I got them to agree that they were acceptable rules. Things like, they would not get out of their seat, they would not fight, they would not roll on the floor, they will not chew, and all that, and then for, it must have been three weeks, every single lesson. Three times a week, for about three weeks. (5)

R Gosh, that is a large proportion of time, isn't it?

T Well, you see, it was worth it - as I see now - but the first couple of lessons it was a hard, hard way of getting through it. I would write them up, we would go through them one by one, the whole class would agree, yes, that is acceptable. And things like chewing, I would get to the chewing one - "No you are not going to chew in my lesson" and they would all say, yes, so I said, "Right, everyone who's chewing now get up and put it in the bin". First of all they didn't do it, but now they do it.(5)

R So you did that nine times, did you. It got easier and easier, did it?

T It must be about nine times, yes. As we got towards the seventh, eighth and ninth, I just said, "These are the rules".

R When you thought of the rules did you think of them and put them up on the board and then they came in, or did they take part in generating the rules.

T They took part.

R They helped you generate the rules.

T To begin with I had them up on the board, and then I asked them if there was any more. Then I would write the rules up when they were in the classroom and they would

tell me what I was writing up, so they were already agreed rules but they were telling me to identify the fact that they knew what they were. (5)

R So you encouraged them . . .

T Well, I knew what I wanted them to do, and then I would say, "What rule have I missed off here?" and then they would say, "The chewing", or "Don't get out your seat", "Put your hand up", and then obviously once I put them up on the board, then when they started to step out of line I issued a warning straight away and I would point to the rule, "You have just broken this rule". "That means now you are on a formal warning." "Oh, you have just broken it again. That means another one." So I take them up the ladder, and particularly difficult students within the first couple of lessons were out of my lesson. (5)

R So in that sense you followed the school Behaviour Policy.

T I followed it once I had set my own rules. I am a firm believer that children need to have boundaries. When they know what the boundaries are, then they don't step over them. If they don't know what the boundaries are . . .(5)

R They need to know that the boundaries don't move either, otherwise they are not boundaries, are they?

T If they came in now, well I've got them next, if I said to them, "Can you tell me what the rules are", they would be able to tell me what every one of them up there are, and I would just be able to write them. So, some of them wouldn't go as far as being out of my lesson, some would then come back for detentions, and I would ensure that they came for detentions. If they didn't turn up for my detentions, then they would go for a half an hour one with my head of department. So I followed the structure that way. When they came in for a detention with me, rather than (growling) I would sit down and talk to them, so I had an individual conversation which I can't do in the lesson. So building up relationships in the detention time. One of the most difficult girls in the class, she has just come in now and had a chat with me, just before you got here. (5)

R There was a child who came and collected her work at the beginning of the lesson.

T Difficult child.

R Is that the one you were talking about?

T No that was another one. There are quite a few difficult ones. I have found they are still in primary mode. I don't do this with every class. This is the only class that I do it with. I have another two Year 7 classes that don't need to have this sort of structure, because they respond to my instruction anyway, but because these are particularly bad, I have implemented it and they are the only class that I give a reward to. (5)

R The sweets.

T The girl that came into the lesson, she sometimes turns up twenty minutes late to my lesson, or she would just walk in and start arguing and shouting about. It was key as well for me to work very closely with the LSAs - I have to say they did very, very good - and I have drawn on their knowledge of the students rather than believing that I am the teacher and that I know best. So, once I got the decision that something drastic needs to happen, I discussed with them about where different students need to be seated as well (5). So they were originally put boy/girl/boy/girl alphabetically when they first came into the classroom, but it still meant that there might be a net of students that they didn't work well with, so we talked about that, and we decided different ones would go with such and such, so now the ones that are likely to have any problems are not next to each other.(5)

R Do they come in and sit down in the same seats each lesson?

T Yes.

R So they all know where their place is and they come and sit at it.

T They have asked me to move, but I don't let them. Because they catch me in what they think is a good mood and say, "I've been good all lesson" stuff, but I don't let them, and I don't also let them because they have a lot of falling out amongst themselves and they come to me and say, "I'm not talking to such and such. I don't want to work with her, or sit next to her". I tell them, "You do not talk about this in my class and you do not bring it into my class". And they don't now, even though they miss many other classes because they are going to see their head of year or stuff, because such and such has fallen out, they don't come late and they don't bring it into the classroom. It does create too much friction and then everybody starts to get involved. They say, "What does such and such do?" and if I hear any child talking about any conflict I take them out of the classroom straight away and put them in that back room, and then I go in and talk to them (5). That is the "room of doom". They all know when they go in there that they are in trouble. The symbol is to the rest of the class that they are going into the "room of doom" because they need to be talked to.

R So you can leave the class with the TAs.

T No, I never. I only stand by the door, they stand in there, I always let the class see, because I never scream and shout at them any more. Well, that's a lie, I do, occasionally, because they are just looking at me as if to say, "Oh, well, I've got one over on you" and I really do feel that I do shout at different times.

R Is that shouting at the class, or an individual, or either?

T It can be both. But I have actually not lost my temper with them, because I want them to see that as much as I would like to lark about with them, there are still those boundaries and if they overstep the boundaries they need to know I'm unhappy (5). And

they know that when I am happy they are going to have a good lesson. When I'm not happy they know that they are going to have to work in silence, there is not going to be this interaction, and most of these kids love you to have a word with them. (5)

R Attention.

T They absolutely love it. They like to feel special. If I go round to one of them and I say, "That looks really good" I will have about five or six of them saying, "Can you look at mine, does mine look good?" They crave that acceptance. (5) When I take them back to the point where they bring into the classroom all this disruption because I honestly believe that a lot of the reason why there is so much disruption in the class, I don't talk to them about what's going on with their friends, I talk to them about the fact that this is my lesson and they are not to talk about it in my lesson. If they have got problems then they deal with it at break time, lunch time, and they will come late to my lesson because such and such has been crying in the toilet. Of course that comes in and disrupts us so they don't do that any more because they get detention for that - every minute they are late they get detention for it.

R Do they get opportunities to talk about these problems elsewhere, that you know of?

T I will talk about them in detention with them. I will talk about them, or if I am walking around school, but they should be having opportunities with their head of year and with their form tutors(5).

R Is there a danger that, in order to get to talk to Mrs K, what you have to do is behave badly in the lesson and then you get detention and you get some individual time with her.

T No.

R How do you avoid that?

T When they come for the detention I don't just: "Ahh, that was unlucky", I say, "That is not acceptable. What you did in my lesson is not acceptable". I continue that (5). Once they have understood that. I don't get them in detention now. It doesn't very rarely happen. If they are late and they come without a note. I don't hardly see any of them.

R Has anyone else noticed? Obviously you feel you have gone from point a to point 100 up the scale in terms of this group and their behaviour.

T Its got to be the hit of the year for me, to be honest.

R Has anyone else said, "Oh, how, why?"

T Well, I keep harping on about it. I think they think because I am an NQT I am quite enthusiastic. I have had my mentor come in and observe a lesson, because I said, "Look,

I want you to see". She does emergency duties, so she gets called out to this class all the time. She she's come in and sees how much I have turned it around. (12)

R Was she impressed?

T Yes.

R What did she say?

T She said, "You've done really well, you've done a good job there". I am frustrated, I must say, that they haven't used what I have done in here. I hear all these problems around the school, with these students. I just don't understand how they get away with it. I don't understand. I took this class into the library, ICT block, yesterday, working on the computers, they had to find out ten facts about Islam. A teacher came in who teaches them and could not believe that not one of them was on a site that they weren't supposed to be on, and not one of them was running around shouting and screaming, and they were putting together - I will show you their work they have put together. This is work that they have done for me in the lesson. This is the low set that had no ability. (12)

R Particularly useful at this time are social developments, isn't it. Presumably you get a prescribed curriculum, so you have to follow it.

T I have been teaching subjects and topics that I don't know anything about. It has been a learning process for me as well.

R You personalise it, like that card game thing you did at the beginning (7). That, I guess, was your idea?

T I am actually a religious education teacher so I am much more comfortable with religious aspects. I mean, I have been doing history and geography with them this year as well.

R Do you get the freedom to do that? At any level is that a problem, or not?

T No. I have got a scheme of work that tells me what I am supposed to work towards, and then I have to work towards the assessed work. I have just given all my work away now, but the assessed work, they cannot believe - I have just taken it to my history - and he can't believe what work I have got out of them. Because they don't do anything for anyone else. Well, that's a lie, not anybody else, but . . .

R They don't get as much done.

T No. I have to say, I am so excited about this. The class. At the beginning I used to dread them coming in. Now, as you see, we do actually have a laugh, and I know that they are learning a lot (5).

R And they value you and the time in your classroom, basically.

T I know I took a cover lesson for Year 7 and it was rounders I was covering, and a Year 7 student I had never met said, "You are a strict teacher, aren't you?" so I think that the students begin to know from the very beginning.

R And pass the information around.

T That's it. Don't mess with her because you . . .(5)

R And it means that you have won before they come in the class, doesn't it. Or the teaching process has won. You don't have to battle to get their attention each time. (7)

T When I first came here, and I was doing some cover, I had some nightmare covers because they just saw me as the teacher and now when I walk into classes they know. I don't say I have got the formula completely right, because different classes have different approaches, and obviously the older they get the less you are able to mould them, but my theory is that if get them in Year 7 I am not going to have any problems with them when I teach them in Year 10. None at all.

R So would you say that your pupil management changes vastly or how would you say it changes vastly from say Year 7 to Year 9, or 10.

T I have to look at every class, I have a different approach. It might be using the same material, but I have a different approach to it. The way that I talk to them, some lessons I am actually more relaxed with. Like, this Year 7 class I am actually very, very relaxed with. I don't get stressed about them coming in. Its all very natural. Whereas some classes - but then, you see, I am teaching different subjects as well, so the specific matter is very different. I am looking at, I found Year 10s very, very difficult because I am taking on second year RE, they had a teacher before doing the main part of the course, I have just come in, new teacher, and a combination has been quite bad when they have been mixed ability. So I found it very difficult to actually keep some of those classes. It does require a lot of effort to begin with.

R What about the rewards. Would the rewards be different for a Year 10 group. Would you take out sweets?

T I don't take sweets out to any other class. I only take it out for that one Year 7. Unless, of course there is a special event on. I will give other Year 7s commendations out and what I tend to do is I don't make a big deal of it. I tend to just go round with stickers. (5)

R So, what rewards would you use for a Year 10 group?

T I have found that very difficult, because they don't like being recognised for anything.

R It's not cool, is it?

T No. So the rewards that I actually give them, is having a quiet word with them when nobody's listening. I will say, "Here, I'm impressed". Or if they have done well on an exam, as I am giving it out, "That's excellent". They much prefer just the praise side of it. (5) You can't give them stickers, for a start they are not . . .

R There have been some suggestions in the school about working towards giving vouchers for CDs and those sorts of things that everybody uses (5).

T I actually pushed myself on to this BFL (behaviour for learning) committee. They are trying to put together these policies, because I feel that if I am going to stay here I need to have some impact on what happens.

R Who leads the committee?

T Well, its led at the moment by KH, he is going to be the new Deputy Head, but the Head is there and so it PP and all the senior members of staff, and that's mainly what it is, senior members of staff.

R Have you come across SA?

T She's on it. I have heard her talk a couple of times in the meeting.

R She's the person I have been working with and S who's the SENCO, case work and so on. Also, S who will be the Deputy Head.

T She has only just been coming in and out. I would love to do something on the behaviour. I feel very intimidated at the moment because there are a lot of teachers in the school who have been teaching quite a while and they are well-established and respected for their position (12).

R Something's come across perhaps in other classrooms more than this one is that there is a sort of culture of having a water bottle and these water bottles aren't just for drinking from, they are for missiles, they are for hammering on the desk. It seems that if they saw having water as a privilege, which they earned towards getting, it might be a more positive thing that having an extra missile in your bag which you can take out when you want.

T I think that comes down to classroom management in the first place. They are not seeing that as an acceptable behaviour, and they get away with it in some lessons. And they bring that attitude and mentality into every single lesson.

R How are we fixed on time now?

T They are coming in. They are going to start to come in within the next five minutes.

R Is there anything you want to add to what you have said?

T I just think that there are kids in this school that you can work with, but they have been written off because they have gone too far down the negative path of labelling and that. I know people have put time with them, but because they have not had the clear guidelines in the first place, that's where they have lost. (5)

R What would be useful on another session perhaps, would be to share with you some observations that I have had in another class and say, "What could be done about that?"

T I would like that, because everything is so new to me, being an NQT I have just been floating to get by, so to go outside my little bubble and be going to look at other teachers and staff, and also not many teachers like you going in and looking at their lessons. They are intimidated by it. They think you are judging them, and to a certain extent, you are because you can sit around and think, "Well I would do that better and I would do that . ." (12)

R It could be a supportive experience, couldn't it? Somebody coming into your lesson, saying, "You could have tried this", or "How about trying that", or "Maybe you could have done that differently" or whatever, and if people are feeling that their shark's in the water then obviously its not something that people are going to accept very easily but it could be a supportive thing. (12)

Appendix 18 Data 14

Notes from the SEN Focus group meeting

Discussion started on developing strategies for the beginning of a lesson with pupils who were unprepared for learning tasks.

The following ideas were proposed:-

Getting pupils to stand behind their chairs

Try to avoid starting with a confrontation which leads to a negative atmosphere

Greeting them by name as they enter

Provide an accessible activity which they can start straight away eg. Using interactive whiteboards (not all classrooms have these) or giving them anagram words from the subject area

Pupils behaving well should be noticed and rewarded with points

Pupils achieving an agreed number of points should receive clearly defined rewards or prizes which are fairly immediate

Points can be given for effort, classwork and homework

Points could also be given for showing kindness or consideration towards others and settling down to work at the beginning of a lesson

Each pupil's number of points could be clearly accessible to them eg. Scores could be shown when pupils log on using a school computer

An agreed coding system could be used for adding comments to the points (eg. Gave 7 out of 10 correct answers)

Students with a high number of points could be rewarded publicly as an incentive to others

Rewards could also include a sweet given out at the end of a lesson and clapped by the class

Printed reward stickers can also be handed out

Pupils who behave well and work hard should receive positive rewards such as going to MacDonalds (as well as those with behaviour difficulties)

One Year group had a pizza party only for those who had behaved and worked over the year

Useful to have a school budget to cover this

Appendix 20 Data 16

SEN focus group

Thanks for coming and agreeing to contribute to the research project Student Success and Competence. All right. So its your agenda really. To encourage problem solving regarding pupils and behaviour and so on. So we acknowledge that there's no single correct way of working with them. Everybody has different styles and different techniques. We tend to speak from our own experience and own our own statements and try and give other people a kind of sharing thing, we discuss ideas.

You can come and sit with us, you know, and share your expertise.

We don't give 'good' advice or preach at each other, we don't criticise each other's ideas, we feel uninhibited and free to express ourselves and say exactly what we think and the confidentiality stays within the group, so we don't go and talk about it to other people. I will write up some minutes and before I share them with anyone else I will send them round to you and say, "Is that ok?" Is your email still the same? You don't have an email?

No, I do.

Well then, you've got it.

Ok.

It is quite interesting from somebody else's perspective actually because you TAs see classrooms from a different point of view don't you, because we are always up front learning things, they often see things that we don't. Frighteningly so.

Problem area 1, behaviour difficulties

I would like to speak about a student, actually two students.

What subject do you teach.

Mathematics.

First student, M was in Year 7. He used to have extreme behaviour problems and all of a sudden there he was in the lesson and he was a star pupil. I didn't have to ask him once to work, nothing behaviour-wise or anything. I don't know who spoke to him or what they said to him, but I would love to know. But sometimes he would just ignore what you say, not do the work, make funny noises, things like that. Removing him from the class does not help. Detentions does not work because basically every night he has got detention from other lessons and so on. But it seems to have been the maths lesson he

has improved. So for the time being I will deal with that. The other student, S in Year 11. Some lessons not a problem at all. I see them for three lessons in the week. Then last lesson which was Monday, the last lesson. He came in and C wanted the table next to him. She has a pencil case that looks like furry and he was stroking that and making sounds of a sheep, for example. He is 16 years old. He was walking around the class, stopping the work, bothering other students, disrupting the lesson. He basically did nothing that time and wouldn't follow instructions. Ignores you if you speak to him. I don't mean shouting at him, like I am talking to you now. Trying to help him to focus on his work, any arguing or anything like that and that was the scenario in the class so I had him removed from the lesson the next lesson and he was also removed from the next one. He will sit with the head of department. It seems as if something has gone seriously wrong somewhere. His form tutor doesn't know about anything. Miss P doesn't know about anything and when he is in the library he is totally the opposite.

He gets on with his work and focuses.

He is a prefect, I think a senior one for that matter.

He can be very polite but some days he would come into the lesson and that's the situation. And you can't get anything out of him. He will say if you ask him to do some job, it's not fair. He just doesn't stop. So I would like to maybe find a way I am seeing E tomorrow afternoon which is a behaviour expert, so maybe she can also shed a bit of light.

He is very immature in some respects.

Do you see him in other lessons?

I used to last year.

What was he like then?

He wasn't too bad in science.

I taught him in Year 9 for English and he was like that then. I used to have him at odd times when he was behaving well and other times when he was completely loopy and I never knew what it was. It is a worry.

He is 16 years old. There is nothing wrong mentally with him.

Academically he's ok and can keep up with the work?

I think academically he's quite weak.

If he's weak, he had teacher's assistance and there wasn't any reason for him to say, I can't do this. If you ask him, for example, take 7 add 3, he would say to you I can't do this,

although he can. Its a case of, I don't want to do this. What's the use? He sometimes has that attitude.

Does it change from morning to afternoon.

I never see him for the last lesson which I think might have an influence. Tuesdays is the second lesson. Sometimes it doesn't change.

Do you know the student?

I suppose E will tell you to build on the good things and ignore the bad ones. That's all very well but when they are throwing things across the classroom and poking other people and wandering around, how do you ignore it?

No. And other students complain because it is disrupting them.

Please don't go.

I have to go.

She can read our suggestions.

It just sounds like he is not capable of carrying things over from one lesson to another so if you punish him by keeping him out it is not going to make any difference.

No, I have never done that before.

He is a minute to minute child.

I have never had anyone removed from the lesson for two lessons in a row. I have never done that. This was the first. It was a last resort. I would have given him a detention or speak to him outside the classroom and say, get yourself together. I know you can do this, show me that you can.

Could you let him in the lessons and say, look you can come in the lesson but as soon as you start disrupting the class then you go, rather than not letting him at all.

I have tried that before.

I suppose it works in the sense that you have taken him out of the class and you have got a fairly settled group, have you, without him?

Well, I wouldn't say its a settled group.

I cannot do anything else at the moment. Thank you so much.

I don't think we have been much help.

I will have a look at the minutes and see whether there is anything else in there that I can use.

Did you see the minutes of the first forum? Not the last one, the one before that. There were a whole series of ideas that people came up with about settling students in.

Perhaps you could email them to R then.

Perhaps I will send you that and add any more than we think of.

Brilliant. Thank you so much.

I tend to tell him he is good and I know he can be good. You often find it is like self-fulfilling prophesy. If you keep saying to them, you're naughty, stop being naughty, they will think, well I am naughty so I have to be naughty. I am shocked that some kids, I thought kids that I have in small groups and often that is the key isn't it, they can't cope in a big class. They need too much attention. You should take them out of the big class and put them in a small group and you don't have as many difficulties. I am not saying you never have any, because you do, but sometimes its an issue of attention, but then as you say you are sitting next to them.

Have you tried taking them out?

No.

I wonder if man to man might work better.

He is in the army cadets so he must behave himself at some stage.

Yes, he would have to really behave himself.

And like he is in the library, given some responsibility he seems to be able. It is finding a way of allowing him to be in charge but not be in charge.

Something about responsibility for his own learning isn't it. What do I have to do to tackle this task? How will I do it? Rather than relying on adult help a lot. The subject teacher going and talking to him at the beginning and making it clear to him that he's got some attention and he is clear about what he's got to do.

Perhaps set small tasks then. I am going to give everybody pages so-and-so to so-and-so in a minute but as soon as you have done that I want you to bring it in. As soon as you have done that, right, ok, that's brilliant you have got all those right, so maybe need that instant and then right, well perhaps the next ten now or five or however many, depending

on what it is. Go and see if you can do it without anybody's help and then more praise. They have the points, I don't know how successful that is.

A very small group, very seldom more than six kids in the class.

So he managed in the small group.

That's not a big maths class but it has got reasonably disruptive kids in it.

So he perhaps doesn't get the attention he thinks he deserves and that's maybe why he acts up then. It was the same in English it was an awful class. With a lot of very demanding people and perhaps that's it. He thrives perhaps on the attention.

Maybe if he's got your attention then he wants someone else's as well. One person's isn't enough for him.

Was R saying that he changed? Did you pick that up? That he was ok at one point and then he got worse and its not quite clear why?

I think he was better at the start of the year. As times gone on he seems to be getting worse.

A lot of our kids, now I can only speak of what we have had in SA twenty years ago we have had some schools which was a completely separate school and they have done away with ninety-five per cent of them and we have brought those kids into ordinary secondary school and now all of a sudden that kid is not in a small group any more. In a small group in the same school or in the same class even as far as that's concerned if you wanted everything in the normal school. That child follows a completely different curriculum. Something that he can achieve. My Year 9 groups, 9Y4 and 9X4 that's bottom, bottom sets, very difficult kids, JW, NS, I get all those lovely characters. The day I am working with them in science, I have got problems. Whether I do a practical, whether I do theory with them, its a problem. But then I say to them, right we have done that now, let's do that work on a poster. And I have got a completely different group of kids. Immediately they can sit and draw little pictures and they can manage it. And they are in control of their work. With the same theory, talk to them differently doesn't work, but if they can then put it in pictures, let's draw pictures, let's do this. I don't know how you are going to do that in maths. There are certain things you can, which of course you can draw, and I think if we can get to that stage that they are going to need smaller groups. You don't need 26 kids in a group. With a smaller group you can have much more success. I feel now behavioural problem kids are now bottom set kids and are top set kids. Because the top sets are losing it. Because they are not stretched. And I don't blame any teacher. We haven't really got the time. Yes, you have got an hour, but in that hour's time you have got thirty other students, so you can't pick up those five that's at the top. Yes, you give them individual little bits and pieces of work.

But you are not giving them your time, are you?

But you don't give them time. Those kids need as much time as the bottom ones. And the bottom ones need time. But if we have got smaller groups, we can do it. You can basically then with your TAs and things almost individual attention but there's no other distractions. At the moment you have got a top few and you have got a bottom few and its the in-between. They are quite happy to carry on with the work but they fall either way eventually. Because they see. Those kids are getting attention and these are getting attention and we get nothing.

That came up a couple of sessions ago, didn't it. The rewarding and the noticing that kids in the middle who are just getting on with it often are just left.

You are trying to solve the problems all the time. You don't really give time and pay attention to those.

There is a fair bit of resentment in that class. In the top set. He doesn't do any writing. And yet when he gets a test he knows the answers, I don't know where he gets them from. He does some work somewhere. I don't know how much work he's done. He doesn't do the work in the school, that's for sure. He doesn't do the homework. He doesn't do the projects.

He must be taking things in although he doesn't look like he is. There are some students who can do that.

Is it because he can't record the information?

His writing is abysmal. If I gave you a page of his writing you would desperately struggle to read it. I can read most of it because I have worked on him for about four years. He can't write quick enough.

Does he get an amanuensis in?

Yes.

So, are there any other ideas that we can offer R? We have got taking him out, talking to him, giving him responsibility for some aspects of management.

He is totally different.

This one is out of school already.

He had a brother a year or two ago, also. I think I will eventually kick him out of science. But I think he was basically just walking around school.

You don't mean D B? He's his arch enemy.

Probably keeping him out of the lesson for the whole lesson and saying, don't come in, is probably not going to help him much, is it. He might be quiet somewhere.

It doesn't solve the problem because the problem is still there when he comes back, isn't it. And I think that's true of a lot of kids that are out of lessons like that. You are still faced with that problem and whether the way we deal with that.

Even if you set up (are you with them in all the maths lessons?)

Yes.

Because maybe you could set up some sort of reward system. What about you setting up a sort of little maths record. If you are on target in a quarter of an hour then you can reward them and there might be something, they might not want sweets, but we can arrange they get.

It sounds a good idea. Its that short term thing, isn't it. Getting those short term rewards rather than waiting for the long one because the long one could be forever coming in terms of the child. Did you have anything, is there anything else you want to discuss?

Problem area 2, child with social difficulties

I would like to talk about S. Have you come across S?

Yes, she was in my group but they have moved her. I really would like some advice about her because I don't know whether she has got Tourette's.

What's her name.

S.

That really is her name?

It really is her name. She comes from S, I know that S culture is slightly different from ours, but she is so aggressive towards the other children. She is just awful towards them. And my form, as anyone will tell you, is a very nice form. There's two girls in it which aren't very nice and half a dozen boys who are a bit silly, but there's nobody in there who's evil or really horrible. And yet she has managed to upset the vast majority of them. She will walk past. She was in Year 8, she got put in the wrong year group when she first arrived, but managed to alienate the whole of Year 8 virtually in a term. But you catch her and she will walk past the children and she will say something like, Bitch. I can't work out whether she's Tourettes-like and she just says it without realising she is doing it. And then kids turn on her and then she feels victimised. She comes to me: "Everybody is so horrible to me, I do not understand what it is that's going on", and is so hurt, but she causes it. You know that boy, M, that you saw, she's like M. I have no idea what to do for her to help her. I don't know whether it is some sort of condition she has or whether

she just misinterprets social signals and she interprets every time anyone looks at her, or she will say, they are whispering about me. And I say, no they are not, they are just getting on quietly. "No they are looking at me and whispering about me." She has an obsession that everybody is getting at her and it is not fair.

If you want to commit suicide take M with you and go down to London. It would be the easiest way to get killed. M and this girl's got basically the same personality.

They walk in and as they walk in, they make enemies. They don't have to look. My opinion is its their body language which is aggressive. I think hers is because she comes from a different culture. She wanted to make her mark here and she hasn't made it. I think she thought she was going to walk into School and I am going to be "the girl". And she's not. That's the opinion I'm getting.

She will say things like, because I have got a group of really, really nice girls in my form. And they have tried to be friendly with her, but they all say things like, Oh, I'm going for my dance competition at the weekend, (for example), she will say, "Well, I won a competition. I was the best in the whole of S and I went up against adults". They despair at her because they know she's lying and yet if they say, "Oh, come on, S", off she goes again. She doesn't seem to know how to, she can't ignore anything for a start and she doesn't seem to know how to be (oh what's the word). No social skills at all.

She thinks she's got to be treated like a little Madonna.

Special.

She's very special and by doing that attitude she is looking down on the others and that's causing a bitter feud. That's the impression she gave me in my lesson.

What is she, a normal size. She's not overweight.

She is quite big, she's quite tall. She is bigger than a lot of the kids. No, she's not fat.

I would say as she walks in she would pass through as normal.

English isn't a problem, she can speak with no problem.

Apart from the social thing.

Its an entirely social thing.

She is bright enough, isn't she.

What about getting a circle of your best girls around and saying, how do we make friends with people? What do we value in a friend? Is it somebody saying something nice? Somebody saying your name? Do a bit of modelling of what thing a friend is. Being

kind to somebody. You could lend them your rubber. All those things and then end up with a list of things. Give them to her and say, see if you can do any of those today for the next lesson. Tick it when she has done it. Come and show me what you have done.

Give her little targets.

Like the idea of giving targets for the work. Breaking it down and being specific about what you want them to do. She probably doesn't know, does she, she probably doesn't know. She thinks everybody is being horrible to her. She doesn't relate it to how she's behaving. That may help, especially if you have got some mature, socially skilled girls.

Yes, they are, extremely.

I did do that with an ADHD, she's left now.

NEXT TAPE:

Signal for her, be quiet. When she got too loud in class and they were all doing this, calm down calm down. This is what I used to do with my son, he's autistic. What is it, Makaton. That's enough, no now. That worked with them so I should try it with S really.

Good idea. It might help.

It's so awful, her name just doesn't suit her. Clouds of black. I don't mean that because that sounds racist.

I wonder whether that's not where one of our problems is. Yes we try to move away from racism but I think a lot of times they walk around with a chip on the shoulder. Coming from a third world country they walk around with a chip on their shoulder. Why me? Why victimise me? Why me? They cannot understand that you are ones that looking for trouble.

Problem area 3 pupil denial

They tell you in Year 9. Standing, looking at him. In my classroom. I saw him throw it. I walked in and I said I have been standing, watching you doing it! Oh, no, you didn't see me.

One of the most infuriating things, isn't it, when kids turn round and say, no I didn't do it.

When you have seen them.

She hangs her stuff at the back of my class, her scarf and her handbag. He walked from me after I spoke to him, he walked to the back, took her scarf and walked down the aisle. Now, I didn't know that it's her scarf. I don't pay attention. She said, Where's my scarf.

Its a grey one. That one there. No, its not me. We have gone through this before. You argue with me and I know. I walked away. But he is that type of person.

It is almost as if they are looking for a confrontation.

All the time.

The more they engage you with it, no I didn't, you know, the more they get out of it.

Unfortunately, I cannot argue with the kid. I'm sorry.

It is a waste of time. You say something, he says something. You get into that. It is better to walk away and say you are expected to pick that up, leave it and see if he does. If he doesn't then give him a detention or a punishment.

I'm sorry but I don't want to give him a detention. There will just be another confrontation. Why me?

You are picking on me. Yes, I am because you are not doing what I asked you to do. When you do what you are supposed to be doing I won't pick on you any more.

I have done nothing. Well that's exactly why you are getting attention. You have done nothing I have asked you to do. I want you to do work. You have just told me you are doing nothing. By walking away they are still getting on. The minute you go to the front and carry on with the lesson they realise they have lost this one. I didn't get out of this argument what I wanted. There's quite a number of them here who will give you a good hour argument if you want one.

They are very skilled at it, aren't they?

Oh yes, they pick it up at home.

They bring in a secondary thing, don't they and so rather than arguing about having to pick up that piece of paper then its someone else did something. So they bring as many things in as possible. It gets more and more complex.

Its not always easy.

There is an assertive discipline approach where you say to a child, the rule is you don't throw paper on the floor. You have broken that rule. You chose to break that rule. Either pick it up or leave the classroom, and then you go away. You are giving them two options really and then you go away, you don't get drawn into the argument. You come back and see if they have done that.

Its the only way you survive I think.

I think we could do with some training at this school on assertive discipline.

I think we need quite a bit of training. One of the things we need really desperately is to project our voices. Unfortunately, I haven't got one of those thundering voices.

No, I haven't. Mine just goes shrieky and I want a Margaret Thatcher waaaaahhh and I need to know how to do it.

You need to learn how to do it. I think that is really important.

What about involving senior staff? Would you do that, or not? Rather than get into the confrontation.

They are not very keen on getting involved, are they? I have to say. Our senior staff push it back down. We have got a system at the moment where the class teacher detentions, department detentions or head of year detentions, depending on which way it goes. And then we have senior management after school detentions. If they refuse to attend those senior management after school detentions.

Does that push back to you?

It is pushed back down to department or head of year. To my mind that's wrong. I don't see how it can be pushed back down. If we have a system, the system should be. If you haven't come to that first after school detention then you get one on Saturday morning.

Well if they haven't attended you will have to do something about it. What can I do? I have already put my sanction in place and that hasn't worked.

I find personally the only way of dealing with it is dealing with it in the classroom and get it over and done.

Otherwise it becomes a long drawn out thing.

One of my year 10 said to me today, but sir that was four weeks ago.

Yes, I know.

And now she has got an after school detention this afternoon.

It is ridiculous. It should be instant.

Problem area 4 How do we punish kids then?

Coming from a special needs point of view a lot of our kids have dreadful short term memories. They don't know why they are there. "I don't know what I've done." Genuinely, they probably don't at that point. Unless you have got break time or lunch time straight after the lesson you are dealing with. And they are the only times I keep kids in, because I find that if I do it any other time it doesn't work.

The worst thing is, because when I do it, I talk to the class and lay down this. And I write on the board. Year 8 Breaktime detention. It is like a radio, you can hear immediately. Calm down. You put a question mark. 15. You start writing names underneath. They immediately calm down. If you tell them to come back at break time half of them don't come back. I'll see what happens here at the moment. How many people are running around in their free lesson to come and collect kids to come and do a detention. Is that part of my work?

Well D would say yes.

But it doesn't stand in my contract like I have got to run around collecting kids for detention. I don't see that as educational, I'm sorry.

That's where you need everybody reinforcing each other and you need all the teachers in the school to know that that child should be in detention when they are actually on the playground and the people on duty say, you are down here for a detention, what are you doing up here. That's when you want the consistency, isn't it.

This site is so huge. Yes, that would be brilliant if we could do that.

I personally feel we will not get it right. We can cut down our dinner time, make our dinner time 20/25 minutes. It doesn't take these kids longer than 25 minutes because I do dinner time duty and the first 20 minutes it is dead quiet and then they start drifting in. Cut the dinner time, they can go home earlier, but the school still closes at quarter past three.

Everyone that has been naughty that day.

If you don't behave, you have got a detention this afternoon. And the last teacher who teaches the group of kids, get out your planners please, thank you. Anybody that's plainly got a detention, they stay in that class. They don't go out, they stay there. They do their detention and at quarter past three they go home. All the other kids go home. It will make sure they have got their planners. If you don't have your planner then you stay anyway.

That's a very good idea.

The planner starts working, we use their planners, and at the end of the day you see their planners. We see how quickly we get this idea round. But at the moment its too easy if they don't attend senior management detention.

Three weeks later.

Three weeks later they send them to L. They want to go to L.

Problem area 5 The use of an additional resource

That's changing in September. No more of that because I'm in charge, officially since lesson 4 this morning. I am officially head of learning support now. We will have no more of drinking tea at L. There will be no more of it.

It should be punishment, not a holiday resort.

There is nothing wrong with having a system where kids come in in the morning and make toast and have a cup of tea and a chat with people.

It depends why they are there. What has happened is that L has become a doss area for kids who don't want to work. If kids have got family problems and they need a one to one, they are very upset about something, you take them in, a one to one in the mentoring room and they have a cup of tea and you sit down nicely with them. However, if you are out of maths because you have been a pain in the butt for the last half a term, or whatever it is, you should be sitting silently working.

I don't want to hear you and I don't want to see you.

I can't be doing with this nonsense, ah well yes but they can't help it.

You are reinforcing, they can go to L and take the pressure off.

Yes, that's what they do.

Going to L, oh, good.

L - any kid that goes there should not have break time the same as the others.

No.

They should have break time at a different time and, if you they get a free meal, you will get a packed lunch.

I said that before.

The packed lunch gets delivered there. If they can take sandwiches and things to the staff room they can walk 30 meters further to take packed lunches down there. Or you can send one kid to go.

NEXT TAPE:

Because we have chosen them to come to our lesson will be down there. Anybody else running off down there, hiding. Rows of children in silence doing their work.

That's what it should be.

I can't allow what's going on down there to happen any more because it is ridiculous.

He doesn't come to any of my lessons, I haven't seen him except for smoking on the school site. Does not go through any entrances or doors and things in the school. Come dinner time, come break time, he's in the school site. And the first thing he goes straight down to the back to smoke. All his buddies hang around him and they smoke. With their big coats and things they walk past you, are you going to say anything. If you do ask them, oh, I'm at L. I don't come to your lessons.

Why has he been out for so long, that's ridiculous.

He has been there ever since the beginning of this year, since L opened I haven't see him.

Its got to be far more transparent. People have got to know why they are there, for how long. He is just dossing isn't he?

He is using it as a way of putting two fingers up against the rest of the school.

A lot of other students are doing the same thing. And that's got to stop.

It's amazing how quickly these kids learn - there's the loophole. It draws the same kids all the time.

Behaviour support, what do you mean by that? If you have a child with anger management problems and they are having a group session for anger management then we will go down there. If you are just messing around you will be up here and its behaviour modification. Its not behaviour support, we are not supporting you being naughty.

Its exclusion really.

Internal.

Nobody is giving you any attention and you have just got some work to do.

Its too comfy for them, and I'm not having it any more.

The kids laugh about it.

Yes, they do.

I want to go to L, sir. I also want cookies and tea.

Its not a punishment.

Nothing wrong with cookies and tea but not for kids behaving badly to get it.

In the right circumstances.

We hear that they work for three quarters of an hour. Yes, good, they should have done. It should be there lesson work.

Its not right.

The bell goes and they can go. I say, thank you and off they go. They don't get cookies and tea. Its not working.

No, and it will stop.

Good. One bright spot!

Some people are not happy about it but they are just going to have to live with it.

Or look for another job.

I think we have got to the stage where if we don't stop this. The black people in SA have got a very good expression, you are on the wrong bus. It is taking you to where you don't want to go. Anybody that misbehaves, you are on the wrong bus. They will say to the kid, and its amazing how quickly those kids know the teacher said, you are on the wrong bus. Guaranteed by the end of the day that kid's back on track. That's what we need here, because they know what's going to happen.

You can only get that by reinforcing each other as a staff group.

I want to involve all staff. What I want to have is a page on the network so that any staff can look up at any time and see which kids should be in there for what reason. Literacy - so and so's at literacy. Right, ok I can check that. That's right. So and so is doing his one to one, right ok. We don't want any of this bugged off over there because he felt like it.

They should be in the classroom. That has been a problem here since I've arrived here. It was too easy to say, but then I go to learning support. And they come here. Because it was out of the lesson situation.

Well I have got this with CW at the moment. He is in here all the time. Telling me, I'm supposed to be in here when nobody has asked me.

That's where the planner could come in. Here's my planner, that is the teacher who told me to come here.

This is what I say to him. I know how difficult he is for everybody else so I contained him, but I'm not happy about it. But I have emailed his head of year and I get nothing.

Problem area 5 staff communication system

Our communication, we have got the most fantastic systems, but there's no communication. You get 35, 39, 40 emails a day and two of them might be relevant to what I'm doing here. You eventually get to the point where you just click them.

I do it as well.

Its not a matter that you don't want to do it. Three quarters of them are absolutely nothing to do with you.

Those are the ones that could be put up in the staff room, couldn't they. On sheets of paper for everybody to see? You don't need to receive them individually, do you?

I think if you take a little bit more time but it is so easy to send an email now to teachers. I personally feel that if I send you an email I don't have to send it to the whole school. Who do you want to reach?

If we are going to do that, we also need to provide us with an easy way of getting the people that we want to get emails instead of having to laboriously type it all in.

That's the easiest thing out!

Is it?

An address book.

Yes, but why have we not got one.

We need an address book on there and send it to the science department, or the maths department because its affecting them. But now what happens I send one to the whole school.

Ok It's time to finish our focus group, thanks everyone for coming, we've had some really good discussions with useful ideas from everyone, I hope those who presented the problem areas found it useful and I will send a summary round by email for you to see, if everyone's agreeable I will then circulate them to the school through S.

Appendix 20 Data 16

Minutes of the SEN focus group

Discussion: pupil in Year 11 who walks round the classroom, stopping the work of the other students, disrupting the lesson, strokes the furry pencil case of another student and making the sound of a sheep. He does not respond to requests or teaching assistant support though he is quite weak academically.

Solutions:

Simply sending him out does not solve the problem because the problem is still there when he comes back in.

Could you let him in the lessons and say, look you can come in the lesson but as soon as you start disrupting the class then you go, rather than not letting him in at all.

Sometimes they can't cope in a large class and respond better in a small group.

I tend to tell him he is good and I know he can be good. You often find it is like a self-fulfilling prophesy. If you keep saying to them, you're naughty, stop being naughty, they will think, well I am naughty so I have to be naughty.

He responds well to being given a job of responsibility in the library.

He could be given some individual attention at the beginning of the lesson, making sure he is clear about what he has got to do, set small tasks to last about 15 minutes and provide immediate feedback and award points before setting the next small task. Some pupils thrive on high levels of attention.

Using short term rewards as some pupils can't work towards the long term goals.

He could use alternative methods of recording such as drawing pictures and making mind maps.

There is a danger that the lower ability students in the group are taking up staff time and the top ones are not being stretched enough.

Discussion point: female student who has real problems relating to her peers. She has an obsession that everyone is looking at her, being horrible and whispering about her. Some pupils just seem to make enemies as they walk into the classroom. She thinks she's very special and by taking that attitude she is looking down on the others and that's causing a bitter feud. That's the impression she gave me in my lesson.

Solutions: What about getting a circle of your best girls around and saying, how do we make friends with people? What do we value in a friend? Is it somebody saying something nice? Somebody saying your name? Do a bit of modelling of what a friend is. Being kind to somebody. You could lend them your rubber. All those things and then end up with a list of things. Give them to her and say, see if you can do any of those today for the next lesson. Tick it when she has done it. Come and show me what you have done.

Agree on a (Makaton) signal that you can use for her to be quiet when she gets too loud in class.

Discussion point: in my classroom I saw him throw it. I walked in and I said I have been standing watching you do it and he says 'oh no you didn't see me'. It's one of the most infuriating things and they are constantly looking for a confrontation.

Solutions: the more they engage you with the argument the more they seem to get out of it and then they bring a secondary thing such as what someone else is doing and before you know it you are going round in circles arguing about that as well and it gradually gets more heated. They draw in as many points as possible and it gets more and more complex. If you are not careful you end up arguing over something completely different. It's better to walk away and get on with teaching the whole class than be drawn into a long argument.

There is an assertive discipline approach where you say to a child, the rule is you don't throw paper on the floor. You have broken that rule. You chose to break that rule.

Either pick it up or I make arrangements for you to leave the classroom, and then you go

away. You are giving them two options really and then you go away, you don't get drawn into the argument. You come back and see if they have done that.

Discussion point: students who are least willing to attend detentions. Well if they haven't attended you will have to do something about it. What can I do? I have already put my sanction in place and that hasn't worked.

I find personally the only way of dealing with it is dealing with it in the classroom and get it over and done.

Otherwise it becomes a long drawn out thing.

The system should be that if you don't come to that first after school detention then you come to one on Saturday morning.

Well if they haven't attended you will have to do something about it. What can I do? I have already put my sanction in place and that hasn't worked.

I find personally the only way of dealing with it is dealing with it in the classroom and get it over and done, otherwise it becomes a long drawn out thing.

Coming from a special needs point of view a lot of our students have dreadful short term memories. They don't know why they are there. "I don't know what I've done."

Genuinely, they probably don't at that point. Unless you have got break time or lunch time straight after the lesson you are dealing with. And they are the only times I keep kids in, because I find that if I do it any other time it doesn't work.

I talk to the class and lay down this, write on the board. Year 8 Breaktime detention. It is like a radio, you can hear immediately. Calm down. You put a question mark. 15. You start writing names underneath. They immediately calm down. If you tell them to come back at break time half of them don't come back.

That's where you need everybody reinforcing each other and you need all the teachers in the school to know that that child should be in detention when they are actually on the playground and the people on duty say, you are down here for a detention, what are you doing up here. That's when you want the consistency, isn't it.

We could cut down our dinner time, make it 20 to 25 minutes, allow them to go home earlier but those in detention stay. If you don't behave, you have got a detention this afternoon. And the last teacher who teaches the group of kids, get out your planners please, thank you. Anybody that's plainly got a detention, they stay in that class. They don't go out, they stay there. They do their detention and at quarter past three they go home. All the other kids go home. It will make sure they have got their planners. If you don't have your planner then you stay anyway.

Discussion on the possibility of using Lakeside as a reward for pupils who manage their behaviour in lessons. The dangers of children behaving badly and then having time in nice surroundings. Some children may genuinely benefit from time out others abuse the system and claim they have been sent out of lessons when they haven't.

Discussion on the high volume of emails. Possibilities discussed of using a notice board in the staff room for whole school information and using an 'address book' for items specific to school departments or certain staff.

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Appendix 22

Student success and competence project

What strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties?

Data on what strategies and teaching practices appear to help reduce or overcome behaviour difficulties was gathered from three action research cycles using interviews with staff, classroom observations and SEN focus groups which were set up to share good practice and information. Successful practices and strategies were identified under the following headings - Access to the curriculum, Preparing the pupils for learning, Behaviour support staff, Additional resource base, Consistency, Agreeing a set of rules, Firm boundaries, Clear guidelines, Building relationships, The use of technology in the classroom (video and computers), The use of rewards.

Access to the curriculum

Evidence was taken from three action research cycles which included interviews with staff, classroom observations and SEN focus groups.

Data 2. Teacher on underachieving boys

‘but its things like setting short term targets, having a larger number of short, focused activities rather than asking them to do one thing throughout the whole lesson. Giving lots of feedback’.

Data 8 During classroom observation of a lesson, the teacher provided pupils with opportunities to participate in the lesson by trying to remember all the playing cards and drawing on the board while the rest of the class attended with interest.

SEN focus group 21. provide an accessible activity that they can start straight away at the beginning of the lesson. Using interactive whiteboards (not all classrooms have these), giving them anagrams on words from the subject area, doing a quiz.

SEN focus group 33 Pupils can respond to well-planned lessons with a variety of tasks. The lessons can be broken up into three sessions, each session with a different activity. Teachers who pitch the lesson appropriately at the right level for the students and differentiate the subject matter for pupils can help to reduce behaviour difficulties.

Preparing the pupils for learning

Staff expressed mixed views about successful ways of preparing pupils at the beginning of a lesson -

Data 9 avoid allowing pupils to sit with their friends

Data 8 lesson 4. Feedback and discussion following classroom observations, teacher's expressed views: Researcher asked if the teacher could get them to line up and enter in an orderly fashion as problems started at the beginning, she said that some line up and the others just stay outside and continue to mess around.

Data 9 Interview following observation: the teacher reported that pupils line up outside and she talked to them before they came in so that they were prepared for the lesson.

Data 21 p.2 I have a problem slightly because I like to start my lesson with everyone standing behind their chairs and everyone being quiet, so you have got to marry the two. Is it worth not worrying about having them standing behind their chairs but actually getting them in, getting them quiet and getting them settled first, and actually giving them something to do. Perhaps that is what you need to be giving.

SEN focus group 21. Settling pupils down at beginning of lesson- getting pupils to stand behind their chairs, try to avoid starting with a confrontation which leads to a negative atmosphere, greeting them by name as they enter, provide an accessible activity that they can start straight away.

There are different views expressed by teachers, one teacher finds lining pupils up outside at the beginning of the lesson and talking to them is a successful way of preparing the pupils for the lesson and another teacher reported that the pupils simply continue to mess around outside the classroom when she tries to get them to line up outside the class.

Behaviour support staff

School staff were in favour of using trained teaching assistants as behaviour support staff and it was important that they were readily available when the problems occurred -

One teacher explained that teaching assistants need to be used effectively and close communication between teachers and teaching assistants was desirable. The teacher perceived that difficult children respond well to adult attention and teaching assistants played a key role in identifying areas of difficulty in the classroom and working closely with the class teacher. Pupils' desire for attention was seen as a key factor in behaviour difficulties

Data 13.

'I am quite happy for them to help me with my classroom management, if they see things, to deal with it, it comes through me anyway eventually so if there is a particular problem they will come up to me after the lesson and say I had this problem with this area. At the next lesson I deal with it. So they are bringing it to my attention and they are also going round the difficult kids and giving them the attention they need because most of it is attention oriented'.

The role of an additional resource base for pupils with difficulties

Focus group p10. If kids have got family problems and they need a one to one, they are very upset about something, you take them in, a one to one in the mentoring room and

they have a cup of tea and you sit down nicely with them. However, if you are out of maths because you have been a pain for the last half a term, or whatever it is, you should be sitting silently working.'

A school with an additional resource base with pleasant surroundings for pupils who are in distress and are likely to benefit from individual adult attention was perceived by staff as beneficial. One member of staff acknowledged that there is a danger that pupils could display behaviour difficulties in order to access the pleasant surroundings of the resource base.

Consistency

Teachers expressed concerns regarding the inconsistent management of pupils' behaviour by school staff on a number of occasions (data 1, 2, 3, 33 and 36).

Consistency is our biggest problem.

Data 2 p2 Teacher: I go into some classes where everything is absolutely quiet and the teacher is in total control but then you ask yourself is there much interaction going on, the learning is very formal in that class. And then you go to other classes and its chaos. The children are out of their seats and you ask yourself, can learning take place when there is so much going on in the class, possibly, I don't know, but then there is a whole continuum across the school.

Data 3 Teacher 'consistency and that's the old cherry isn't it. How do you know what your methods are and compare them to any other teacher'.

Focus group 36 p9 That's where you need everybody reinforcing each other and you need all the teachers in the school to know that that child should be in detention when they are actually on the playground and the people on duty say, you are down here for a detention, what are you doing up here. That's when you want the consistency, isn't it?

Data 33 Consistency - everyone should be consistent in their approach. Consistency with behaviour clear expectations from students and consistent, persistent correction/reward. Teachers actively backing up TAs/all staff when disciplining. Consistency in dealing with behaviour. Consistency with behaviour treatment - all should treat the bad behaviour the same way.

This site is so huge. Yes, that would be brilliant if we could do that.

Staff reported the need for consistency in managing pupils behaviour as a key factor in pupils' behaviour difficulties but it was not clear how consistency across the school could be achieved.

Agreeing a set of rules

The teacher was interviewed in an attempt by the researcher to understand the process by which she had achieved the observed behaviour in two lessons of Year 7 pupils in which

they were task focussed and no behaviour difficulties were observed by the researcher. The data is quoted extensively because it gives an indication of the importance of agreeing a set of rules as well as describing the process by which the rules were agreed with the class. Data 13 semi-structured interview with teacher:

‘I would have to say that that group is the one that I enjoy teaching the most in the school now, but when I first started I was absolutely lost to know what to do, how to cope with them, because when they first came in they would be rolling all over the floor, they would be swearing, they would be fighting and because I am new to the schoolso I went to my head of department and I said to him, "Look, I am really struggling with this class and I just don't know what to do. He said, "Just lay the laws down to them". So I thought, "Right - I am going to agree with this class what is acceptable in this lesson and what is not".

So, what I did was, at the very beginning, I started putting (I know you said to me they were all very negative rules), but I started to put all the rules on the board that I considered to be acceptable for my classroom, and then I got them to agree that they were acceptable rules. Things like, they would not get out of their seat, they would not fight, they would not roll on the floor, they will not chew, and all that, and then for, it must have been three weeks, every single lesson. Three times a week, for about three weeks.the first couple of lessons it was a hard, hard way of getting through it. I would write them up, we would go through them one by one, the whole class would agree, yes, that is acceptable. And things like chewing, I would get to the chewing one - "No you are not going to chew in my lesson" and they would all say, yes, so I said, "Right, everyone who's chewing now get up and put it in the bin". First of all they didn't do it, but now they do it.

To begin with I had the rules up on the board, and then I asked them if there was any more. Then I would write the rules up when they were in the classroom and they would tell me what I was writing up, so they were already agreed rules but they were telling me to identify the fact that they knew what they were.

Then I would say, "What rule have I missed off here?" and then they would say, "The chewing", or "Don't get out your seat", "Put your hand up", and then obviously once I put them up on the board, then when they started to step out of line I issued a warning straight away and I would point to the rule, "You have just broken this rule". "That means now you are on a formal warning." "Oh, you have just broken it again. That means another one." So I take them up the ladder, and particularly difficult students within the first couple of lessons were out of my lesson.’

Firm boundaries

The recommendation of firm boundaries reducing behaviour difficulties was gathered from interviews with teachers and an SEN focus group. One way teachers can help pupils understand that there are firm boundaries on their behaviour is for staff to ensure that when a pupil is given a sanction of some kind, the child actually experiences the sanction rather than succeeding in avoiding it.

‘I would ensure that they came for detentions. If they didn't turn up for my detentions, then they would go for a half an hour one with my head of department. So I followed the

structure that way. I don't do this with every class. This is the only class that I do it with. I have other classes that don't need to have this sort of structure, because they respond to my instruction anyway,

Teacher interview 'I am a firm believer that children need to have boundaries. When they know what the boundaries are, then they don't step over them. If they don't know what the boundaries are . . .'

The desirability of teachers having firm boundaries was also mentioned during the SEN focus group data 36

'If you don't behave, you have got a detention this afternoon. And the last teacher who teaches the group of kids, get out your planners please, thank you. Anybody that's plainly got a detention, they stay in that class. They don't go out, they stay there. They do their detention and at quarter past three they go home. All the other kids go home. It will make sure they have got their planners. If you don't have your planner then you stay anyway.'

Clear guidelines

During an interview with one teacher it was suggested that a lack of clear guidelines has contributed to some pupils' behaviour difficulties. Data 9 p7 Teacher

'I just think that there are kids in this school that you can work with, but they have been written off because they have gone too far down the negative path of labelling and that. I know people have put time with them, but because they have not had the clear guidelines in the first place, that's where they have lost.'

Building relationships

Some teachers described how effective it is to talk with pupils and give them attention which contribute to building a positive relationship between the teacher and some of the more difficult pupils, data 9 Teacher interview.

When they came in for a detention with me, rather than growling I would sit down and talk to them, so I had an individual conversation which I can't do in the lesson. So building up relationships in the detention time. One of the most difficult girls in the class, she has just come in now and had a chat with me, just before you got here.

Teachers praising pupils could also be seen as contributing to building a positive relationship between the teacher and pupils Teacher:

'Attention. They absolutely love it. They like to feel special. If I go round to one of them and I say, "That looks really good" I will have about five or six of them saying, "Can you look at mine, does mine look good?" They crave that acceptance.'

Staff also mentioned that the more difficult pupils can respond better in one to one situations in which the pupil is given individual attention from the teacher SEN focus group 27:

It is not possible to build a relationship with every student that you teach, pupils respond better 1:1, it is very few who continue to be abusive when they have been removed from the class and given individual attention, a sympathetic approach can provide students with an opportunity to talk about all sorts of problems outside school.

The availability of separate resource rooms so that staff can meet with individual students was reported to be helpful Data 36

‘Opportunities for building relationships are also assisted by additional resource rooms so that staff can meet with pupils individually’.

The use of technology in the classroom (video and computers)

The use of technology in the classroom was observed to help reduce or overcome pupils’ behaviour difficulties. During lesson 3 (data 8) the pupils were observed to have considerable difficulty attending as some pupils made noises, flicked paper across the room and made comments to other pupils across the classroom. When a video was shown the Year 7 pupils gradually became quiet and the whole class watched the film in silent concentration. The Year 7 pupils in the IT lessons (lesson 2 in data 5 and 8) were observed to be largely task focused and the availability of computer technology may have contributed to the pupils’ ability to engage in curriculum tasks rather than difficult behaviour.

The use of rewards

Teachers also reported that rewards should vary according to the chronological age of the pupils. Older pupils who do not like being recognised for anything do not respond to stickers but may respond to a quiet word such as , "Here, I'm impressed", or "That's excellent" Data 9 p6 Teacher

‘So the rewards that I actually give them, is having a quiet word with them when nobody's listening. I will say. They much prefer just the praise side of it. You can't give them stickers’

During the SEN focus group (data 21) Staff described what they perceived as an effective reward system.

‘Pupils behaving well should be noticed and rewarded with points, pupils achieving an agreed number of points should receive clearly defined rewards or prizes which are fairly immediate. Points could be given for effort, classwork and homework. Points could also be given for showing kindness and consideration towards others and settling down to work at the beginning of a lesson. Each pupils’ number of points could be clearly accessible to them eg scores should be shown when pupils log on using a school computer. An agreed coding system could be used for adding comments to the points (7

out of 10 correct). Students with a high number of points could be publicly rewarded as an incentive to others. Rewards can also be a sweet given out at the end of the lesson and applauded by the class. Printed reward stickers. Long term rewards – trips to MacDonalds, pizza party’.

Technology was perceived as helpful in rewarding pupils, as reported in an SEN focus group.

‘Points reward system in which a central school data base is kept with the names of pupils and the number of points each one has achieved. The points can then be converted into rewards such as getting classroom equipment from the school shop. The reward system should be meaningful to students and not be too complex’.

Thank you for participating in this project

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