

A Comparative Evaluation to Determine the Effectiveness of the Behaviour Support Classrooms and other Positive Behaviour Management Interventions in Designated Disadvantaged Schools.

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DECLARATION

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Abstract

A Comparative Evaluation to Determine the Effectiveness of the Behaviour Support Classrooms and other Positive Behaviour Management Interventions in Designated Disadvantaged Schools.

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Twelve designated disadvantaged secondary schools were involved in the research, which looked at the different approaches for dealing with inappropriate student behaviour. Six of the schools are currently involved with the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) in the piloting of the Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs) for seriously disruptive students. For comparative purposes six other schools who did not have this additional resource were studied, to determine how they go about dealing with student misbehaviour. The aim of my study is to evaluate whether the BSCs are the best way forward for schools experiencing high levels of disruptive student behaviour, and to determine how the schools without this facility manage to deal with serious behavioural incidents.

My research participants included principals, year heads and personnel working in the BSCs. After considering the different research paradigms, I decided that pragmatism was the most suitable for answering my research question. I opted for a mixed methods approach in the expectation that it would expand on my understanding of the issues around student behaviour. Initially I made use of questionnaires, and these were followed by semi-structured interviews. Analysis of the qualitative data was by the constant comparative method. The quantitative data was provided from analysis of the questionnaires and school data, looking at critical performance indicators such as attendance, punctuality, detention and suspension rates. The theoretical lens for my research was utilization-focused evaluation, rather than trying to reach out to all stakeholders I only involved those that would best represent the interests and views of others. In my conclusion, I give a number of recommendations on why I believe that the BSCs are the best way forward for certain schools operating in challenging circumstances.

Glossary of Terms

BEST – Behaviour and Education Support Teams

BSC – Behaviour Support Classroom

DES – Department of Education and Science

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

EPSEN – Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs

ESRI – Economic and Social Research Institute

HSLO – Home School Liaison Officer

JCSP – Junior Certificate Schools Programme

LSU – Learning Support Unit

NBSS – National Behaviour Support Service

NEWB – National Education Welfare Board

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education in England

PRU – Pupil Referral Unit

UFE – Utilization-Focused Evaluation

Chapter One: Introduction

1:1 My Evolving Values and Beliefs

Over the years many different approaches have been taken when dealing with disruptive student behaviour. People have varying viewpoints on whether the most successful outcomes are a consequence of a pastoral or disciplinary philosophy taken by teachers. The problems caused by inappropriate student behaviour are wide ranging, impacting significantly on the quality of teaching and learning taking place in Irish schools. As a teacher I have had first-hand experience of the impact of the disruption that can be caused, by a small minority of students, and the resulting frustration and stress this can cause to both teachers and the well-behaved students who want to learn. My own dissatisfaction with the current situation, and the experience I have gained from working with these students, were the main reasons for my decision to further research this particular area. Disruptive behaviour is associated with a wide range of cognitive, educational and family problems. Students, exhibiting disruptive behaviour, can be challenging for teachers because they require teachers to spend a substantial amount of time on behavioural issues rather than teaching, (Galloway 1997). Rather than being able to facilitate personal and social, as well as academic development with these students, teachers devote a great deal of time and energy to reducing their disruptive behaviour. The result is that instructional time, and eventually academic achievement, is negatively affected, (Stage & Quiroz 1997).

My value position regarding discipline has evolved throughout my teaching career. When I began to work as a teacher I was very rigid in my approach to discipline, adhering strictly to the code of behaviour. I adopted a disciplinarian stance. I believed that, if students misbehaved, they deserved to be punished by using different sanctions. Early in my teaching career, whenever problems occurred, I would have taken the easy option and blamed the student. Through reflection and personal development, I have realised that there is much a teacher can do to prevent problem behaviour occurring in the first instance. With experience, my attitude and my values have changed and I am now more understanding of the many underlying factors that can impinge on student behaviour. I am not as judgemental or as punitive in my approach. I endeavour to build positive and strong relationships with these students using a pastoral approach.

My philosophy has changed and, in my role as year head, I try to instil this pastoral/caring approach in the teachers with whom I interact, so that there is consistency of approach for all students, particularly those with behavioural problems. I have noticed, over the years, that regularly using detention or suspension as a deterrent for these students has no discernable impact. All that it does is to increase their negative feelings and reduce their attachment to the school. It is my firm belief that every effort should be made to keep disruptive students within the confines of the school community. This is not always easily achieved and, in certain cases, the only option may be to remove the student from the mainstream setting altogether. From my experience if these students with behavioural problems are identified early, and the necessary supports put in place, they can have much more favourable outcomes from their time in school.

1:2 My Concerns for Students with Behavioural Problems

I was concerned that the values of fairness and equality were being denied on a daily basis in schools, where students with poor behaviour were often unable to engage in the learning process, because of the inability of the teacher to keep them sufficiently interested. In such cases it was obvious that children's rights were being denied and justice was not being done, in that an appropriate education was not being provided for pupils with specific behavioural problems. Schools seemed to be failing in their duty, which, according to Section 9 of the Education Act (1998:13), is to:

provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall, as far as resources permit, ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special educational needs, are identified and provided for.

I believe that all students should be treated equally. I am concerned that the current constraints prevent the realisation of the potential of these students because, unfortunately, the supports and sufficient resources are not in place. Often it is the case that these are the students that nobody wants to teach and, as a result, they often feel marginalised and rejected.

In my role as year head, I have tried numerous strategies trying to improve my relationship and interaction with these disruptive students. I always felt that the core underlying reasons for the poor behaviour were not being addressed fully, mainly due to a lack of resources such as time and specialised personnel. My belief is that the earlier their underlying problems are dealt with the better their life chances. Far too often in the past these students were neglected and eventually left school disillusioned. I have noticed that in certain schools, that have a disproportionate intake of students with challenging behaviour, there is an over-reliance on suspension, while other schools, that have similar intakes, use alternative strategies that have more beneficial outcomes for students in the long run. Through my research I want to determine why it is that certain schools have greater success in meeting the requirements of these disruptive students.

My thesis will take the following format. Firstly, I shall consider how the approach to dealing with student misbehaviour has evolved over the years. Next, I will critically review the literature around in-school and out-of-school factors impinging on student behaviour. I shall mention the different strategies that have been used to promote positive behaviour both in Ireland and internationally. I will place particular emphasis on the Behaviour Support Classrooms (BSCs) in Ireland, which are modelled on the Learning Support Units (LSUs), used in England. Next, I will focus on my research design and methodology, considering the different paradigms, and giving reasons why, predominantly, a qualitative approach is more suitable for my particular study. After this, I shall address the philosophical underpinnings looking at the ontological and epistemological issues related to my research question. I provide reasons why I predominantly made use of qualitative data, backed up by some quantitative data, resulting in a mixed methods approach. I further elaborate on my research methods which included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and document analysis and why I found them to be appropriate in

answering my research question. I end this section by justifying the reason why I made use of 'Utilization-Focused Evaluation' (Patton 2008) to get the answers to my questions.

Data analysis is broken down into two main sections. The first deals with schools participating in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, the DEIS initiative, and that are also involved with the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) in the piloting of the BSCs. The second part deals with DEIS schools not involved with the NBSS. The themes that had been identified, after the semi-structured interviews, are analysed in detail and triangulation of the different methods is used to increase the reliability and validity of my findings. Based on my research findings I make a series of recommendations relating to schools, with and without BSCs, regarding the best way to deal with this problem of inappropriate student behaviour. In my final chapter I make an overall judgement regarding the evaluation of the different interventions. I particularly mention the BSCs and whether or not they are the way forward for schools that are experiencing high levels of disruption.

Chapter Two: Research Context

2:1 Evolution of Approaches to Dealing with Pupil Misbehaviour and the Impact of Legislation and Critical Events

In the last decade in Ireland there has been a huge shift, in culture and practice, regarding the manner in which students with serious behavioural problems are dealt with in school. Up to the abolition of corporal punishment (1982) the Irish educational system was based on a strict disciplinary approach. A contributory factor was the influence of the Catholic Church, which was the main educator in the country. There was great respect for authority. Parents and society accepted the role corporal punishment played in dealing with student misbehaviour in schools. Teachers often controlled their classes by engendering fear in the students, although this was neither healthy nor positive for the students' personal development. Under such circumstances, this was not an optimal environment for learning to take place. Educators such as religious brothers, priests or lay staff, who were extreme in their punishments, were tolerated by management. Their behaviour was rarely challenged. The degree of reliance on corporal punishment in schools depended on the school manager, but almost all employed a fear of corporal punishment as a means of discipline, (Humphreys 1998).

Whenever difficulties occurred in the classroom, the student was always viewed as being the problem and the teacher's role in this relationship was never questioned, (Miller 1996). Factors impinging on the students' lives outside of school were rarely considered and, when students misbehaved, the belief was that they deserved to be punished. Teachers had little or no understanding of behavioural disorders and no effort was made to accommodate, or encourage, a student experiencing behavioural difficulties. There was no outside expertise available to the schools. When students misbehaved in class, very often they were physically punished, which led to a negative and detrimental impact on their confidence and self-esteem. The main argument given against corporal punishment was that research had shown it not to be effective as a positive means for managing student behaviour. Studies such as, (Hyman 1995, Hyman & Perone 1998, Arcus 2002) have linked corporal punishment to adverse physical, psychological and educational outcomes, including increased aggressive and destructive behaviour, increased drop-out rates and poor school achievement. The abolition of corporal punishment in schools caused difficulties especially for senior teachers, who had depended solely on it as a strategy for dealing with disruptive students. Teachers had to re-evaluate their approach to classroom management and alter the manner by which they dealt with these students. As physical force was no longer an option alternative sanctions, like detention and suspension or teachers adopting a pastoral care model, became the order of the day, (Jenkins 1999).

Many of the structures that are used, to organise learning and promote the holistic development of pupils, in Irish schools today have been influenced by the English school system, which was often centered around the maintenance of good discipline and learning, (Norman 2004). The Irish schools were further helped by teachers who returned from England having gained valuable experience. The approaches to dealing with inappropriate student behaviour have changed dramatically over the last two decades. Nowadays the majority of Irish teachers perceive teaching as having a pastoral dimension, in contrast to an enforcer of discipline which was the

situation in the past. However, the problem faced by teachers now is that many do not consider themselves to be competent in dealing with their students' pastoral needs, (Norman 2004).

The introduction of free education in 1967, to facilitate the provision of second level education for all young people, changed the profile and numbers of students remaining on in education. The enrolments in post-primary schools rose from 148,000 in 1966/67 to 239,000 by 1974, and today there are 350,000 students, (Walshe 2010). Consequently, teachers faced new problems, with pupils of a wider range of ability and social background, in more crowded classrooms, (Coolahan 1981). The introduction of free education has dramatically increased the number of students completing their Leaving Certificate. According to the School Leavers' Survey Report, (McCoy et al. 2007), in 2006 among school leavers, 86 per cent of women obtained Leaving Certificate qualifications compared with 77 per cent of men. This indicates that well over 80 per cent of students complete their senior cycle. This has put a serious strain on resources, as teachers and management have to deal with a diverse cohort of students. Currently, students who would have previously left school early, to take up an apprenticeship or other opportunities, are remaining in school due to the downturn in the economy. Regrettably, for certain students, the school curriculum is not suitable and, consequently, this can often cause increased frustration leading to disruption, (Kern et al. 2006).

The Education Act (1998) was wide ranging and brought about significant positive changes in the Irish educational system. The Act promoted greater inclusion of students with special educational needs, such as those with behavioural and adjustment problems. There was a greater realisation, and acceptance, that students are different and that all cannot be treated in a similar manner. If required, students with behavioural difficulties should be able to access extra support and resources, such as a special needs assistant. This would assist these students by providing them with the opportunity of achieving their full potential. More emphasis was placed on involving parents and students in school related issues, such as developing the code of behaviour. The greater involvement of parents and students, which had rarely occurred previously, meant that both students and parents felt more valued and respected. There was now a parents' council and a students' council in all schools. This reduced the overall influence teachers had on school matters, allowing for a more even contribution from all stakeholders.

Another important piece of recent legislation has been the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, EPSEN Act (2004). This Act accepted that in the past people with disabilities, such as those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, did not have adequate opportunities to fully participate in and benefit from education. This recognition has grown in recent years, and changes have been made, yet much remains to be done to afford equality of access to educational opportunity. It ensures that students with special educational needs can be educated, where possible, in an inclusive environment; that they can have the same rights to education as students who do not have a requirement for extra assistance. This should be the case unless it is inconsistent with the best interest of the child, or with effective provision for the other children. It will help them to be equipped to become active participants in society and to live independent and fulfilling lives.

With all these changes in legislation there has also been an increased emphasis on the rights of the child/student. The greatest difficulty faced by many schools is balancing the rights of the

disruptive student and the rights of the well-behaved majority. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which was ratified by Ireland in 1992, provides that the state shall ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the dignity of the child. At present, every effort is made to provide the required support for these disruptive students and to ensure that their concerns are taken into consideration. Nowadays, teachers are engaging more in professional development and in-service training, with the result that they have a better understanding of the issues impacting on student behaviour, and are more knowledgeable on the various types of social, emotional and behavioural problems.

Prior to the abolition of corporal punishment teachers would have seen their main duties as teaching and maintaining discipline, but the role of a teacher has evolved over the years and carrying out pastoral duties is now a vital part of everyday duties carried out by teachers, (Collins & McNiff 1992). Another contributory factor, responsible for schools being less reliant on punitive measures, has been increased globalisation. In countries such as America, the United Kingdom and Australia, where there have been successful interventions in dealing with student misbehaviour, it is evident that less use is made of sanctions, when dealing with these students, and that there is a greater reliance on positive behaviour management strategies.

Over the years there has been a dramatic shift in approaches used to deal with students exhibiting challenging behaviour. Prior to the abolition of corporal punishment the strategies utilised were very punitive in orientation. Little effort was expended in trying to determine the underlying reasons for the problem behaviour. Since then, mainly due to the ineffectiveness of these approaches in altering inappropriate student behaviour, more positive methods aimed at building more rounded relationships with these students have been introduced. In the past, these students would have been ignored and punished regularly; now, more individualised, intensive and positive approaches are used so as to improve these students' chances of educational success and their experience of school. Internationally, this has been the case also with numerous positive behaviour support programmes. These approaches include School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) in America, (Sugai & Horner 2002). Other approaches utilised include the Solution Oriented School Programme (Scotland & UK) and the Framework for Intervention which is used in Norway and Scotland, (www.f4i.org).

Another element that illustrates the changing approach used in schools, when dealing with issues of student behaviour, is in the use of the guidelines for schools in developing the code of behaviour, which were issued by the National Educational Welfare Board, NEWB (2008). These guidelines were developed through an inclusive approach, including people from a variety of backgrounds including teaching, child psychology, educational welfare and the law, as well as parents and young people. The emphasis is on a whole school approach and it is very noticeable that greater student involvement is encouraged. Great importance is placed on promoting positive behaviour through the use of rewards and not being over-reliant on sanctions.

In recent times effective ways of dealing with disruptive students has become very topical. 'School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools', Department of Education and Science, DES (2006) addresses the issues around student behaviour in significant detail. It was noted in this report that the behaviour of a very large majority of students remains satisfactory, and that most secondary schools are successful at

managing behaviour and creating an environment where pupils feel valued, cared for, safe and belonging to the school community, (DES 2006:72). The most common form of poor behaviour is persistent low level disruption. There are in schools, however, a small percentage of students with serious behavioural problems that put a serious strain on resources. The factors, internal and external to the school, contributing to poor student behaviour were discussed in the report and a series of recommendations were made. Included in these recommendations was the setting up of BSCs in schools that were experiencing high levels of disruption, (DES 2006:144).

2:2 The DEIS Initiative and the Role of the National Behaviour Support Service in Setting up the Behaviour Support Classrooms

The schools involved in my research are all designated disadvantaged secondary schools and part of the DEIS initiative. There are two hundred and three such schools out of a total of seven hundred and thirty-seven post-primary schools. Twelve of these schools were included in my study. The DEIS initiative addresses the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through to second level education. It aims to reduce the barriers and impediments, arising from social or economic disadvantage, which prevents students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools. The DEIS initiative is designed to ensure that the most disadvantaged schools benefit from a comprehensive package of supports, while ensuring that others continue to get support in line with the level of disadvantage among their pupils. It recognises that there are benefits in individual interventions and programmes, but that also a more integrated and joined-up response to tackling the issue of educational disadvantage is required. DEIS provides for a standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage. Examples of supports provided include the Home School Community Liaison Scheme, the School Completion Programme and the BSCs. The DEIS Action Plan (2005) for educational inclusion places an increased emphasis on planning at school level, and on measurement of progress and outcomes, to ensure that investment under the DEIS initiative brings about improvement in educational outcomes for young people. Mac Ruairc (2009) mentions that the success of the DEIS initiative is based on the freedom given to schools to respond to locally identified priorities. Schools are encouraged to engage with the process of DEIS planning at a local level, and to identify their own targets and priorities, based on an analysis of evidence of local needs.

The main focus of my research is on the schools piloting the BSCs. There are sixty-two schools involved in this pilot programme which is coordinated by the NBSS. I shall be focusing on six schools, five urban and one rural. The NBSS is funded by the Department of Education and Science under the National Development Plan 2007-2013. Its work encompasses three approaches:

Whole School Approach:

The NBSS works with schools identifying, developing and disseminating good practice and assisting with behavioural issues which impede teaching and learning.

Customised Approach:

The NBSS partners schools developing programmes/approaches for a specific group of students. These approaches include:

- Identifying student needs around behaviour and learning.
- Developing appropriate teaching and learning methodologies.
- Accessing suitable social/behavioural improvement programmes.
- Setting up network groups/clusters for support and continuous professional development.

Behaviour Support Classroom:

The NBSS works with schools on the development and operation of BSCs. These classrooms provide an individualised intensive intervention programme for a targeted group of students.

The NBSS believes that, by learning to behave appropriately, every student can experience success in the school community. Unacceptable student behaviour can improve with appropriate support. School staff should be able to access support and assistance to develop strategies and interventions. The NBSS provides in-service training for personnel working in the BSC and also for teachers working in mainstream settings, so that everyone has a good understanding of how this extra support works.

The fundamental aim of these classrooms is reintegration into mainstream education, through the provision of a tailored academic, social, emotional and behavioural curriculum for students whose behaviour significantly interferes with teaching and learning. There were three options available to schools regarding the composition of the designated BSC team. Option one consisted of one full time twenty-two hour teacher and two part-time teachers working eleven hours each. Option two was for two twenty-two hour teachers. The last option was for one teacher for twenty-two hours, a teacher for eleven hours and money to the amount of €25,000. Four of the schools chose the second option, and two chose option one.

As a contrast, six other DEIS schools, which were not involved with the NBSS, will be compared regarding the strategies that they employ in dealing with poor student behaviour. The manner in which these schools tackle poor behaviour will be compared to the methods used in the BSCs. The reasons why certain schools have more favourable outcomes with these students will be considered, along with the approaches that seem to work best with these vulnerable students. I shall also endeavour to determine whether these schools are coping sufficiently well with these students, or whether they could do with extra support. My objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the BSCs and other interventions in improving student behaviour. This will be achieved by talking to the relevant personnel and monitoring the critical performance indicators, such as attendance, detention/suspension rates, lates and academic performance. Specifically for those schools, with the BSCs performance indicators, pre- and post-intervention will be analysed so as to determine the effectiveness and potential long term benefits of such a support.

2:3 Justification for and Significance of Carrying out this Research

The justification for and significance of carrying out research in the area of dealing with students with disruptive behaviours, for policy and practice, are many. In the first part of my research, I study the schools piloting the BSCs and the intensive individual support that is provided for

seriously disruptive students. This has the potential to provide an increase in the time spent teaching and learning in the mainstream setting, thereby leading to improved school performance and greater school effectiveness. Having an on-site facility to deal with students with behavioural problems can assist in reducing the need for suspension and other exclusionary measures. While the vast majority of students are well catered for in the mainstream setting, it is this small number of students, that require intensive support, that are sometimes neglected due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel to deal with their problems. The designated team working in the BSCs will have the expertise and facilities to deal with these students on a one to one basis. This could, potentially, free up year heads so that they have more time to carry out their other duties.

The significance of carrying out the research in the DEIS schools, that are not involved with the NBSS, is as follows. These schools were used for comparative purposes, and to determine the alternative strategies that are used in schools that are not receiving this extra assistance. My fear was that there was the possibility that these schools did not have sufficient resources to deal with those students that required intensive intervention. The result was that there was the possibility that these students were not receiving the assistance that they required to succeed at school.

The importance of schools dealing with students with behavioural problems should not be underestimated. Like any new pilot project the BSC has to be cost effective and lead to significant school improvements if it is to become embedded in practice. There are a number of areas where it can impact on policy; these include ways to prevent early school leaving which is still a major problem. It can also lead to alternative approaches to dealing with behavioural issues and, hopefully, lead to greater social inclusion for these students. If these students are ignored or do not receive the required help, they can become a burden on the state for the rest of their lives, primarily because they did not receive sufficient assistance in reaching their potential while they were at school. Of all the students with special educational needs those with behavioural problems have the poorest educational outcomes, (Wagner et al. 2006, Bradley et al. 2008). Many drop out of school early and can become involved in anti-social behaviour and crime, (Christle et al. 2005). Governments have the choice to make: whether to invest the resources when these individuals are young and their problems are manageable, or suffer the consequences when they become older and their problems are more entrenched and cannot be remedied.

I have shown that there have been major changes, in the last three decades, in the manner in which school personnel deal with students that have challenging behaviour. Corporal punishment was used up to 1982, but it was shown not to have the desired impact as it only further alienated these students. Following its removal schools became reliant on sanctions, such as detention and suspensions, which are still utilised on a regular basis in schools today. While these strategies might be effective with certain students, primarily those that are rarely in trouble, they generally do not have the desired impact on students who are regularly in trouble. Nowadays, every effort is made to promote the positive and encourage these students to behave appropriately through the use of rewards and praise. This approach is totally at the other end of the spectrum when compared to corporal punishment. It shows the major shift that has occurred in attitudes to dealing with pupil misbehaviour. In the past these students were ignored and the belief was that they were incapable of changing. Now the necessary supports are provided and every encouragement is given to help them alter their ways. The respect for authority figures, such as teachers, is no longer evident and they are regularly challenged by pupils and parents. There is a

greater realisation by society that students with serious behavioural problems cannot be taught in the same way as the majority of students in a mainstream setting. Consequently, it is vital that new and better ways of educating young people with behavioural problems are explored if they are going to have a chance of overcoming their difficulties and of succeeding in the years ahead.

Chapter Three: Review of the Literature

3:1 Introduction

In this review of the literature I shall concentrate on how schools, that have a significant intake of students with challenging behaviour, go about promoting positive behaviour in the school environment. Discipline in secondary schools is of major concern for many educationalists. An area which is of personal interest to me is the promotion of positive behaviour among students exhibiting challenging behaviour. Good behaviour and learning in schools and classrooms is the product of a great many factors and influences as the Elton Report (1989:8) stated:

The behaviour of pupils in a school is influenced by every aspect of the way in which it is run and how it relates to the community it serves. It is a combination of all these factors which gives a school its character and identity. Together, they can produce an orderly and successful school in a difficult catchment area; equally, they can produce an unsuccessful school in what should be much easier circumstances.

The Elton Report (1989) was a significant report focusing on schools in England and Wales. It assessed critically the role of teachers, schools, parents and pupils. The Report found that for many teachers the flow of their lessons had been impeded or disrupted by having to deal with minor disciplinary problems rather than major confrontational issues. These include pupils talking out of turn, hindering other pupils from learning and work avoidance. In such situations it is hard for teachers to teach and pupils to learn. It contained many detailed recommendations for action at classroom, school, community and national level. The authors observed differences in the schools which could not be explained by the home background of the pupils. The most effective schools were those that created a positive atmosphere based on a sense of community and shared values. There was a recognition of the need for alternative provisions for the most troublesome pupils with behavioural difficulties, preferably on-site or in exceptional cases off-site. Greater responsibility was to be placed on schools to ensure those pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties could have their pastoral, academic and special educational needs met. The Report also recommended a more child centered approach to school discipline. The crucial role that parents have to play was highlighted along with problems related to poor school attendance.

The approach that I will take will be two pronged: looking at the in-school and out-of-school factors that impinge on student behaviour. The in-school factors include teacher-student relationships, pastoral care/disciplinary system, classroom management and leadership within the school community. The desired behaviour expected of students should be evident from the school's procedures and policies and communicated by effective leadership. Some of the out-of-school factors included will be the socio-cultural background of the students along with parental attitudes and beliefs and within the student factors.

'School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools' DES (2006) has been very informative for those involved in education in Ireland. One of the recommendations of the Task Force was the introduction of BSCs in schools with serious student behavioural problems. Researching the impact of these BSCs will take up a significant

proportion of my research work. As the piloting of these classrooms is only in its infancy in Ireland, it allows for a more intensive, individualised support for seriously disruptive students to be provided on-site within the school environment. As a contrast, I will look at supports in place in some other countries to compare their approaches, when dealing with disruptive students, with those in Irish schools. The United Kingdom is more advanced in its provision for challenging students, having in place initiatives like Learning Support Units (LSUs), Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Following this I shall review the different approaches that are currently utilised in America and Australia in the promotion of good behaviour.

I begin by focusing on the in-school factors that impinge on student behaviour and, following these, the out-of-school factors will be discussed.

3:2 Teacher-Student Relationship

Historically, students have been the focus of attempts to understand their behavioural difficulties, as many schools perceive them as being or having the problem. Research carried out by Croll & Moses (1985) and Miller (1996) reported that teachers ascribed, approximately, eighty per cent of the cause of pupils' behaviour problems, not only to the pupils themselves, but to the parents also. Recently there has been a shift in emphasis away from the student and his or her family, to the context in which the behavioural difficulties occur, (Bambara & Kern 2005, Kern & Clemens 2007).

The manner in which teachers interact with students and manage challenging behaviour greatly effects the classroom atmosphere. Galloway (1983:245) refers to the fact that teachers need to look at themselves, and what they can do, to make the most of what students bring to the school gate. He concluded 'that factors in the catchment area of a school have much less influence on children's behaviour than the policies and practices of the school itself.' Self-reflection, by certain teachers, would result in improved educational outcomes for these students. Reflection allows teachers to plan to do things differently rather than trying to change the student. It helps teachers to realise that students have individual needs that may not always be catered for. The underlying philosophy would be based on the following: if they cannot learn from the way I teach, maybe I can teach the way they learn. Unfortunately, certain teachers are far too quick to put the blame elsewhere and are happy to continue with their safe teaching methods, despite the fact that little teaching or learning is taking place. These teachers may be part of the culture of blame, whereby individuals tend not to reflect on their own practice of managing behaviour difficulties, (Miller 2003) and see the problems as lying outside their control.

Schools that are successful in dealing with challenging behaviour 'do not blame, either pupils, their families or themselves, but they actively seek solutions' (Watkins and Wagner 2000:11). There are numerous factors that teachers cannot directly change, such as the many external issues that affect a student's behaviour at school: conflictual family dynamics; family values; housing; diet/nutrition at home; substance abuse; long term parental unemployment and structural poverty. Schools have to be sensitive to the child's predisposing 'pathology' for behaviour, while also recognising that the school can have a significant impact in helping a child. Rogers (2007:10) makes the point that 'progress will be limited if the schools attitudinal stance

is, “how can we be expected to develop good learning and behaviour when we’ve got kid’s like these in this kind of environment?””. To rectify this situation there needs to be an additional shift for many teachers, away from attributing blame on factors outside their control, to focusing on those factors over which they have control that can bring about improvement in student behaviour.

This inability of certain teachers to alter their teaching strategies to meet the needs of the student can have a detrimental impact on classroom behaviour. Teachers need to gain a better understanding of students who exhibit challenging behaviour. Many show externalizing behaviours which include non-compliance, aggression, arguing and rule breaking. Jenson et al. (2004:68) in talking about these students mention:

Thus the two set of skills required and valued in school settings (academic ability and social skills) will not provide an optimal flow experience for many students with externalizing behaviour. At best the school experience will be a struggle for these students.

While students with behavioural difficulties normally do lack these important skills, there is much that schools can do to ensure that they experience success in their everyday activities. Schools can achieve this by not focusing solely on academic success, but by rewarding and recognising extracurricular activities, or other aspects of school life, which can greatly improve the confidence and self-esteem of these students. This is not always easy for schools within the time constraints of the curriculum. The introduction of the published league tables of examination results, and other indicators of performance in schools, are very unfair to those schools that have a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour. These league tables focus solely on academic results and fail to take into consideration the many other worthwhile activities that take place in the school. It is very inequitable as it has ‘created a climate less likely to be sympathetic to children not only producing no positive contribution to these indicators, but who may also prevent others from doing so’ (Hayden 1997:8).

More effort needs to be made with these students to ensure more rounded relationships. This can be achieved by involving them in extracurricular activities so that they can experience success outside the classroom situation. Jenson et al. (2004:76) suggest a positive psychology approach ‘if continually punished and forced to experience failure these are the students who drop out of school and commit crime’. Accordingly, the suggested choices for schools and society are: do we put in the resources and effort now with these students, or do we pay later, when students reach adulthood and experience problems which can be more detrimental and costly.

Evans (1999:35) refers to the problem caused by the over-reliance of certain teachers on action referral as a behaviour management strategy. The impact of using such an approach is felt by students and teachers alike. He explains, ‘teachers overusing the strategy (action referral) become deskilled and permanently damage their relationship with individual students’. He mentions the consequences of such actions, which result in increasing frustration for staff and students, recommending that such teachers improve their classroom management skills and increase the range of strategies available to them to prevent escalation of behavioural issues. Also Klein (1999:148) refers to teachers who use sarcasm, ridicule and outright bullying to keep

some form of order in the classroom, ‘once the notion of a teacher lacking respect for a pupil takes hold, it requires a lot of working through to overcome’.

Good communication between teacher and students is critical for maintaining good relationships and flow to the lesson. Swinson et al. (2007:242) noted that ‘positive feedback by teachers was positively correlated with compliant pupil behaviour as measured by pupil on-task behaviour, while negative feedback or disapproval showed a negative correlation with on-task behaviour’. From the results of the study it was obvious that admonishing pupils for their behaviour does not appear to be an effective strategy for improving student behaviour, especially students with challenging behaviour. Analysis of the observations showed that the designated students (exhibiting challenging behaviour) in the class received an over proportionate degree of negative feedback for their behaviour and, unlike the rest of the class, received almost no positive feedback at all for appropriate behaviour. Similarly the Elton Report (1989:101) emphasises the importance of maintaining good relationships in the school environment, ‘humiliating young people in front of their friends by, for example, public ridicule, makes good relationships impossible. It breeds deep resentment which can poison the school atmosphere. Punishments do not need to be humiliating to be effective’. While this all makes sense, it can often be very difficult for teachers to praise, or provide positive feedback, for these students who can be constantly disruptive in class. It requires teachers to be very skilled in their interactions with these students, and to use praise where it is warranted and appreciated by the students.

If positive interactions between the teacher and student are considered valuable in obtaining optimal educational experience, why then are negative interactions so common? Maag (2001:29) explains that ‘many negative interventions are less time intensive than positive procedures, easier to administer and result in rapid (although temporary) suppression of problematic behaviour’. Overall, teachers generally feel that they are positive in their interactions with students; however, this is not the case with students with disruptive behaviour, (Rogers 2009). Teachers need to be more conscious of this and make extra efforts to praise these students when required, so that they become more optimistic about their future.

Some teachers are not always willing to adapt their teaching style to cater for the diverse range of pupils and as a result teaching and learning is being affected. Turner (2003:14) refers to the ‘ineffective way in which some staff are dealing with behaviour, or because they are using ‘safe’ teaching styles (to avoid losing class control) whilst simultaneously losing pupil interest’. For example, some teachers are removing students from their classroom, in the first instance, rather than trying strategies to deal with disruptive behaviour, or differentiating their work. Teachers need to realise that all students are different and have to be treated as such. Turner (2003:16) emphasises this point when stating ‘failing to recognise that pupils are different, and have different needs, is leading to an emotionally charged and confrontational working environment for both pupils and staff’.

The incidents of really serious disruption are becoming more frequent, and appear to be carried out by students who have a wide range of needs that mainstream education cannot be expected to fulfil, without the support of outside agencies, ‘School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools’ (DES 2006). At the same time, teachers feel under ‘increasing pressure to achieve academic results at all costs in a curriculum which makes few

concessions to what one television programme calls “the unteachables” (Times Educational Supplement 2005). These students have a very weak attachment to the school which is ‘characterised by indifference or hostility to teachers and scepticism about the value of schooling’, (Cooper 2008:14). Helpful strategies that work with students with emotional and behavioural difficulties ‘include clear expectations, consistency between staff, rewarding pupils and non confrontational approaches’ and there seems to be more successful outcomes for these students when they engage in individual and small group work, (Bennett 2006:192).

Depending on whether the school is ‘coercive’ or ‘incorporative’ in its approach will impact greatly on these vulnerable students with behavioural difficulties. In coercive schools teachers generally ‘have negative attitudes towards their pupils, and teaching strategies tend to be punitive and confrontational’. On the other hand, incorporative schools ‘tend to enjoy higher rates of academic success, higher attendance rates and less behavioural problems’, Martin & Hayes 1998:138). Coercive approaches operated in schools up to the time corporal punishment was banned and, because this approach was not effective, it led to a more pastoral incorporative way in dealing with these students. Schools can put in place protective factors to ease the transition of troublesome students through secondary school, by emphasising the importance of developing positive relationships. Schools that prioritise healthy, positive and caring relationships may contribute to breaking the cycle of disaffection, despair and negativity for many of these students. The approach recommended is one that is pupil centered where tolerance and respect are essential leading to the development of strong relationships, (Groves 2004).

Teachers need to be perceptive to students with low confidence levels and poor self-esteem, ‘the child with middle/low self-esteem has lost the excitement of learning; any learning means risking failure and mistakes and these have only brought humiliation and rejection in the past’ (Humphreys 1994:7). Efforts need to be made to elevate their self-esteem by providing them with individual attention, praise or getting them involved in extracurricular activities, before effective academic development can be established. It is essential that teachers are able to empathise with these vulnerable students. Martin (1997:11) emphasises the importance of been able to recognise that certain ‘pupils have burdensome personal biographies that may make them unreceptive or unavailable to our teaching in school’. The impact for teachers who lack the ability to connect with these students is that they can experience serious behavioural problems in the classroom.

3:3 Pastoral Care/Discipline (Rewards and Sanctions)

In the last twenty years family life in Ireland has undergone dramatic changes and has seen the emergence of new social problems. Research carried out by Norman (2003:23) into the role of teachers regarding pastoral care, recognised the need for foundation courses for student teachers that would enable them to develop a basic pastoral competence in dealing with students and their personal needs. In the research,

... an overwhelming majority (90%) of teachers, in this study said that pastoral care was part of being a teacher.... Furthermore, the vast majority of the teachers (91%) in the study believed that their teacher training did not adequately prepare them to deal with their pupils personal issues.

Lines (2003:26) is of the belief that the pastoral model that exists in most secondary schools has existed since 1960's and for some schools it is not appropriate. He feels that, in many cases the,

*management of challenging behaviour tends to be reactive rather than proactive.....
Pastoral models need to be pre-emptive and to assume that disruption will take place spontaneously and to plan contingency strategies that can come into play at times of crisis.*

The manner in which schools deal with disciplinary issues can greatly affect a school atmosphere. Some schools are far too ready to exclude pupils while others do so with extreme reluctance. It is vital that the same values and philosophies are held by all members of the teaching staff when dealing with disciplinary incidents. This is not always easily achieved when there can be diverse opinions amongst staff regarding the best approach to take with these students. The effectiveness of a school's behavioural policy can be reduced owing to a lack of ownership and shared values by staff. The Elton Report (1989) recognised that, in schools where decisions are made without consultation with staff, there is a lack of collective responsibility for behaviour and discipline, and that this results in problems being referred quickly onto senior management level, reducing the authority of the class teacher.

Very often the outcomes for students involved in disciplinary issues depends on the capabilities of senior management. Watkins et al. (2000:27) verify this, 'if key people believe the problem of disruptive behaviour to be within the power of schools to resolve, then the practices and outcomes are more positive'. They further emphasise this by showing that there has been evidence that schools with higher rates of suspension are to be found among those where senior staff tend to have less confidence in their power to tackle disruptive behaviour. The individuals in leadership positions in schools need to have the strength of character not to be over-reliant on exclusionary measures, and to utilise methods that keep the students in the school environment.

The response to rewards and sanctions in schools is dependent on the particular school context. In some schools detentions are highly effective, in others they are counterproductive. Detentions are effective for students who value education and are rarely in trouble, while for students who are regularly in trouble they do not have a positive impact. Certain students need regular rewards whereas others do not require as many. Cowley (2006:81) refers, firstly, to students who do not require regular rewards:

They are able to delay gratification, because they understand the longer-term benefits of getting a good education. Other children will need almost constant rewards and reassurance, because they lack this inner drive and find it very hard to keep themselves motivated.

The reason why the latter students require almost constant reassurance is because very often they receive little, if any, positive feedback from their parents. Therefore the school environment is the only situation where they are receiving positive reinforcement and extra encouragement, and this helps to make them feel valued and more optimistic about their future. There are a number of key dimensions that have to be taken into consideration regarding effective praise. First, praise should be specific in that it should communicate approval of the desired target behaviour, (Chalk

& Bizo 2004). It should be contingent, it should directly follow the performance of the desired behaviour, (Houghton et al. 1990). The target audience must also be considered when making use of praise, older students might not like to be praised publicly, preferring to be praised privately.

Kohn (2006:27-30) in analysing the values of rewards and punishments, is of the opinion that they are not very effective in the long run for improving student behaviour. He is of the view that they only achieve 'temporary compliance' and that rewards are 'control by seduction'. His viewpoint regarding punishment is that 'it ruptures the very relationships and alliances that you as a teacher need to be strengthening'. Kohn recommends that teachers help aggressive and impulsive students to become more responsible. This can be achieved by expending more effort in gaining some insight into why the students are behaving in such a manner. In research carried out by Munn et al. (2000:15) a central theme that emerged, in responding to challenging behaviour, was that alternative punishments, that keep the pupil in school and busy, are much more of a deterrent than exclusion. He suggests 'that exclusion loses its effect when it is used in response to apparently trivial matters and/or when it is equated with holidays from school'. While using sanctions that keep the student in the school are preferable problems occur when students refuse to turn up, leading to exclusionary measures being taken.

3:4 Classroom Management/Curriculum

Effective classroom management entails that good two-way communication prevails and that the working environment ensures that teaching and learning take place. Kounin (1970) found that effective teachers were no different from ineffective teachers in responding to or dealing with pupil misbehaviour. The difference was in their readiness. He noticed that effective teachers projected an image of being in charge in the classroom, displaying skills such as 'with-it-ness' and 'overlapping'. They were also efficient in managing lessons and transitional periods by maintaining 'momentum' and 'smoothness'.

When classroom misbehaviour occurs it has to be dealt with in a fair and appropriate manner. Rogers (2000:89) believes that it is more constructive and beneficial, in the long run, that students write about their behaviour. In an approach using the 4W form, students are given an opportunity to reply to the following: (1) What I did against our class or school rules. (2) What rules I broke or infringed. (3) What is my explanation? (4) What I think I should do to fix things up or work things out. Rogers feels such an approach gives students an opportunity to reply, which they may not always get, and time to think about ways in which they can rectify the situation. While this approach seems worthwhile it might not be practical in schools where you have a high proportion of students with challenging behaviour, who are regularly breaking the rules. In such circumstances an excessive amount of time would be spent by certain students completing forms. Although they would be reflecting on their behaviour, the underlying reasons causing their poor behaviour would not be addressed.

The desired characteristics of teachers who students respect and get on well with, are explained by Kyriacou (1986:139), 'pupils are typically reported as liking teachers who can keep order (without being too strict), are fair (that is, are consistent and have no favourites), can explain clearly and give help, give interesting lessons, and are friendly and patient'. Very often student

misbehaviour stems from teachers who are unable to fulfil such demands. A starting point for teachers regarding classroom management would be to ask themselves: ‘Does the way that I understand, analyse, prevent and intervene during challenging behaviour place me in the “battle zone” or “learning zone”?’ (O’Brien 1998:87). Those teachers who are in the battle zone will see the child as the challenge, while those in the learning zone will see the behaviour as the challenge. Accordingly, he mentions that, if teachers want to enter the learning zone, they must be willing to reflect upon their own behaviour. They must also have a fundamental commitment to the belief that the environment and people can change. In the learning zone bridges have replaced the barriers that are present in the battle zone.

The teaching style and strategies adopted by the teacher can have a major impact on the classroom atmosphere. On observing students in class, Martin & Hayes (1998:139) noted that, unless they ‘experienced some element of success they quickly became bored and frustrated and, at this point, their behaviour deteriorated’. They further elaborated that when there is a continual lack of success in the classroom setting it can lead to a ‘loss of self-esteem which some pupils try to overcome within their peer group by anti-social behaviour’. Teachers need to make more of a conscious effort to engage those students that have behavioural difficulties, early in the lesson. It is very important that they are capable of pitching their lesson to a level that will maintain the interest of the class. Too often the level at which the subject matter is taught is too easy or too difficult, resulting in students disengaging, which in turn leads to behavioural problems.

In research carried out by Wise (1999:16) pupils described three factors associated with the mainstream setting which they believed to be influential to their behaviour: ‘these were the size of the mainstream schools, the size of their classes, and the nature and content of the curriculum’. Many students find the curriculum too challenging or not relevant to their everyday experiences. In an article by Spratt et al. (2006:16) the problems associated with the curriculum were articulated as follows, ‘difficulties with school work were reported to elicit feelings of inadequacy, to be generally detrimental to the pupil’s feelings about themselves and to the perceptions about how others saw them’. In England the Office for Standards in Education Report, OFSTED (2005:13) suggested that high levels of poor behaviour are found in ‘all schools where the curriculum is limited and differentiation is lacking, resulting in a decline in pupils’ interest, motivation and involvement’. In certain schools in Great Britain additional government funding has been allocated to make adaptations to the curriculum to provide effective support to pupils with more difficult behaviour.

In the last ten to fifteen years modifications have been made to the Irish educational curriculum, both at junior and senior cycles, to cater for the aptitudes and abilities of a diverse student cohort. The Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP) is available to schools that can identify a suitable cohort of students who would benefit from a more flexible approach to the curriculum and its assessment. At senior cycle, the introduction of the Leaving Certificate Applied and Vocational programmes in the mid-nineties has increased options for students whose needs would not have been catered for by the traditional Leaving Certificate. Despite the advances that have been made regarding curriculum provision there are still problems associated with the Irish educational system, as indicated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD report (2003), **Education at a Glance**. This disclosed that over-two thirds of Irish fifteen-year-olds often feel bored at school, while the OECD average is under fifty per

cent. From this report it is evident that, for many students, there is a lack of relevance of the curriculum to the real world. Teachers are under increasing pressure to get through the curriculum, often adopting inflexible teaching methodologies which are not very interesting to the students.

3:5 Leadership

Strong leadership from the top is necessary to ensure smooth running of the discipline and pastoral care systems, especially when trying to introduce change for improvements. Harris (2002:18) looked at key features of effective leadership in secondary schools in challenging circumstances. Head teachers were found to adopt leadership approaches that matched the particular stage of school development. These leaders were ‘successful at realigning both staff and pupils to their particular vision of the school’, and they also had a high degree of emotional intelligence, always acutely aware of the need to build positive relationships with pupils, teachers and parents.

According to Penlington et al. (2008:66) the success of the head teacher’s vision, in terms of how it acted as a positive catalyst for change, seemed to be related to two dimensions. The first of these was the clarity of communication of the vision to staff, students and parents and the second, was the relevance of the vision to the school context. In such schools the principal’s vision was the main contributory factor in bringing about change, but the stakeholders did not feel that it was forced upon them as they were consulted. In schools endeavouring to promote positive behaviour, example and good communication must be given by the principal if the desired results are to be achieved. Kouzes and Posner (2003:111) in talking about leaders and the importance of communicating their vision, state ‘there is nothing more demoralising than a leader who can’t articulate why we’re doing what we’re doing’.

In research carried out by Leithwood et al. (2004:6) into ‘how leadership influences student learning’, they found that ‘leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school related factors that influence what students learn at school’, and that ‘leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most’. Mortimore (1991:9) has defined, ‘an effective school as one in which pupils progress further than might be expected from consideration of its intake. In other words an effective school adds extra value to its students’ outcomes in comparison with others serving similar intakes’. In such schools the teaching staff take on leadership roles outside their teaching duties and leadership is distributed throughout the school community. Harris et al. (2008:31) mention that a distributed model of leadership ‘focuses upon the interactions, rather than the actions, of those in formal and informal leadership roles’. It extends the boundaries of leadership significantly as it is premised upon high levels of ‘teacher involvement’ and encompasses a wide variety of ‘expertise, skill and input’ (Harris et al. 2003:160).

Leaders can adopt different leadership styles. The model most often linked to vision is transformational leadership. Preedy (1993:148) in referring to transformational leadership, refers to the fact that the leader, ‘may secure substantial commitments of time and energy from teachers in a drive to change attitudes of students and parents to a school in a community where there were low levels of achievement and little value placed on education’. Effective leadership is an

essential component in trying to establish structures to support the promotion of positive behaviour in schools. However the day of the heroic leader at the top running the school alone is gone. Nowadays, for change initiatives to be successful there needs to be input from all the stakeholders by means of distributed leadership.

3:6 Out-of-School Factors

While schools play a very important role in influencing student behaviour, it would be wrong to believe they can do so in isolation. Often too much is expected of schools in dealing with many of society's problems. Other factors and issues from students out of school life such as family problems, unemployment and poverty can have a detrimental impact on their behaviour. Schools cannot be expected to deal with all these diverse issues, not only due to lack of time and financial resources but also due to lack of professional and or experienced personnel. It is vital that there is a collaborative approach in the community where local development groups and agencies work closely with the school in dealing with issues. The Economic and Social Research Institute, ESRI (2009) report indicates that targeting resources on disadvantaged schools is not enough to counter educational inequality. Local community groups and parents need to work in tandem with the school so that there are appropriate activities for these students outside school hours. In America this approach is referred to as 'Wraparound', (Quinn and Lee 2007), where there is a collaborative approach. School, family and agency services, as well as informal supports, work together to meet the needs of students requiring intensive assistance.

Parental involvement and support regarding students who are disruptive in class is sometimes not forthcoming. MacBeath et al. (2007:69) suggest that 'low attendance at parents' meetings is explained by domestic and financial pressures, travel, prior negative experiences of school and lack of confidence in dealing with professionals'. Schools often don't engage parents because they don't think they can. A lot of it is perception; teachers perceive that parents do not want to be involved when, in fact, families don't know how to be involved. Raffaele & Knoff (1999) refer to the fact that the assumption is often made that the students' parents are unwilling or unable to work with school personnel. This is what sometimes happens with parents of disruptive students, the result is that teachers stop trying to involve the parents and focus on interventions limited to the school environment which is not the ideal situation. OFSTED (2005:19) further emphasise the importance of parental involvement: 'where partnership between parents and schools are strong, parents are involved as soon as concerns arise. Parents are seen as partners rather than being blamed for the poor behaviour of their children'. Successful parent school partnerships are not stand-alone, add-on programs, but they are integrated into the school's overall mission.

For many students from the lower socio-economic group there is a clash of cultures and they have difficulty in making the transition to school life. This immediately puts working-class students at a distinct disadvantage, making their transition to secondary school more difficult, (Drudy & Lynch 1993). This can be an additional barrier for these students, which can add to the frustration that they might be already experiencing. This build up of frustration can lead to these students acting out in class, disrupting the flow of lessons. When there are cultural discontinuities between home and school, teachers should strive to understand and appreciate these differences, and help students and families to do the same. Keddie (1973:8) refers to

culturally deprived children who ‘come from homes where mainstream values (i.e. middle-class values) do not prevail and are therefore less “educable” than other children’.

3:7 Irish Perspective

In recent years in Ireland, much effort and resources have been put into tackling the problem of challenging behaviour in secondary schools. The publication: ‘School Matters: The Report of the Task Force on Student Behaviour in Second Level Schools’ DES (2006) looked at the problem of student behaviour from many different perspectives. It acknowledged that student behaviour is not only influenced by what transpires within the school but also factors operating outside of the school. The issue of disruptive behaviour and how it impacts on teaching and learning was examined and it was recognised that incidents of serious disruption are becoming more frequent. The Task Force went on to mention the various mechanisms that the school can use to limit and reduce misbehaviour. These include a suitable code of behaviour, smooth transition from primary to secondary schools, provisions made within the curriculum to ensure that the abilities of all students are catered for, extracurricular activities and the importance of continuing professional development of staff. One of its recommendations involves the setting up of BSCs for those students experiencing problems and causing disruption. The goal of these classrooms is to identify student’s needs around behaviour and learning, and to develop appropriate teaching and learning methodologies. These classrooms provide an individualised intensive intervention programme for a target group of students.

Another approach used by O’Hara et al. (2000) was ‘positive discipline’. This provided teachers with a proactive way of addressing the complex issue of student discipline. It is a process ‘requiring teachers to focus their attention on pupils when they are behaving appropriately, rather than continually being on the lookout for reprimanding inappropriate behaviour’ (Wheldall 1991:101). The involvement of pupils in this project was the key to negotiating acceptable classroom rules; consequently, they felt valued, respected and involved. All key stakeholders were involved before a set of rules, sanctions and rewards were agreed. An outside facilitator was used to energise staff and to communicate key ideas of the new process. Student interest was maintained by making rewards attractive. A special area was set aside in the school where charts and details of competition between classes were publicly displayed.

The Department of Education (Northern Ireland) (2001:8) looked at schools where behaviour was good and discipline was not an issue. They found in such schools that there was ‘a positive atmosphere based on a sense of community within the school and values which all of its members share’ and ‘a sense of collective responsibility among staff, and a commitment to the school by pupils and their parents’. Other factors mentioned, which help to promote positive behaviour, include early identification of learning difficulties which may present as, or lead to behavioural problems, and effective links with outside support agencies. The programmes running in these schools promote among pupils a sense of self-esteem, self-respect and responsibility.

3:8 On/Off Site Provision in Great Britain

There are several strategies, such as the LSUs and the PRUs, that have been used in secondary schools in the United Kingdom to deal with students with serious disruptive behaviour. The LSUs are an on-site provision, while the PRUs are an off-site provision. Extensive time and resources have been put into these two approaches, and there is considerable debate about the use and usefulness of both provisions for disruptive students. This debate ‘often revolves around whether marginalising pupils to a unit in either location is another way of firmly locating the blame within the child’ (Watkins and Wagner 2000:7). These units do provide important temporary support. The level of success in altering patterns of disruptive behaviour is very much dependent on the personnel working in these units, and the commitment of mainstream teachers to these extra supports. It can be more difficult for students attending a PRU to make a successful return to mainstream when compared to those students attending a LSU. The reason for this is because they are outside the mainstream setting and they are therefore no longer interacting with the whole school community.

One of the most important statements for developing an improved understanding of behaviour is ‘ $B = f(P.S)$ ’, written by the influential social psychologist Kurt Lewin in 1947. It means that behaviour is a function of the person and the situation. It is unusual to find a student that is disruptive in all situations of school life. Normally there will be certain triggers that cause the undesirable behaviour to escalate. The challenge for schools is to ensure that ‘simple corrosive processes of blaming are avoided, in favour of a more comprehensive understanding of a range of contributions, including our own’ (Watkins and Wagner 2000:20). Much time is spent in these student support facilities identifying the triggers that cause the students to misbehave. As students gain an understanding of these triggers and the causes of their poor behaviour, with help they can begin to develop coping mechanisms which prevent escalation of the problem behaviour. Emphasis is placed on the situation/environment that the student finds him/herself in rather than focusing solely on the student as the source of the problem.

In referring to the LSUs Mc Sherry (2001:62) mentions that:

Entry to the unit should be planned, short term, and with an emphasis on helping pupils develop strategies to manage in a mainstream classroom. It is therefore important that reintegration is always a key element and carefully planned and supported.

There have been many different models of in-school centres developed over the years but there appears to be a number of factors which contribute to the success or failure of whichever model is adopted. These include the following:

- The active involvement of senior staff, teachers and parents;
- Good communication within the school;
- Using an approach which combines the withdrawal of pupils and support for them within normal classes;
- Flexibility in the provision of support;
- The involvement of pupils in self-monitoring, (Hallam & Castle 2001: 173-177).

In the functioning of the LSUs it is seen as vital that students are allowed to remain in those classes in which they are clearly working and causing minimal problems. These students need only be removed from the classes where they are causing serious disruption. All the time pupils need to be aware that their time in the unit is limited, 'if the full re-integration back into mainstream is not planned and supported, this is often the point at which all the good work put in by the staff and pupils comes apart' (Mc Sherry 2001:74). There is no point in carrying out brilliant work with the students when they are in the BSC and then forgetting about them once the students return to mainstream. If staff in mainstream classrooms are not supportive or do not believe in its effectiveness, this is where the support for students can break down and the disruptive behaviour can resurface again. The involvement of all staff means that there is less dependence on individual members of staff in ensuring successful outcomes for these students, (Hallam & Castle 2001).

Another support in England for these disruptive students are the Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTs), which are multi-agency teams whose focus is to deal with behavioural and associated problems in schools. The majority of the practitioners involved with BESTs come from social work and mental health backgrounds, followed by education welfare and behaviour support, and a lesser number of specific teaching roles. In an evaluation of BESTs by Halsey et al. (2006:31), the educational hierarchy of needs of students is mentioned. Firstly, students social and emotional well being needs to be catered for, followed by behaviour and attendance. When these lower order needs are satisfied then improvements can be made regarding attainment. Utilising this model makes sense, as there is no point in trying to improve examination results if issues surrounding student attendance and behaviour have not been addressed. It follows on naturally that if students are attending school in a more secure frame of mind, that their attainment will improve. Mc Namara & Moreton (1995:14) also emphasise this point: 'the raising of their self-esteem through counselling approaches is a prerequisite to any changes in behaviour and should precede any attempt to gain successful feedback through progress in their learning'. Halsey et al. (2006:79) mention a number of critical factors that influence the effectiveness of BEST's. The benefit of having a multi-agency approach was described as:

the ability to take a holistic approach to the educational, health and social needs of children and families; the collaborative pooling of skills and exchange of expertise around casework and interventions; and the opportunities for professional development this presented.

The importance of good communication within the team should not be underestimated, along with a required readiness of personnel to blur professional boundaries at times by stepping outside the margins of traditional roles and specialisms. If this does not occur, progress will be severely restricted with these students when the involved professionals adopt an inflexible approach, looking at problems solely from their own perspective, (Hamill & Boyd 2001).

To suggest that all professionals will slide seamlessly into effective inter-agency teamwork is, to say the least, somewhat naive. It requires all professionals to recognise that no one group has all the answers. Progress can only be made if the full range of professional skills is utilised collectively so as to benefit the young person. The preparation of staff to work in a multi-disciplinary manner 'requires considerable thought and planning; most social workers, teachers

and youth workers have been brought up almost entirely within their own traditions' (Pickles 1994:77). The integration of all these professionals in an equal partnership must become a reality. Problems occur when some professionals do not feel valued, and 'feel that they are sometimes perceived by other professional groups as lower down the professional hierarchy and consequently their input is also somewhat devalued' (Hamill & Boyd 2001:140). It is important that the coordinator/leader of the team ensures that all members feel valued, providing all members with the opportunity to contribute and participate in decision making. When this occurs there is a greater likelihood that all professionals will be committed, for the right reasons, to improving student behaviour. If, on the other hand, certain team members are allowed to dominate, this can considerably reduce the effectiveness of the team and limit beneficial outcomes for students.

3:9 International Perspective

The Framework for Intervention model used in Norway is an approach to the management of low level disruptive behaviour in the classroom, (Daniels & Williams 2000). It uses a peer support model, enabling teachers to support each other in forming solutions. This approach provides a structure which helps schools to implement change, while putting the teacher at the centre of the process. A no blame culture is adopted, creating a supportive environment for staff. In Australia, Fields (2004) mentions the use of a strategy called Defensive Management, which is designed to assist teachers to better manage non-compliance and defiance in the classroom, with the ultimate goal of reducing disciplinary referrals and follow-on suspensions and exclusions from school. Defensive management aims to avoid coercive, aggressive, emotional and irrational responses to challenging behaviour. The challenge for teachers is to like the students who are troublesome and make positive contact with them; this is exactly what is needed if teachers want to create a classroom environment where respect and cooperation is fostered. Fields (2004:107) makes the comparison with defensive driving:

*behaviour management is very much a practical skill - responding quickly and automatically to a multitude of events, both ordinary and extraordinary.....
Defensive behaviour management is all about avoiding "collisions" with students when such clashes can only result in damage and harm.*

In the American context Positive Behaviour Support has been used to improve student behaviour, (Minke & Anderson 2005). Positive Behaviour Support is 'the application of positive behavioural intervention and systems to achieve socially important behaviour change', (Sugai et al. 2000:133). Attention is focused on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results for all children and youth by making problem behaviour less effective, efficient and relevant and the desired behaviour more functional. Warren et al. (2006:189) argue that in implementing Positive Behaviour Support, 'interventions are targeted at a number of different levels, including the school as a whole, groups of students that may require more focused intervention, support for individual students with challenging behaviour'. Once behavioural expectations have been defined, they must be taught effectively to the students as instruction alone is insufficient to ensure the maintenance of expected behaviours. Overall, school-wide Positive Behaviour

Support 'shifts the emphasis from reactive and punitive methods to more proactive, preventative, and educationally focused methods' (Ervin et al. 2007:7).

3.10 Conclusion

From my review of the literature it is evident that there are many factors impinging on student behaviour. The schools that are successful in dealing with students with challenging behaviour adopt a whole school approach. This involves all of the teaching staff taking a committed approach to promoting positive behaviour. There is a strong belief that, irrespective of family background, socio-economic status or other factors outside of the school, positive outcomes are possible for these students, provided the necessary support structures are put in place. In schools that achieve beneficial outcomes for students with behavioural difficulties, everyone is treated as a unique individual and with respect. Opportunities are provided so that students can experience success in varied activities taking place in the school. Excuses are not made by attributing the causes of poor behaviour to factors outside the school; every effort is made to increase the attachment of these students to the school.

Currently in Ireland, in certain schools there are a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour. This problem is exacerbated by schools adopting a policy of 'cherry picking' (Walshe 2006), by selectively enrolling the less troublesome students. This unfair distribution is putting some schools under serious pressure, as they are spending significant time dealing with disciplinary issues which is impacting on teaching and learning. The Irish Times on (March 27th 2008) refers to schools who embrace these students with special needs wholeheartedly. These schools become victims of their own success and end up having a large number of students with special educational needs, for whom they do not have adequate resources. To counteract this problem it is essential that all schools have in place policies that actively support equality of access. Every year there is continuous competition between neighbouring schools as they strive to attract potential students. While this is healthy rivalry and acts as an important stimulus for raising the overall standard of schools, there are implications for students especially those with special needs. Parffrey (1994:108) stated that: 'naughty children are bad news in a market economy. No one wants them. They are bad for the image of the school, they are bad for league tables, they are difficult and time consuming, they upset and stress teachers'.

The schools that are having the most beneficial outcomes for students exhibiting behavioural difficulties are constantly evolving so as to adapt to the ever changing educational environment. This is being achieved by engaging consistently in planning, evaluation and monitoring of critical performance indicators. These indicators include attendance, detention, suspension rates along with academic performance. In the schools operating in disadvantaged areas under challenging circumstances the principal has a very important role to play. This is achieved by communicating to all stakeholders his/her vision and distributing leadership throughout the school environment. In circumstances where the vision encourages strong teacher-student relations and the adoption of a pastoral philosophy, greater progress can be made with these students. From reviewing the literature it is clearly evident that punitive exclusionary measures do not have desirable outcomes for these students; they only further increase the difficulties they encounter. Such strategies only add to their cycle of negativity, alienating them further from the

educational system. Unfortunately a difficulty faced by many schools operating in disadvantaged environments is the lack of parental support. When this is absent or not at a satisfactory level, it impacts significantly on the educational outcomes of these vulnerable students who also require assistance from home.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4:1 Introduction

In this methodology chapter I shall, firstly, look at the philosophical foundations underpinning the different research paradigms that can be considered when endeavouring to carry out research in an educational setting. I will describe and consider each paradigm and provide reasons why certain paradigms are not suitable for dealing with my particular research question. I will contextualise this through an examination of the ‘paradigm wars’ and the evolution that occurred with the gradual movement from mono-methods to mixed methods. The paradigm which I found to be most appropriate for my research was pragmatism, and I will provide justifications for my choice. In my research I predominantly made use of qualitative methods and this data was further enhanced by quantitative data. I shall examine the different approaches to research, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods, before explaining my rationale for deciding to use mixed methods. Regarding data collection, I will describe in detail my reasons for using questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews and analysis of school data. ‘Utilization-Focused Evaluation’ (Patton 2008) was used to determine the overall effectiveness of the interventions. I will also explain the approach I took in dealing with ethical issues and how I went about improving the reliability and validity of my research findings.

4:2 Research Theory

In the analysis of the philosophical foundations underpinning research in the area of promoting more positive student behaviour, there are three educational paradigms which, potentially, can be used to address this issue namely:

1. The positivist empirical approach (quantitative)
2. The interpretive/constructivist approach (qualitative)
3. The pragmatist approach (mixed methods)

The positivist approach was the dominant paradigm used in research from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. Then, the constructivist paradigm linked to qualitative methodologies became established as a viable alternative from the mid-1970s to the 1990s. Mixed methods as a research paradigm is seen as emerging from the 1990s onwards, establishing itself alongside the previous paradigms, so that ‘we currently are in a three methodological or research paradigm world, with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods thriving and coexisting’ (Johnson et al. 2007:117).

Each paradigm has its own specific attributes underpinned by their philosophical perspectives and their own theory of knowledge. The knock-on effect is that these theoretical and epistemological assumptions affect the methodology used. A paradigm is a set of ideas, theories or an approach. The research paradigms operate out of a ‘set of coherent ideas’ about the world and how researchers operate, (Bassegy 1990:13). Another definition expressed by Mertens (2003:139) is that a paradigm may be defined as ‘a world view, complete with the assumptions associated with that view’. Sometimes researchers feel so strongly about their particular paradigm that they fail to see the worth or value of other paradigms.

Traditionally researchers would have fallen into one of two camps. Lincoln and Guba (1988) refer to them as ‘scientific’ and ‘naturalistic’. In other articles they are referred to as ‘positivists’ and ‘constructivists’. Normally, a quantitative approach implied the holding of positivist paradigm beliefs and a qualitative approach meant the holding of beliefs associated with the constructivist paradigm. This particular research period was known as the mono-method era, where researchers adopted either a quantitative or qualitative approach and used methods from either approach. The debate termed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) as the ‘paradigm wars’, commenced with the challenge to the dominance of mono-methods with the emergence of mixed methods. During this time there was much debate around the relationship between paradigm and methodology, (Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003). There were those who felt that the differences between the two main paradigms were irreconcilable and, therefore, mixed methods could not work. They put forward their ideas in the ‘incompatibility thesis’. Those who felt that methods could be mixed expressed their ideas in the ‘compatibility thesis’ (Howe 1988). The result of these debates over mixed methods led to the emergence of a third way, the pragmatic paradigm.

The work of Cohen and Manion (2000:1-41) provides an excellent overview on the twin traditions of positivist and anti-positivist research methodologies in education and examines the relevance of both traditions. They identify the three means by which humans seek to come to terms with their environment, and to understand the nature of the phenomena that our environment presents: experience, reasoning and research. Failure to make sense of a situation through one approach may, in turn, lead to an application of one or both of the remaining approaches in order to gain knowledge.

These two conceptions of the social world (positivist and anti-positivist), from a research perspective, are based on a number of assumptions. Burell and Morgan (1979) identified these assumptions from a number of key perspectives: the ontological, the epistemological, the relationship between human nature and the environment and the methodological. The ontological is concerned with the nature of things and, in particular, the nature of the social world. Put more simply, the ontological assumptions determine whether one takes an objective or subjective stance in one’s research. From my perspective as a researcher in the field of education, interviewing principals and teachers, it was evident that my ontological stance was firmly rooted in the nominalist subjective approach. This would necessitate the collection of subjective accounts and perceptions that might explain how the world is experienced and constructed by those working in a school setting. Consequently, it was important that I used methodologies and methods that were in line with my ontological position.

If epistemology is the theory of knowledge, then epistemological assumptions concern the nature of knowledge, the acquisition of knowledge and how this knowledge can be communicated to others. Griffith (1998) mentions that the epistemological basis of research is the focus of many disagreements among the research community. Burell and Morgan, cited in Cohen and Manion (2000:7), locate the main focus of the disagreement around:

The view that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible will demand of researchers an observer role, together with an allegiance to the methods of natural science; to see knowledge as personal, subjective and unique, however, imposes on researchers an involvement with their subjects and a rejection of the ways of the natural

scientist.

As I view knowledge as experiential, personal and subjective I was aware that I needed to find out ways of generating knowledge that placed considerable emphasis on accounts given by informants, either through interviews or, in some instances, questionnaires. In my research I was committed to the episteme that allowed me to take different perspectives, to see the world through many lenses. Thus my ontological and epistemological stance was predominantly in the qualitative domain. It follows that the ontological and epistemological concerns will have direct implications for the methodological concerns of the researchers. Researchers who adopt an objectivist approach to the social world will choose from a range of traditional options, such as surveys and experiments, and will be predominantly quantitative in their approach. Those favouring the more subjectivist approach and who view the social world as being much softer, personal and humanly created will make use of observation and interviews and will be qualitative in their approach.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) further elaborated, contrasting the difference between positivism and constructivism on the basic issues of epistemology, ontology and axiology. The following illustrates the differences:

Epistemology: Positivists believe that the knower and the known are independent, whereas constructivists believe that the knower and the known are inseparable.

Ontology: Positivists believe that there is a single reality, whereas constructivists believe that there are multiple, constructed realities.

Axiology: Positivists believe that inquiry is value free, whereas constructivists believe that inquiry is value bound.

Despite their obvious merits, each of the two basic approaches to research (positivist and anti-positivist) has been criticised by proponents from the other orientation. Although much of the controversy has focused on different world views, which has resulted in the 'paradigm wars', each camp has also criticised the others' methods of study, the rigour of its procedures, and the validity of its outcomes. Today, there are still qualitative researchers who avoid mixed methods research because of the incompatibility of 'mixing' paradigms. Rossman and Wilson (1985) called these individuals purists, who could not mix paradigms; others, they called situationalists, who adapt their methods to the situation, and pragmatists, who believe that multiple paradigms can be used to address research problems. Given such contrasts, it was inevitable that 'paradigm wars' would break out between individuals convinced of what Smith (1994) called the 'paradigm purity' of their own position.

4:3 Positivism

The positivist approach is not very appropriate for my work because the data collected using this method is only suitable for statistical analysis. It deals with facts and figures. In education you are dealing with feelings, perceptions and values of the various stakeholders and these cannot be measured scientifically. Kincheloe (2003:80) states that: 'researchers from a positivist

background fancy that the environment of the objects they study will stay constant. We know as teachers that the learning environment of children is constantly changing'. Due to the uncertainty and unpredictability associated with teaching and learning situations the prescriptive positivist approach is totally unsuitable.

The implications, adapted by Hughes (1994) and Easterby Smith et al. (1997) illustrate why positivism does not provide the means to examine human behaviour in an in-depth manner. It is value free research determined by objective criteria, rather than human beliefs and interests, also the researcher is independent of the subject area examined. These qualities make the establishment of laws and the ability to generalise impossible. Parahoo (1997:113) further elaborates on this:

In physics, it is possible to formulate laws relating to..... the expansion of metal when heated. From such laws, the amount of expansion that will occur in particular circumstances can be predicted. However when a man loses his job and becomes depressed, it does not mean he will be depressed each time he loses his job, nor can we say that everyone that loses his job becomes depressed.

Many factors influence human behaviour which makes it extremely difficult to predict. The positivist approach is totally unsuitable for my research question because it only provides a superficial view of the situation. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the school situation, where the problem of human interactions between the different stakeholders present the positivistic researcher with an extremely difficult task. The mechanistic view with which positivists view nature fails to take into consideration critical human attributes, such as the notion of choice, freedom and moral responsibility. Kincheloe (2003:81) when making the point that educational research was value laden, and the inappropriate nature of the positivist approach states:

Positivist research is of little help to such practitioners (who must make moral decisions about the 'right' thing to do) because it assumes that research exists only to describe and help make predictions and, of course, has no value dimensions. It is unequipped to evaluate educational purposes or to assess various strategies for improving schooling.

Students and teachers in the school situation cannot be studied objectively and dispassionately. The researcher has to immerse him/herself in the situation to get a good understanding of the context. In the positivist approach people are expected to receive information and apply it to their work. Because the external researcher holds the power and gathers information about the situation, individuals' beliefs and perceptions are systematically factored out. Mc Niff (2002:28) refers to 'the epistemological basis of empirical approaches in that theory determines practice'. Researchers have to fit their practice into a given theory and not to question or show any initiative in the educational setting. Positivists view knowledge as a commodity, something which can be acquired and sold; they do not tolerate any personal involvement with the data as this would affect reliability and validity and could potentially affect the results. Positivists claim that their techniques are objective, yet overlook many subjective decisions that they make in educational research. While attempts have been made to put the study of human social life on a

scientific footing, problems remain due to the unpredictability of human nature and the fact that the relationship between the social scientist and the subject matter is totally different to that of the natural scientist and his/her subject. For my research, I considered the positivistic approach but I found it not to be appropriate for answering my research question. While I did utilise numerical analysis, it only comprised a small portion of my research findings. It was primarily used to increase the reliability and validity of my predominantly qualitative research.

4:4 Qualitative/Quantitative Debate Leading to Mixed Methods

My research question ultimately decided whether I was going to use a qualitative, quantitative or a mixed method approach. Recent studies carried out in this area primarily make use of qualitative approaches, (Hayes et al. 2007). I believed that it was important to align my work with previous work in this area and not to try and reinvent the wheel. Qualitative research designs tend to work with a relatively small number of cases, which applied to my research, as there is a tendency to sacrifice scope for detail. I predominantly carried out qualitative research using interviews, and this was enhanced further by quantitative analysis of questionnaires and educational data from the schools. The type of research used is referred to as qualitative dominant mixed methods.

Deciding to do qualitative research is not a soft option. Such research demands theoretical sophistication and methodological rigour. In his excellent book *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, Seale (1999:10) identifies quality issues with what he calls ‘methodological awareness’. As he puts it:

Methodological awareness involves a commitment to showing as much as possible to the audience of research studies.....the procedures and evidence that have led to particular conclusions, always open to the possibility that conclusions may need to be revised in the light of new evidence.

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context specific settings, such as ‘real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest’ (Patton 2001:39). Qualitative research, broadly defined, means ‘any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification’ (Strauss and Corbin 1990:17). The two main approaches differ in their ways of conducting research, and each tends to claim superiority over the other. The major differences between the two research approaches are in the areas of data collection and analyses. According to Gall, Gall & Borg (2002:13), quantitative research ‘relies heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis’, in contrast, qualitative research makes ‘little use of numbers or statistics but instead relies heavily on verbal data and subjective analysis’. Without doubt there are certain questions and topics where the qualitative approach will not help you and the same is true of quantitative research. Regarding the quantitative/qualitative debate Creswell (1994:176) stated:

Currently three major schools of thought prevail; purists assert that paradigms and methods should not be mixed and advocate mono-method studies. Situationists argue that certain methods are more appropriate for specific situations and

pragmatists attempt to integrate methods within a single study.

Taking a non-purist or mixed position would allow me to mix and match design components that would offer the best chance of answering my specific research question. Punch (1998:240) cautioned that 'these differences should not obscure the similarities in logic, which make combining the approaches possible'. As the researcher it was my task to examine the specific contingencies and to make the decision about which research approach, or combination of approaches, should be used for my specific study.

A key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research when compared to mono-method research. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004:19) refer to this when saying that 'in many cases the goal of mixing is not to search for corroboration but rather to expand on our understanding'. It was extremely useful to combine both quantitative and qualitative techniques when looking at the different approaches to promoting positive behaviour, due to the complexity of the situation which required data from a large number of perspectives. While I knew that, by carrying out mainly qualitative research, it was going to be time consuming, I was confident that it would yield rich information not obtainable through statistical sampling techniques solely. As stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985:120) 'if you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them with information in the form that they usually experience it'. The rich description provided by qualitative research ensured that it was more easily understood and more relevant to the world people interacted with. In recent times, some of the strongest supporters of qualitative research, such as Denzin, Lincoln and Guba have, at times, made statements that appear to give credence to mixed methods research. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) acknowledged that there were many opportunities for the naturalistic investigator to utilise quantitative methods, probably more than are appreciated.

Several benefits also accrued from using quantitative methods in my research. Firstly, carrying out quantitative analysis of the questionnaires enabled me to get a good understanding of the opinions of key personnel in the different schools. It also provided me with a starting point where my research questions for the interviews were determined. Carrying out analysis on each school's Annual Attendance Report provided statistical findings and concrete evidence on critical performance indicators like attendance, suspension and expulsion rates. Providing hard data pre- and post-intervention, for the schools with the BSCs, would significantly help for evaluation purposes, and along with the valued opinions of the relevant stakeholders, assist in increasing the reliability and validity of my findings.

Ultimately, I decided on a mixed methods approach as the best way to answer my research question. I would use semi-structured interviews and questionnaires to generate my qualitative data, while I would carry out numerical analysis on the questionnaires and school data for my quantitative data. Tashakkori & Creswell (2007:4) provide an excellent description of mixed methods where they define it as: 'research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry'. A number of factors have contributed to the development of mixed methods research. The complexity of our research problems calls for answers beyond simple numbers in a quantitative sense or words in a qualitative sense. Due to

the call for increased sophistication of evidence this requires the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. In recent years, many authors have begun to advocate the use mixed methods as a separate methodology or design. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003:9) refer to mixed methods research as the ‘third methodological movement’.

On a philosophical level, mixed methodologists had to counter the incompatibility thesis. Howe (1988) stated that qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should not be mixed. The incompatibility thesis has now been largely discredited as many researchers have successfully employed mixed methods in their work. For mixed methods it is not necessary to have a detailed set of philosophical and methodological positions that would fit into the classification scheme popularised by Lincoln and Guba. A variation in the particular philosophical commitments is welcomed and these differences should be embraced as part of mixed methods research.

My reason for using mixed methods is premised on the idea that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, will provide me with a better understanding of my research problem than either approach alone. This better understanding results from the fact that mixed methods offer strengths that offset the weaknesses of separately applied quantitative and qualitative research methods. Mixed method designs are required in situations where neither the quantitative nor qualitative methods alone would be sufficient to answer the research questions. Personally, for me, the major advantage associated with mixed methods includes the clarification and comparison of results from one method with the other method. It allows for the development of the research; the results from one method, in my case the questionnaire, help to inform the structure and type of questions for the semi-structured interview. Using qualitative and quantitative methods should assist in expanding the breadth and range of the inquiry. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2009:33) mention three areas where mixed methods research is superior to single approach designs:

1. It can simultaneously address a range of confirmatory and exploratory questions with both quantitative and qualitative approaches.
2. It provides better (stronger) inferences.
3. It provides the opportunity for a greater assortment of divergent views.

4:5 Interpretive Approach/Pragmatism

Initially, the research paradigm that I felt was most appropriate was the interpretive paradigm, as I wanted to get a good understanding of the different approaches to dealing with inappropriate student behaviour. As a teacher researcher I value the interpretive approach to research, more than the scientific way. It acknowledges the great complexities of people and the difficulties of quantifying their responses. A researcher using this method does not believe that reality exists irrespective of people, but rather that people construct their own reality. Bassey (1990:42) refers to this: ‘because of differences in perception, in interpretation and in language it is not surprising that people have different views of what is real’.

The interpretive approach agrees that people see the world differently. Interpretivists accept also that their research cannot be exactly replicated. People change and, by the very nature of the

enquiry, the researcher impacts on and affects the study. Thus repetition might well result in different findings. The researchers bring with them their own bias, history and beliefs to the interpretation of the findings so that it is, as a result, value laden. Unlike positivism the researcher does not begin with a fixed hypothesis about an educational situation. However, many interpretivists share with empiricists the desire to remain detached and objective observers, in the hope that this might ensure a greater degree of validity and reliability. This requirement for objectivity meant that the interpretive approach would not have been appropriate. Eventually, after careful consideration, I decided that pragmatism would be the most appropriate paradigm to use for my research.

Several authors, such as Rossman & Wilson (1985), Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) and Patton (2002), have proposed that pragmatism is the best paradigm for justifying the use of mixed methods. Pragmatist researchers consider the research question more important than either the method that they use, or the paradigm that underlies the method. Pragmatists challenge the distinct contrast between objectivity and subjectivity. They believe that epistemological issues exist on a continuum, rather than on two opposing poles. At some points during the research process, the researcher and the participants may require a highly interactive relationship to answer complex questions. At other points, the researcher may not need interaction with the participants. Pragmatists believe that research on any given question, at any point in time, falls somewhere within the inductive-deductive research cycle. Pragmatism takes an explicitly value-oriented approach to research that specifically endorses shared values, such as democracy and freedom. It offers a pragmatic method for solving philosophical dualisms as well as for making methodological choices.

Pragmatism can be treated as the new orthodoxy built on the belief that, not only is it permissible to mix methods from different paradigms of research, but it is also desirable to do so. For this reason good educational research will almost inevitably necessitate the use of both quantitative and qualitative research to provide adequate answers. Denscombe (2008) mentions, that pragmatism is framed by a whole variety of practical issues and demands, rather than being guided by some overarching philosophy. Inevitably, this means that the manner in which the elements of quantitative and qualitative methodologies become combined is likely to be fragmented and inconsistent.

In my previous research, which was in the school where I currently work, I made use of action research. It was very appropriate as I was endeavouring to bring about change within the school. Action research is not suitable for my current research, as I am going to be an outsider visiting schools and will not have the opportunity of introducing change. I will be evaluating the impact of the BSCs and other approaches to promoting positive behaviour. The theoretical lens through which I will carry out my research will make use of utilization- focused evaluation.

4:6 Utilization-Focused Evaluation

I made use of utilization-focused evaluation (UFE) to determine the effectiveness of the different interventions in dealing with inappropriate student behaviour. Patton (1997:23) describes UFE 'as evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses'. UFE takes a pragmatic eclectic approach, where the evaluator takes context into consideration

and then chooses the model, methods, criteria and intended users that best fit the local situation. The highly personal, dynamic and situational nature of UFE underlies Patton's (2003:2) summary of the working relationship between the evaluator and client group, that encapsulates the approach that he has so strongly developed and espouses. He states:

In considering the rich and varied menu of evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation can include any evaluative purpose (formative, summative, developmental), any kind of data (quantitative, qualitative, mixed), any kind of design (eg naturalistic, experimental) and any kind of focus (processes, outcomes, impacts, costs, and cost benefits, among many possibilities).

As with any evaluation there can be multiple possible stakeholders. I was very conscious of involving those who were going to have an immediate stake in the findings of my evaluation. Rather than trying to reach and work with all stakeholders, the approach I took was with a select, representative group that allowed for greater focus in my research. From analysis of all potential stakeholders, I identified those that could best represent the interests of all stakeholders. Through careful and thorough analysis, I identified the multiple and varied perspectives and interests that needed to be represented in the study. Since stakeholders, typically, have diverse and often competing interests, and as no evaluation can answer all potential questions equally well, it was necessary for me to narrow the range of questions to focus the evaluation. This was achieved by narrowing the number of potential stakeholders to a much smaller more specific group of primary intended users. I wanted to engage those who were committed to bringing about improvements in these students' behaviour within the school environs; these individuals included principals, year heads and individuals involved with the BSCs.

UFE enabled me to judge the merit or worth of the different supports that were in place in the different schools, particularly the BSCs. Carrying out a focused evaluation would assist in improving interventions that were already in place. From the start, my goal was to ensure high quality participation rather than high quantity participation; this was the reason why only a few individuals from each school were involved. I consciously designed the evaluation to ensure that the intended users' questions were answered in such a way that they would respect, understand and apply the findings. Patton (2008:69) refers to the personal factor, which is the presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates. Where such a person or group is present, evaluations are more likely to be used; where the personal factor is absent, there is a correspondingly lower probability of evaluation impact. The people that I chose to be involved definitely cared about the evaluation, and I was confident that the personal factor was present in my research.

There are limitations associated with UFE. Stufflebeam & Shinkfield (2007:443) mention a couple of these, one of which is the turnover of involved users. Replacement users may require that the program evaluation be renegotiated in order to sustain or renew the prospects for evaluation impacts. The intended users group may not represent all the stakeholders' interests, if the evaluator has not been successful in recruiting a representative group and keeping them all involved. There is always the danger that the interests of other important stakeholders may not be addressed. From the utilization focused perspective, there is no one right way to conduct an evaluation; rather a design should be developed by negotiation that appeals to users and potential

users of the program. Patton (2003: 153) reinforces this concept, ‘the right way..... is the way that will be meaningful and useful to the specific evaluators and intended users involved, and finding that way requires interaction, negotiation and situational analysis’.

4:7 Research Methods

The methods that I utilised in my data collection included a questionnaire, semi-structured interview and document analysis. Each method helped to complement and enrich the findings from the other methods, allowing for better evaluation of the different interventions to be taken in the schools. I started my research by distributing the questionnaires. This was then followed by the semi-structured interviews and finally analysis of school data.

The questionnaire design for the schools with the BSCs, and those without this facility in place, were very similar in their format. There was a covering letter attached to each questionnaire (Appendix 1), explaining the purpose of the research and requesting their participation. All questionnaires were administered by hand, personally, and were collected approximately a week later. I was conscious of not putting undue pressure on any of the participants, by requesting them to complete the questionnaire hurriedly in my presence. I felt that it would be more beneficial to me if they were completed when they had adequate time to do so. I decided against posting the questionnaires to the school as I believed that the response rate would have been very poor. I felt that it would be more useful to meet the relevant personnel face to face, so that I could introduce myself and deal with any queries the participants might have. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, I piloted it in two schools, similar to the ones involved in the research, to determine its suitability. The feedback that I received allowed me to make the necessary alterations. Certain questions were removed from the questionnaire altogether and the wording of other questions was altered. I also introduced more sections into the questionnaire, explaining more clearly the purpose of each section, thereby making it easier for respondents to make their way through the questionnaire. A pilot has several functions, principally to increase the reliability, validity and practicability of the questionnaire, (Oppenheim 1992, Morrison 1993). The personnel involved in completing the questionnaires also participated in the follow-up interviews.

The questionnaire for those schools with the BSCs started off with closed questions concerning the school profile. Following this, respondents were questioned about discipline and behaviour in the school prior to intervention by the NBSS. Next, their opinions regarding the changes that had occurred, as a consequence of the intervention, were sought. Towards the end of the questionnaire respondents were given the opportunity to answer open-ended questions regarding the impact of the classrooms; this gave them the chance to elaborate on their opinions. The order of questions in the questionnaire was based on recommendations by Cohen et al. (2007:337), which was to commence with the unthreatening factual questions, move to closed questions and then move on to the more open-ended questions. For the DEIS schools without the BSCs, the questionnaire again started off with closed questions on the profile of the school and background information relating to discipline and the current situation in the school. Again the questionnaire concluded with open questions regarding the impact of positive approaches to promoting good behaviour.

Cohen et al. (2007:320), when talking about the large range of types of questionnaires, mentions that there is a simple rule of thumb: 'the larger the size of the sample, the more structured, closed and numerical the questionnaire may have to be, and the smaller the size of the sample, the less structured, more open and word based the questionnaire may be'. Due to the fact that I was sampling only twelve schools, and up to three personnel in each school, I adopted a semi-structured approach to the design of the questionnaire. By making use of questions that allowed for open-ended responses, I was confident that the completed questionnaires would contain the gems of information not always associated with this particular method of data collection. The information gathered from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire would help to form the basis for some of the questions in the semi-structured interview. The reason I used open-ended questions, towards the end of the questionnaire, was to allow respondents the opportunity to explain and elaborate on their responses and to avoid the limitations associated with very structured questionnaires that have preset categories of response. I was mindful that the ordering of the questions in the questionnaire was important so as to set the tone and the mindset of the respondent to later questions. As Oppenheim (1992:121) remarked 'one covert purpose of each question is to ensure that the respondent will continue to cooperate'.

Questionnaires can provide mass data about a particular issue, but they lack the depth of understanding that a qualitative interview provides. Likewise, observations can certainly lead to insights about, say, interactional styles of teachers with students or patterns of behaviour in a classroom, but without interview data gathered directly from the participant, observation is akin to watching silent movies. For these reasons alone, the interview has become the most common qualitative tool that researchers employ in education, (Glesne & Peshkin 1992, Merriam 1998). Interviewing can be used to gather information that cannot be obtained using other methods and, consequently, was the dominant method in my research.

Following collection and analysis of the questionnaires the semi-structured interviews were carried out. The personnel involved in the semi-structured interviews included the principals and the Behaviour Support Coordinators/staff, in the schools piloting the BSCs. In the other schools, the principals and one year head from a Junior Cycle year were involved. This approach ensured that the perspectives of the leaders of the schools were sought, along with those individuals who regularly dealt with disciplinary related issues. Being an outsider coming in to carry out the research limited my access to other stakeholders, such as parents and students; there would also have been the difficulty of getting informed consent from the parents to interview the students. Dexter (1970:123) describes the interview as a 'conversation with a purpose'. Interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when it appears that it will get better data, or more data at less cost, than other 'tactics'. Guba and Lincoln (1981:154) further elaborate when stating: 'of all the means of exchanging information and gathering data known to man..... interviewing is perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most respected of the tools that the inquirer can use'.

My reason for making use of semi-structured interviews was to enhance the interpretation of data derived from the questionnaires. The semi-structured interview is more flexible than standardised methods, such as the structured interview or survey. For each of the interviews I used a standardised interview schedule, with set questions which were asked to all the interviewees. Kvale (2007:65) mentions that the semi-structured interview 'has a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some prepared questions'. The reason why schedules were designed for my

interviews was because they were a one-off; I had to make sure that the correct questions were asked to elicit the relevant information. I had identified a framework of certain questions that had to be explored in the interviews. This allowed for a certain amount of flexibility and freedom within the interview schedule. In the interviews the questions were asked in a similar order and format. This allowed for easier comparison between interviewee responses and assisted in easier data analysis. In certain instances adjustments had to be made to the interview schedule when interviewees answered questions that were later on the schedule, or when it was necessary to probe further.

I was extremely cautious in the sequencing and framing of the interview questions, ensuring that the easier, less threatening, non controversial questions were addressed earlier in the interview to put the respondents at ease. I piloted my interview questions prior to commencing the interviews for my research. This was beneficial and afterwards I restructured my interview questions so that the right questions were being asked at the right time. Initially I was trying to cover too many themes within my interview schedule and, on reflection I reduced the number of themes to a more manageable level.

Oppenheim (1992:147) argues that wording is a particularly important factor in attitudinal questions rather than factual questions. He suggests that ‘changes in wording, context and emphasis undermine reliability, because it ceases to be the same question for each respondent’. I recorded all the interviews using a tape recorder for reliability purposes because I felt that, if I was to depend on note taking or memory, there would be the possibility that data would be lost. This point is perfectly illustrated by Ribbins, cited in Briggs and Coleman (2007:216), ‘recording generates data, without data there is no research’. To reduce the problem of bias in the interview process I made sure that all parts of the interviews were transcribed, that there was consistent coding of responses. My motive for transcribing the complete interviews was that there was the possibility that something might seem to be irrelevant at the early stage of the research project but, depending how the research evolved, it might become highly relevant later on.

Guba and Lincoln (1981:155) argue that, ‘researchbased solely on interviews may be sabotaged and crippled....triangulation of methods is the best means of ensuring that one will be able to make sense of data collected through interviews’. Interviews themselves are contrived, artificial situations and interviewees often respond to them in a manner that reflects this. This is because what people tell you and what they actually think and do, might not be consistent. Often it is the case that further evidence is required and this might mean talking to the relevant others or studying documents. I carried out analysis of school data so as to provide further evidence to back up my findings from the questionnaires and interviews. School records provide another window for the researcher to read between the lines and to increase the credibility of the findings. In the schools with the BSCs I used a standard document for evaluating the impact of the intervention. For comparison purposes, data was presented in the format of pre- and post-intervention. The critical performance indicators that were monitored included attendance, detention and suspension rates, punctuality and academic achievement. In all the schools the Annual Attendance Report for the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was analysed for the academic years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. This gave details on student attendance, suspension and expulsion rates. This represented the quantitative aspect of my research as the results were expressed numerically.

4:8 Details of Research and Data Analysis

In carrying out my research I visited every school, explaining to each principal the purpose of my research and requesting their permission to carry out my work. I strongly believed that meeting each principal personally was necessary, as I was an outsider coming into the schools. I visited the schools in late 2008 and early 2009. I collected the data firstly from the schools piloting the BSCs and thereafter the six other DEIS schools. The visits and follow-up interviews took place whenever a mutually acceptable time was agreed. Purposive sampling, (Cohen et al. 2007) was employed in all the schools when selecting the personnel that were to be involved in the research.

The key research participants chosen were very knowledgeable in relation to the different strategies that work with these students and their common underlying problems. After completion of the questionnaires the follow-up interviews were subsequently arranged; eighteen were carried out in those schools with the BSCs, and twelve were carried out in the other DEIS schools. The participants were made fully aware that their interviews were being recorded and that they would be transcribed later. My rationale for including the two different samples of schools, those with and without the BSCs, was to evaluate their effectiveness in dealing with inappropriate student behaviour. I wanted to determine whether the schools with these additional resources had more beneficial outcomes for students with challenging behaviour. Through comparing the different interventions I was going to give my opinion on whether the BSCs are a long term viable alternative as an additional resource for these disadvantaged schools. I wanted to find out whether the DEIS schools, without this additional support, were coping or whether they were struggling to maintain a safe and orderly school environment.

There were a variety of reasons why the questionnaire was used prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews. Feedback from the questionnaires allowed me to get good background information on the schools, in areas such as the number of teachers, number of students and level of disruptive behaviour in the school. It eased the participants into the research mode and acted as an effective tool in highlighting the areas that needed to be further addressed in the interview. Using the questionnaire reduced the number of exploratory questions that had to be asked at the start of each interview.

Analysis of the questionnaires was divided into two sections; the first part dealt with factual and closed questions. The factual questions were used to build up a profile of the relevant schools and to determine the opinions and values of the respondents. In answering the closed questions respondents made use of the Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't know). The different viewpoints for each question were then expressed as percentages that illustrated the opinions and feelings of the relevant personnel. The results of the remaining questions, which were open, were collated and the diverse range of responses was recorded. There was a significant amount of repetition in the responses to the open questions. However, the data generated helped significantly in gaining a better understanding of the diverse range of factors impacting on student behaviour. The response rate from the questionnaires was good; in the schools with the BSCs thirteen out of the eighteen questionnaires were returned completed, a 72% response rate. In the DEIS schools eight out of twelve were returned completed, giving a 67% response rate.

The method of data analysis that I found most appropriate for the interviews was Constant Comparative Analysis, (Cohen et al. 2007). This approach requires the researcher to take one piece of data (eg. one interview, one statement or one theme) and compare it to all other pieces of data that are either similar or different. During this process the researcher begins to look at what makes this piece of data different and/or similar to other pieces of data. This method of analysis is inductive, as the researcher begins to examine data critically and draw new meaning from the data. Constant comparison is the process 'by which the properties and categories across the data are compared continuously until no more variations occurs' (Glaser 1996:101) i.e. saturation is complete. Patton (1990:406) in referring to Constant Comparative Analysis mentions, 'the qualitative analysts effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories is a creative process that requires making carefully considered judgements about what is really significant and meaningful in the data'. This type of analysis provides the researcher with a clear path for engaging in analysis of substantial amounts of data, in a way that is challenging and illuminating.

I began my analysis by photocopying all the relevant data, this included interview transcripts, questionnaires and school data. In the early stages of analysing data from the interviews things were very disorganised. Ezzy (2002:94) further emphasises this point, 'the early part of coding should be very confusing, with a mass of unrelated material. However, as coding progresses and themes emerge, the analysis becomes more organised and structured'. I coded each page of the interview transcripts, an example of this coding would be BSCP1/8. This referred to the first school where I carried out interviews that were piloting the BSCs. The interview involved the principal and the eight referred to the page number. Initially, I carried out open coding, where all the data that might have relevance for gaining insight into answering the research question were labelled. This was then followed by more focused coding, where particular attention was given to different aspects of the data. Coding is the process of identifying and organising portions of the data that are potentially useful for further analysis. Miles & Huberman (1994:56) describes codes as 'labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information gathered. Codes are attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs'.

I then proceeded to identify the chunks or units of meaning in the data, a process referred to by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as unitizing the data. I accomplished this search for meaning by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data, which later served as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning. On identifying a unit of meaning, I drew a line across the page to separate this unit of meaning from the next unit. I indicated in the left margin where the unit was located in the data set. I proceeded to cut apart the units of meaning which were identified, and I taped them to index cards. Right throughout the data analysis I was trying to identify any emerging patterns or themes. As each new unit of meaning was selected for analysis, it was compared to other units of meaning and subsequently grouped into categories with similar units of meaning. In instances where there was no similar unit of meaning, a new category was formed. I adopted the 'look/feel-alike' criteria advanced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as a way of describing the emergent process of categorising qualitative data. I asked myself whether the unit of meaning on one card was very similar to the unit of meaning on another card. Taking this systematic and painstaking way, salient categories of meaning were inductively derived. I was determined to have in place an audit trail, whereby I could trace the path of my initial ideas and compare them to those that I finished with at the end of my research.

As researcher I was aware of the potential influence that I could have on the data from the interviews due to my preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, background and agenda. Consequently, I exercised great caution and self-awareness when carrying out data analysis, as often it can be the case that the findings say more about the researcher than about the data. All the data from the interviews was analysed; the data was significantly reduced as I had a good understanding of what was relevant and important in answering my research question. As similar questions were asked in the different interviews it allowed for easier collation of data. The data was further analysed by separately looking at the responses of principals, year heads and those working in the BSCs. This allowed for a better understanding of the different viewpoints.

4:9 Reflections on Research Design, Reliability, Validity and Ethical Issues

All the schools involved in the research were designated disadvantaged schools participating in the DEIS initiative. Purposive sampling, (Patton 2002) took place which resulted in the selection of twelve DEIS schools, of which six had BSCs. Because many of the schools were operating in similar contexts and had to deal with many related issues and difficulties it meant that the findings were generalisable.

On reflection the notable strengths that I would see with my research design was that it focused solely on evaluating the impact of different interventions to dealing with inappropriate behaviour in designated disadvantaged schools. A significant sample of the schools, with and without the BSCs, was studied in great detail. The fact that I utilised a number of data collection methods, such as questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and analysis of school data, helped to significantly increase the reliability and validity of my findings. The data generated from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, was very detailed. The research took into account the perspectives and opinions of the principals, year heads and those working in BSCs. There were limitations associated with my research design. Firstly, because the BSCs were only being piloted and were only in operation for a few years, it was not possible to get information on their long term impact in the schools. There was always the danger that the individuals working in the pilot programme might have been overly positive about this approach so as to portray the intervention favourably. As already mentioned, because I was an outsider coming in and because of the problems associated with getting informed consent, I deliberately neglected the opinions of students and did not seek the views of their parents. Both viewpoints would have been invaluable in determining the overall impact of the intervention.

In the broadest sense, reliability and validity address issues about the quality of the data and the appropriateness of the methods to answer the research question. The quality of the data and the employment of the most beneficial methods are particularly important in education, because of the different philosophical and methodological approaches to the study of human activity. In order to increase the reliability and validity of my research findings I made use of a variety of data collection methods making use of triangulation. Cohen and Manion (2007:141) refer to the benefits associated with this approach, 'triangular techniques attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint'. The idea behind triangulation is, that the more agreement of the different data sources on a particular issue, the more reliable the interpretation of the data.

Aspinwall et al. (1994:218) mention that ‘where reliability is a problem, there is advantage in using more than one kind of data in relation to the particular criterion: i.e. triangulation’. There are two main types of triangulation and I made use of both in my research. Firstly, methodological triangulation, where multi-methods are used to explore the same issues, and respondent triangulation, where the same questions are asked to a range of different participants. There were several reasons why I decided to use triangulation; a single method can never adequately shed light on a phenomenon. Using multiple methods and personnel can help facilitate a deeper understanding and allow for greater cross-examination. Youngman (1994) refers to the notion of reliability in questionnaire research and he suggests ways in which it might be checked. I used two of the recommendations comparing findings with other sources, eg. school records and direct questioning of respondents to see if personal responses match previous answers. While my interviews were semi-structured, allowing for some flexibility, I stuck to the schedule as best as possible to increase reliability. However, I did not want an interview that was too structured as this would have had implications for validity.

There are two types of validity: external and internal validity. External validity refers to the ability to be able to generalise the results of my study to other settings. I am confident that this will be the case due to many of the common underlying characteristics and the contexts of the schools that are designated disadvantaged. Cohen and Manion (1994:101) in talking about internal validity mention sources that can occur in two techniques which I utilised. With questionnaires respondents may not complete them accurately, and often validity has to be checked by interviewing. There is also the problem associated with the non return of questionnaires, the greater the response rate the smaller the risk of invalidity. I tried to ensure a good response rate by personally handing out the questionnaires to each participant. The main potential source of invalidity in interviews is bias, which is influenced by the characteristics of the interviewer, characteristics of the respondent and the substantive content of the questions. It is extremely difficult to eliminate bias especially from semi-structured interviews.

There were a number of ethical considerations that had to be dealt with prior to the commencement of my research. Firstly, I submitted my research proposal to the Research Ethics Committee at Dublin City University and I was granted approval soon afterwards. Prior to commencing my research work I made phone contact with the principals of the relevant schools, requesting a meeting to discuss the purpose of my research. On meeting with the principals I formally requested permission to carry out the research in the schools. In schools where I was authorised to start, I spoke to the relevant personnel regarding the aims of my research and my data collection methods. I gave participants the opportunity to ask questions so as to clear up any misunderstandings. Taking this approach meant that all prospective research participants were fully informed of the process and the potential risks. Prior to commencing my work I got all participants to sign an informed consent form. I promised all participants that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any stage if they wished, whereupon all the data involving them would be destroyed. Because of my belief in respect for the individual, I complied with Bassey (1990:18) who, in describing a good research ethic said:

The research ethic of respect for persons focuses on the value judgement that a researcher, in taking and using data from a person, should do so in a way which respects that person as a fellow human being who is entitled to dignity and privacy.

I made a conscious decision early on, not to involve students in the research. There were two main reasons for this: firstly, the difficulty of getting informed consent and the fact that, as many of the students had behavioural difficulties, they could rightfully be considered a vulnerable group. I guaranteed all participants confidentiality; however, I was not capable of ensuring anonymity as I was carrying out purposive sampling. Sapsford and Abbott (1996:319) provide what is a helpful definition of anonymity and confidentiality. They write that , ‘confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which respondent’.

I made sure that the information data supplied was not traceable so that responses of participants could not be identified. Throughout my research no names of individuals or schools were used, individuals were identified by their job title. All records of returned questionnaires and interview transcripts were kept, so as to increase the authenticity and credibility of my findings and assist in meeting the ethical requirements of constructing trustworthy research. The reasons outlined above clearly show why the mixed methods approach was the most suitable for answering my research question. Rather than relying solely on quantitative or qualitative data, I endeavoured to combine them both in an effort to produce a rich and a reliable data source. In the following two chapters I shall discuss how the data collected was analysed, looking firstly at the schools with the BSCs.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis of DEIS Schools with Behaviour Support Classrooms

5:1 Introduction

The data analysis was divided into two main sections. In the first part six DEIS schools involved with the NBSS in the piloting of the BSCs were analysed. The second part involved another six schools that were part of the DEIS initiative, but did not have BSCs as an extra support. These schools used varying approaches to promote positive behaviour in dealing with disruptive behaviour in the school environment. The analysis was further subdivided between information gathered through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and school data. The questionnaires were used to gather background information on the schools prior to carrying out the interviews. The information gathered was used mainly to aid in the compilation of the semi-structured interview questions for each school. This data was very useful as it helped to ensure that no time was wasted during the interviews on irrelevant questions. The data analysis from the questionnaires is in Appendix 4 and 6, the main source of data was that from the semi-structured interviews which will be analysed in this chapter and chapter six.

I shall begin by concentrating on the six schools involved in the piloting of the BSCs. The profile of the schools participating in the research is in Table 5.1 below. Three of the schools were Vocational and three were Community schools, with only one located in a rural area. All schools had at least 10% of students with behavioural difficulties.

Table 5.1. Profile of Schools with BSCs

	% of Students with Behavioural Difficulties	Socio-Economic Profile of Students	No. of Students	No. of Teachers
Rural Vocational	10-20%	Lower	189	18
Urban Community	10-20%	Lower	432	38
Urban Vocational	20-30%	Lower	200*	80
Urban Community	10-20%	Lower	510	45
Urban Community	10-20%	Lower	260	35
Urban Vocational	10-20%	Lower	560	50

* 800 PLC students attending this school.

The areas focused on in the semi-structured interviews included, looking at the reasons why the schools became involved with the NBSS and determining whether all staff was supportive of this move. As with all change initiatives the impact this had on the main stakeholders, namely teachers, students, parents and the wider community, was dealt with in great detail in the interviews. Other issues discussed included the manner by which these classrooms operated, profile of the students attending same, whether the facility should be on/off site, entry/exit criteria and the desired qualities of personnel working in such an environment. Finally, the cost

effectiveness, together with the long term benefits and the advantages of having such a facility in place, were discussed with all interviewees. In my data analysis I use the opinions given in the interviews by principals, coordinators and teachers working in the BSCs.

5:2 Reasons for Involvement, Public Perception and Potential Stigmatisation

Firstly, I am going to look at the reasons why schools decided to become involved in this pilot project. Not every school, who could have availed of this support, decided to become involved and there were reasons for this which will become apparent later. It was clearly evident from interviewing the principals that they were all to the forefront in promoting the BSCs and very much involved in their smooth running. Opinions expressed regarding why they decided to become involved with the NBSS included:

Principal 3: ‘We got involved because we were used to running such a classroom ourselves’.

Principal 1: ‘about five percent of students needed intensive care, the only way we really could get this was to buy into something that gave us extra resources and teachers’.

Principal 5: ‘seven to eight percent of the children were very challenging and put a considerable strain on our resources and personally a lot of time was spent dealing with this small number of students’.

Sugai (2007), in referring to these students, mentions that they need tertiary interventions which are characterised by highly individualised, specialised interventions for those students who are unresponsive to primary and secondary level interventions. The BSC provides tertiary intervention because of the individualised intensive efforts made to bring about improvements in student behaviour. It is unique for schools in Ireland, because usually, schools would not have the facilities to deal with these disruptive students on-site. In the past, due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel and insufficient resources, these students would have probably dropped out of school because their behavioural difficulties were not being dealt with. George et al. (2007) explain that interventions of this type are usually predicated on functional behavioural assessments, and generally take more time and effort for staff to implement. I agree with this analysis, as firstly, a lot of paperwork has to be completed for each student so that the best way forward can be planned. Senior management in schools do not have the required time to spend on this small group of students to the detriment of other school activities. The reason why they were so willing to try this approach was that many of the other attempts had failed, and the strategies available to them were not working, as they were not having the desired impact on these seriously disruptive students.

Personnel working in the BSCs gave a variety of reasons why their school decided to become involved in this pilot project. The following are some of the reasons given:

Teacher 2: ‘There was a small percentage of students with extremely challenging behaviour who were disrupting teaching and learning in the school’.

This reason reinforces a significant body of research which has highlighted problematic student

behaviour as a major source of discontent among teachers, which is having a considerable impact on teaching and learning in schools, (McBeath et al. 2004, OFSTED 2005). In another school 'behaviour was becoming a serious issue within the school especially with the change in the profile of student intake'. This was the only school located in a rural area and in the past ten years many families had relocated there from an urban centre. This had brought with it associated problems as the whole dynamic of the school had been altered. A need for additional support to deal with the challenges posed by this demographic change was acknowledged by the school.

Another common reason mentioned was:

Coordinator 4: 'The school wanted to reduce suspensions, and to develop alternative strategies when dealing with serious behavioural problems'.

Watkins (2000) noted that schools with higher rates of suspension were to be found where senior staff had less confidence in their power to tackle disruptive behaviour. The schools included in this pilot project were, at least, recognising the problems associated with disruptive behaviour, and by their involvement were accepting outside assistance to deal with it. Regarding alternative strategies, such as the BSCs, for dealing with disruptive students Munn (2000) believed that alternative punishments which keep the students in school and busy are much more of a deterrent than exclusion. I agree totally with this, from my experience as year head I have noticed that these disruptive students are often looking forward to a few days off school by getting suspended. I would always try to use different options that keep the students within the school environment. Sanctions like after school detention are much more of a deterrent. Unfortunately what sometimes happens is that these students refuse to do the alternative sanction which reduces the options left available to the school. Those directly involved in the BSCs gave as one of their main reasons for engaging in the initiative, was to break this cycle of negativity that results when students are continuously suspended.

Prior to this intervention there were few options available to the class tutors/year heads, and the interventions that were used had little impact on student behaviour, especially on the more disruptive students. Teacher 4 alludes to this when stating:

'sometimes the student is interfering to such an extent in mainstream classrooms that no meaningful learning is taking place, and the classroom atmosphere becomes frustrated. Having this facility in place provides an opportunity to rectify this potential situation'.

The main options available in most schools include detention and suspension. Maag (2001) is of the opinion that the reason why they are utilised is because they are less time intensive than positive procedures. I would not totally agree with this statement as, in my opinion, sanctions like detentions are used because of the lack of viable alternatives. If students are misbehaving teachers need to be seen to be enforcing the rules. I disagree that these sanctions are less time intensive. They might be in the short term, however, in the long term it is often the same few students that are regularly involved in disciplinary incidents. The same problems tend to resurface and, because teachers don't have the time to get to the root of the problem, the same few students are consistently receiving these sanctions. This approach only helps to bring about a

temporary suppression of the problem behaviour, which is benefiting no one in the long run. This added resource (BSC) allows quality time and effort to be spent on these students by the designated team so that issues around behaviour can be addressed at a time which is not impacting on the educational outcomes of the majority of the students.

Another reason for involvement described by Coordinator 4 was :

‘the behaviour in the school was very negative but not just on the part of the students, the teachers were also reinforcing this negative behaviour through their methods of interaction with the students’.

While this type of response was not expressed in all the schools, it was refreshing to see that certain schools were not just focusing on student behaviour. Through reflection there was a realisation that teachers were part of the problem and many could make improvements regarding their interactions with these students. Often too much emphasis and blame is placed on the student, when the underlying reasons for poor behaviour might be poor delivery of the curriculum or bad classroom management. Galloway (1982) strongly felt that teachers needed to look at themselves and what they can do to make the most of what students bring to the school gate. It is necessary for some teachers to undergo personal reflection, as often they take the easy option of blaming the student or parents.

In schools operating in such challenging circumstances, when opportunities arise to avail of additional resources to tackle disruptive behaviour, such as in this instance, they are normally taken. No one viewed looking for outside assistance as a sign of weakness. The general consensus was that schools were honest enough to admit that there was a problem with student behaviour which could be improved with the help of external expertise. Public perception can greatly influence a school’s standing in the local community, accordingly the involvement in such a pilot study could affect a school’s reputation adversely. When the different personnel were questioned on whether their school might become stigmatised there was contrasting viewpoints. Some of the viewpoints expressed by the principals included the following:

Principal 1: ‘There was a fear initially, we didn’t go out publicly advertise this facility and we didn’t refer to it as a BSC, it was referred to as Back on Track.’

Principal 5: ‘There is a stigma attached to the school anyways certainly amongst the vast majority of middle-class parents in the local area’.

The comments from some of those working in the classrooms included:

Coordinator 5: ‘That was a very big fear initially that it would be viewed as the worst school and that is why the NBSS has kept the BSCs quiet’.

Teacher 6: ‘It is viewed quite favourably in the community that we are trying to do something about the problem of student misbehaviour, rather than trying to pretend that it does not exist’.

In all the schools the principals had consulted with staff to get some idea of their feelings, prior

to the involvement of the school in the pilot project. There was a realisation and a fear that their schools might become further stigmatised in the local area. Despite this they were willing to take a chance as they felt that this extra resource would be beneficial. Another related problem faced by principals working in these disadvantaged settings is where cherry picking of students is engaged in by other schools in the community, (Walshe 2006). The resulting channelling of students with behavioural problems to a particular school, through this process, can put a serious strain on resources. When the league tables are published the schools with a significant cohort of students with challenging behaviour are often nowhere to be seen. This is extremely unfair, as often greater progress has been made with these students as it is totally dependent on where the student is starting from.

The naming of these classrooms had the impact of reducing any stigma that might have been associated with them. In none of the schools was the facility referred to as the Behaviour Support Unit. Other names that were mentioned were the Skills room, K2 and Subway. The appropriate naming of these classrooms was viewed as very important by the principals, especially when parents or other individuals came to view the facility. Hayward (2006), in talking about the LSUs in Britain, mentions that they were slightly different in each school, depending on the context of the school and the range of needs that the pupils present. The schools used a variety of names that reflected the kind of provision the school wished to evolve, examples included the Learning Support Centre or the Progress Centre.

The potential for stigmatisation was probably one of the reasons why the NBSS decided not to name publicly the schools involved. If it was public knowledge the schools might become labelled as schools that cater predominantly for disruptive students. The problem might have been further exacerbated by the potential increase in enrolment of students from outside the catchment area, who might be attracted to the school because of its new provision for disruptive students. Just as schools develop reputations based on their academic excellence, there would have been an initial fear that the schools involved would gain a favourable reputation for the manner by which they deal with difficult students. The secret manner in which the NBSS is going about its work is not appreciated by everyone working in these classrooms. Two coordinators, in particular, felt that the secrecy surrounding the BSCs was unfair and they voiced their opinions strongly.

Coordinator 2: ‘this secretiveness around the programme is unfair, as there are a lot of people carrying out admirable work with these students in very challenging circumstances, and they should be proud of what they are doing not trying to hide their efforts’.

Coordinator 5: ‘I disagree with the NBSS keeping it quiet because that means I am supposed to be ashamed of what I am doing, and they should be ashamed regarding what they are at’.

The coordinator further elaborated, saying that the students are in these classrooms for a variety of reasons and if you are going to change society’s attitude on people who are troubled, hiding them away quietly is not the right way to go about it. While it is not an ideal situation I believe that the NBSS made the correct decision by not naming the schools involved publicly. My reasoning for this is that the reputation of these schools might have been damaged further if the schools involved were publicly known. As this was a pilot programme it was necessary first to

evaluate and determine whether the intervention was having the desired impact on student behaviour.

5:3 Value of Having a Designated Team

The importance of having a designated team to deal with these students should not be underestimated. In all of the schools there were either two or three individuals involved. As an extra resource, they have helped considerably in reducing the workload of the already overburdened class tutors and year heads. The English educational system has the LSUs, (Mc Sherry 2004) on which the BSCs are modelled. As a follow-on support there are the BESTs, which were reviewed by Hallam (2007), providing additional support to primary and secondary schools with high levels of students with challenging behaviour. A diverse range of professionals are involved in the English system involving a multi-agency approach. This approach can result in tensions coming to the surface, due to different professionals having different views as to what the young persons' needs are, which was discussed by Hamill & Boyd (2001). On these teams it is vital that the professional edges are blurred and people are encouraged to see things from different perspectives, rather than coming at things from a restricted view.

The English system has adopted this multi-agency approach, (Cole et al. 1998) much more than the Irish educational system. I firmly believe that the multi-agency approach is the way forward for certain schools in Ireland. At present, too much is left to the goodwill of the class tutor or year head. The consequence is that students are losing out on class contact time because teachers have to deal with issues that are occurring throughout the school day. Teachers often do not have the necessary skills to deal with these students, who can have a multitude of problems and would be better catered for by professionals with expertise in key areas. Being able to avail of such facilities would help to ensure quicker access to resources and earlier intervention. However, this extra support should only be made available to those schools with a significant cohort of disruptive students. There is no doubt that there would be initial problems with this approach, especially in getting a variety of professionals to work together for the common good of the students. Although other professionals are currently involved in the Irish educational system, there are not sufficient numbers and there is an overall lack of coherence, often with significant delays in accessing expertise, (NEWB 2005).

Because there were only two or three people working in the BSCs it allowed for easier delegation of duties and arranging of meetings. The majority of people working in these designated teams were primarily secondary teachers. There were two notable exceptions; in one of the schools the coordinator was previously a primary teacher and he felt that his training had helped him immensely in dealing with behavioural issues. The experience that he gained from working in primary schools gave him a better understanding of where students were coming from; he could more readily identify those areas where students were experiencing difficulties. In another school a psychologist was employed for eleven hours a week. She was of the view that, in the future, there is going to be a greater requirement for psychologists in the educational system. She felt that teachers were not sufficiently well trained to deal with the diverse range of problems some of these students experience. The feedback regarding the designated team was positive, as all those interviewed recognised the beneficial impact of this extra support. The following were some of the comments made:

Principal 4 'Quite often in the classroom situation the teachers do not have the time to give individual attention and to determine what is happening outside the school setting'.

Coordinator 2 'they need some form of constant presence in their lives, because this is what is lacking for them at home and in the mainstream school system as they are moving from one class to the next, and there is no specific person to turn to when a difficulty arises'.

Coordinator 1 'I think many of the kids that we have dealt with need the intensive work. Unless you are superhuman it is not possible, with the current class sizes, to give them the attention they require'.

Teacher 2 'the fact that we have three teachers working in the classroom allows for more intensive intervention'.

Although the members of the designated team working in these BSCs generally have an excellent understanding of the difficulties experienced by these students, it would be unfair to expect them to deal with the multitude of problems some of the students have, without assistance from other relevant professionals. Hamill & Boyd (2001) further elaborate, saying that no one professional group has all the skills required to meet the needs of young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. More success can only be achieved when there are a variety of professionals working together. Another opinion expressed was that it was not fair that the other well-behaved students in mainstream classes suffered 'as a result of the teacher spending excessive time with these disruptive students'. One of the main objectives of this classroom is to reduce the amount of time lost teaching and learning. Many class tutors and year heads do not have the expertise to deal with these students, and some are unwilling or do not have the time to spend a disproportionate effort with a select few students. This confirms the research results of Norman (2003:25), where ninety-one per cent of teachers felt that teacher training did not adequately prepare them to deal with the personal issues of students.

Martin (2003) refers to the protective factors schools can put in place to ease students transition into secondary school. The work of the designated team in the BSC is very pupil centred, and it is based on staff forming solid relationships with these vulnerable students. By taking this approach these students will have more confidence in seeking help whenever difficulties arise, thereby preventing the escalation of problems. This was perfectly illustrated to me in one of the schools that I visited. A critical incident occurred where one of the students attending the BSC proudly showed his daily report card to the coordinator in my presence. The exchange was quick between them, the coordinator praised the student for his positive behaviour for that day and the student went away happy.

Although for many people these simple interactions may seem insignificant they have a major positive impact on these students, boosting their confidence and self-esteem. The reason why they are so effective is that, prior to this, for many of these students their contact with authority figures in the school would have been primarily negative. Swinson et al. (2007) noted that positive feedback by teachers was positively correlated with compliant pupil behaviour. It can be easy for teachers who have well-behaved students that are academically orientated to be positive in their feedback. The difficulty will arise for teachers working in schools with a significant

number of students with challenging behaviour and little or no interest in education. Most teachers feel that they are positive in their interactions with these students when evidence proves otherwise. It often requires a very skilled practitioner to seize opportunities to praise these students and engage in a positive manner with them. The coordinator described in the critical incident above, through his actions and praise, has increased the likelihood that the student will continue with his improved behaviour. Many of these students are already seriously disadvantaged in the secondary school system, often having poor social and academic skills. Some are overwhelmed by the number of teachers that they have to deal with and the size of the school, (Jenson et al. 2004). One of the reasons why the BSCs are successful in making school more manageable for these disruptive students, lies in the individual attention and support they receive from the experienced teachers therein.

The principals were selective in recruiting staff to work in the BSC. Several teachers had prior experience of working with students with special educational needs; others had undertaken courses in behavioural related issues. Principal 5 mentioned that: 'one of the teachers had previous experience of working in a similar setting in Northern Ireland and the other teacher had worked in Youthreach, so they had plenty of experience with this type of student'.

This type of background provided them with the expertise to deal with extremely difficult students. It was clearly evident from the interviews, that the personnel working in these classrooms had a keen interest in working with these students and relished the challenge of trying to improve their behaviour. While not everyone would like to work with such students, these teachers were passionate about their job and found their work rewarding and fulfilling. The selection of suitable personnel ultimately determines whether this extra support for schools will be a success or not. Some of the desirable qualities required by those working in such a setting include:

Coordinator 1: 'Patience is the main one. I think you have to be flexible and you have to be able to go with them'.

Teacher 4: 'I think you have to have some understanding of where the kids are coming from, and have a positive outlook'.

Not only do staff working in BSCs have to deal with the students, they also have to communicate with teachers in mainstream on a regular basis. Early on, not all staff might be in agreement with the procedures that are in place in the classroom, so one needs to be thick-skinned and resilient so as to bring about successful change and improvement in behavioural issues. In one of the schools the teacher working in the designated team was from the local area and, because of this, she felt that this allowed her to build an excellent rapport with the students. She mentioned that it 'enabled them to realise that there are opportunities available to them irrespective of where they come from'. These young people need role models from the local community because, unfortunately, often they are not always optimistic about their future. These adults are able to instil in them the belief that they are capable of realising their ambitions through hard work and that they are capable of overcoming any obstacles that they may encounter.

5:4 Operation of Behaviour Support Classroom, Entry/Exit Criteria and Reintegration into Mainstream

The workings of these classrooms have been clearly defined by the NBSS, to ensure that they do not become dumping grounds or sin bins for disruptive students. In all of the schools there was detailed entry/exit criteria which was strictly adhered to. In England, the Steer Report (2006) recommends strongly that the LSUs should not become dumping grounds for misbehaving children, and should not be a bolt-on provision, or a staging post on the road to excluding a pupil. Likewise this should be the aim of the BSCs, where every effort should be made to improve the child's behaviour and support their continued learning. In one school there were teething problems initially with the operation of the BSC, as students were being sent from their mainstream class out to the BSC because of their behaviour. This, of course was not the expected manner in which these classrooms were meant to operate, but you will always get teachers testing the waters early on, to see what they will get away with. In this school the coordinator mentioned that 'they needed to reinforce the referral procedure, and this was done through presentations at staff meetings where all teachers were informed of the role and function of the BSC'.

Mc Sherry (2001) refers to this problem when she says, if you accept casual referrals from a frantic member of staff it won't be long before you have an internal exclusion room, and little idea of what you are meant to be achieving. The success of these on-site interventions is maintained by rigidly enforcing the guidelines laid down for entry; making no exceptions. If the same procedures are not applied by everyone involved they will soon lose their effectiveness. The importance of clear communication, to staff working in the mainstream setting, about the functioning of the classroom is vitally important to clear up any misunderstandings.

It is where there are consistent problems with individual students that personnel from the BSC become involved. A teacher explains the procedure as follows: 'a behaviour checklist form is given to all subject teachers, and if a student is having problems in eighty per cent of their classes, action is normally taken'. Enforcing these strict guidelines ensures that no one can fast-track the system, and only those students, who are seriously disruptive in most of their classes, receive assistance. Students are referred to the BSC by their year head, only after all other strategies and interventions have been tried. Parental consent is sought and every effort is made to bring the parents on board, so that they have a good understanding of what is happening and are supportive. Following this a significant amount of paperwork (Appendix 2) is completed before the student can start attending. A profile of the student is established with all class teachers completing a Learning Behaviour Checklist. A Pupil Behaviour Plan (PBP) for each student is completed: detailing the behaviour causing concern, behaviour improvement targets, supports to be put in place and the methods to be used for monitoring and recording progress. Turner (2003) mentions that, if the staff have a limited knowledge of a policy and its procedures, it leads to a lack of consistency in policy implementation. In order to make sure that this does not occur, all the coordinators mentioned that they were constantly informing teachers in mainstream of the correct procedures and providing them with feedback.

There was a wide range of comments regarding the operation of the BSCs which included:

Coordinator 6: 'we do work around self-esteem, communication and behaviour management and how to resolve conflict'

Coordinator 1: 'we stress numeracy, literacy and behaviour so really a lot of it would be sixty to seventy per cent behaviour, the rest literacy and numeracy'.

Coordinator 5: 'six weeks is the maximum; the longer you spend here (BSC) the chances are higher that you won't want to move and you become dependent on it'.

The time spent by the students in these classrooms varied between four to eight weeks. The maximum number of students taken in these classrooms, at any one time, was six and often the group was much smaller. This was important because these students required individual attention. From visiting these classrooms it was very noticeable that it was predominantly male students who were attending. This point was made to me, on one particular occasion, 'up to ninety per cent, or over, of all students attending these BSCs were male'. Some of the reasons given for the high number of boys attending were that boys take longer to mature; that their inappropriate behaviour is more noticeable and has a greater detrimental impact on teaching and learning than that of girls.

There was a variety of areas covered by students during their time in the BSCs. The whole focus was very much based around meeting the individual requirements of the student. As well as the areas already mentioned, a significant amount of time was spent working on rules and routines to provide the students with the basic skills for survival in the class. A strong emphasis was placed on extracurricular activities such as horse riding, drama therapy, music and other sports. Time was spent by the designated team in gaining an understanding of the underlying reasons for their poor behaviour. Once these are addressed, there is a greater likelihood that the students will have more beneficial outcomes from their school experience, and will be able to engage with the curriculum in a more fruitful manner. The purpose of the BSCs is to provide an academic, social, emotional and behavioural curriculum for students whose behaviour significantly interferes with teaching and learning in the majority of their subject classes. There is a recognition that behaviour is intrinsically linked to teaching and learning. The BSC is designed to meet the disruptive student's needs. The aim of this extra support is, the reduction of challenging behaviour and the encouragement of students to develop more socially significant behaviours along with teaching alternative skills and coping strategies. Regular contact is maintained with the teachers of classes that they are missing, to ensure that they are not falling too far behind. Hayward (2005), in talking about guidelines for setting up LSUs in England, refers to the areas covered with students which included an appropriate balance of personal and social education, anger management, conflict resolution, counselling as well as literacy and numeracy. There is a lot of overlap between the areas covered in the LSUs and in the BSCs.

All the schools only dealt with Junior Certificate students, predominantly first and second years. Senior cycle students were not involved in this pilot scheme because their problems would have been too far advanced and, consequently, they might not be willing or be unable to change their behaviour. According to Farrington & West (1990) early intervention is of paramount importance if the emotional and behavioural difficulties of young children are not to develop into mental health problems, adult delinquency and/or criminality. The whole emphasis in the schools

is on early detection of students with serious behavioural problems, as a teacher explains when she states: 'we try to get them real quick in first year, before the teachers also have low expectations of them as well. There is always the problem of labelling'. Unfortunately, if students get off to a bad start and are viewed to be troublesome, teachers more or less expect them to misbehave and the self-fulfilling prophecy tends to dominate. In my opinion, there should be earlier intervention for these students in the Irish educational system. At present in primary schools there are no intensive supports available for students exhibiting serious behavioural problems. Often on entering secondary school, these students have a multitude of problems which could have been addressed at an earlier stage.

In England the Behaviour Improvement Programme, (Hallam 2007), which funded thirty-four Local Authorities, focused on improving student behaviour and attendance. Unlike Ireland, this intervention took place much earlier in the student's education. Vulnerable students received assistance in a wide variety of areas while they were still in primary school and, if necessary they could have received this help for the duration of their education. Herman (2002) refers to these school interventions as 'the life vest that keeps at-risk students from sinking into the downward trajectory of academic failure, anti-social behaviour, school rebellion and school dropout'. I do not fully agree with the above comment. While interventions in the school environment can have positive consequences, for more effective and beneficial measures the family and the local community need to be involved also. There is no point having supports in place just when the student is in school and no assistance outside the school setting.

The agreed length of time (normally four to eight weeks) spent in the BSCs is sufficient to ensure that substantial progress is made with the students and, at the same time, is short enough to ensure successful reintegration. There was a variety of opinions expressed concerning the reintegration process, some of which were as follows:

Principal 6: 'very often a member of the BSC team will go back and work with the kid in the mainstream class, particularly in classes where they are experiencing difficulties'

Coordinator 1: 'Reintegration was the steepest learning curve for us; this did, initially, prove the most difficult for us'.

Teacher 4: 'We also check and connect with them for a further four weeks after the programme here, and after that again we can link them up to a fifth year student in the Amigos programme'.

A fear articulated by those working in the BSC was, the longer students spent in the classroom the greater their difficulty would be with reintegration, and the more dependent they would become on the facility. Mc Sherry (2001), in talking about the LSUs, mentions that reintegration is always a key element and has to be carefully planned and supported. The students were not removed from all their classes during this time. It was important that students continued to attend lessons where they were successful. This was not only considered to be good practice, (OFSTED 2003) but it was essential for successful reintegration. This makes sense for a number of reasons; complete withdrawal would only hinder successful reintegration later, as there would be a danger that certain students might become over-reliant on the option. Attending certain classes has benefits: it allows them to try out things that they have learnt, prevents them falling further

behind with their class work and losing contact with their peers. It helps to emphasise to the students that it is only a temporary arrangement with the ultimate goal of complete reintegration into mainstream education.

On returning to a mainstream class a conscious effort was made to ensure that students had a good start to the day. The check and connect process that took place at the start and the end of the day, was an excellent support for keeping these students on track. The aim was to make sure that the students were prepared for the day ahead by having their books and appropriate equipment. Although this only takes five minutes in the morning, and five in the evening to see how their day went, it helps these students immensely by boosting their confidence and self-esteem. Often these students have poor organisational skills and this extra assistance helps to prevent minor problems occurring, that can sometimes escalate into more serious ones.

For some of the more troublesome ones, shadowing was mentioned as a strategy: 'this is where we go into the classroom with them after getting prior consent from the teacher. The benefit of this is that inappropriate behaviour can be dealt with immediately'. This might not always be possible, as not all teachers might be willing to allow one of their colleagues to sit down in the class, so it is important that teachers are made aware of and have a clear understanding of the reasons behind the approach. When the students return to their mainstream setting their behaviour is monitored very closely by their teachers, and if it starts to deteriorate they will pass on a referral sheet to the Behaviour Support Team. Teachers are given a background on the students regarding what triggers cause them to misbehave. The students have daily report sheets, and the importance of these was mentioned by a teacher when she said: 'these sheets remind students of the targets that they have, and they also help to remind the teachers who can encourage them to meet those targets'.

Normally students have three targets. Teachers are encouraged to use positive reinforcements to help them reach these goals. There is no point in carrying out good work in the BSCs, if a deterioration in student behaviour occurs once they return to mainstream class. The emphasis is in gaining the commitment from the subject teachers, so that they will build on the work already done allowing for a whole school approach. This ensures that there is consistency in the strategies that are being employed. In an evaluation of the impact of LSUs in England by OFSTED (2006), a number of reasons which impeded successful reintegration were listed. These same reasons were some of the fears expressed by staff working in the BSCs. Some of the reasons mentioned were, that not all staff were aware of the strategies used in LSUs and were unable to build on approaches, not all teaching staff welcomed back pupils to their classroom. At times students stayed too long in the LSU and were unable to readjust to mainstream classes. Sometimes the reintegrated pupils were not effectively supported, or monitored, on their return to a mainstream setting. Several of the schools, involved with the BSCs, mentioned that full reintegration of the students was an area where they were experiencing difficulties. The research findings regarding reintegration in the LSUs could be of great benefit to the BSC personnel, who may be encountering problems with reintegrating students.

5:5 Preferred Location of Behaviour Support Classroom, Profile of Students Attending and Impact of the Curriculum on their Behaviour

The majority of those interviewed were in favour of having this facility on-site in the school, rather than off-site at a different location. Some of the reasons given were as follows:

Principal 6: 'I think it is better to keep them on-site in the school, keep them among their friends and their peers, and not to further ghettoize them. I came round to that way of thinking through the NBSS initiative'.

Coordinator 1: 'If they were totally isolated in a different place, it would not work as well and would impact on their confidence and self-esteem.'

Teacher 2: 'If it wasn't (on-site) it would be creating a "them and us" type scenario. It also allows the students to meet their peers at break times and they still feel part of the school community'.

In the English system, where the LSUs work hand in hand with BESTs, Hallam et al. (2005) mention that in addition to the regular support that students receive from BEST, they valued being able to drop in whenever they were experiencing difficulties. This allows professionals on-site to address a wide range of issues speedily before they escalate. If this classroom was off-site, it would be much more difficult to operate and to monitor its effectiveness. In a review of The Behaviour Improvement Programme by Hallam (2007) she noted that it was crucial for the BESTs to have appropriate facilities within schools, to enable their work to become embedded in routine school activities. Where there was a problem with suitable accommodation, resulting in the BEST lacking an effective base, this was detrimental to their work. Similarly, this is of utmost importance for the BSCs if they are to have the desired impact. The facilities must be up to standard as well as having a suitable location within the school environment.

It is vital that the students feel valued within the school community and are given the opportunity to mingle with their friends. Hallam & Castle (2001) refer to these in-school centres in England as providing these students with a focus, and in some cases, with sanctuary and somewhere to go when they are experiencing difficulties. Prior to its introduction there were few structured alternatives in place for these students. There is also the possibility that they might feel further alienated if the classroom was located away from the school which might increase their negative feelings towards the school.

Only one teacher was of the opinion that the classroom would be better off-site. Her fear was that, because the facility was on-site, 'it might appear attractive to other students who might deliberately misbehave in order to gain entry'. This fear was expressed because these students do not stick rigidly to the mainstream curriculum; they would be regularly involved in extracurricular activities that would be attractive to mainstream students. This particular teacher felt that these extracurricular activities might act as a distraction to students in mainstream education, and that they might be better off not knowing what goes on in the classroom. While it is a reasonable point, the advantages of having the facility on-site appear to far outweigh the disadvantages.

While it is impossible to categorise students attending these classrooms, they do have a number of similar characteristics. The following comments illustrate the diverse range of problems faced by these students:

Principal 5: ‘the type of student is usually one that comes from a socially deprived background, low intellect, difficulty in controlling their emotions and incapable of organising themselves: things that you would expect in school like books, pens and copies for class’.

Coordinator 3: ‘male, angry, feels that they have no real responsibility for their actions; they tend to have no real support at home’.

Teacher 2: ‘they are constantly getting in trouble with their teachers, and they have behaviour problems because of poor literacy and numeracy skills, so they are acting out in class because they do not know what is going on’.

A significant number of these students would be from dysfunctional families with little or no support from home. Another teacher makes this point, saying ‘we get students that are neglected, and they are very unkempt, often without breakfast with no books or copies’. This would be backed up by research carried out by Martin (1997) which shows that these students often have burdensome personal biographies that make them unreceptive or unavailable to our teaching in school. It is important that teachers are made aware of these outside factors so that they get a more rounded view of where the student is coming from. These are the students that need the extra bit of encouragement and praise so as to increase their attachment to the school.

A key contributory factor to their poor behaviour would be that they lack the two sets of skills required and valued in the school setting, namely, academic ability and social skills. Because these students lack these essential skills, the time spent in education will not provide them with an optimal experience. Due to the deficiencies in these areas, very often these students feel left out and frustrated. Miles & Stipek (2006) further elaborated on this notion, that aggression results from the frustration students feel with academic failure, arguing that students begin to avoid academic tasks through acting out behaviour. Whether the problems of the students can be satisfactorily dealt with in the short period of time is debatable, but at least, the schools are providing meaningful supports for these vulnerable students. For many students it is the first time that they feel valued, respected and listened to and with continued support they can be more optimistic about their future.

There was divided opinion regarding the suitability of the curriculum for these students. Some felt that the curriculum was totally unsuitable, while others believed that the curriculum was suitable but that it needed to be differentiated. There were a number of viewpoints articulated:

Principal 4: ‘a significant number of students are unable to cope with the diverse range of subjects on offer at Junior Cert cycle. Personally, I feel more time needs to be spent on literacy and numeracy for these students, so that they have the basic skills to survive in the real world’.

Coordinator 3: ‘too often teachers are too rigid in their delivery of the curriculum which, as a result, lacks imagination. More emphasis and use needs to be made of the different media that

are necessary for catering for the needs of all learners’.

Teacher 2: ‘Yes the curriculum is unsuitable. We were on a training day with the NBSS and they showed us a lot of textbooks that are on the curriculum, and the reading ages are way above the level that some of the students we deal with are at’.

One principal felt that it was the manner in which the school day was constructed that was unsuitable. The current model expects students to sit quietly in class throughout the school day. In his school, modifications have been made to the delivery of the curriculum for first year students, involved in the Junior Certificate School’s Programme (JCSP). Students now spend the first three classes every day focusing on literacy and numeracy, rather than doing a particular subject. Flynn (2005) refers to the literacy and numeracy crisis in disadvantaged schools, so taking this approach might be the way forward for schools operating in such circumstances. Certain teachers were of the view that too many of the mainstream teachers were adopting safe teaching styles for fear of losing control of the class, and that they were too inflexible in their approach. As a follow-on, Riley & Rustique Forrester (2002) encourage teachers to consider the role of pedagogy in managing behaviour; to use a range of teaching strategies in the delivery of the curriculum that will respond to the diversity of pupil’s abilities and needs. Although, theoretically, the use of a range of teaching strategies in response to the diverse needs and abilities of students is to be commended, practically, their application is not always feasible in the classroom. This is because of the increase in the number of students with special needs and the time constraints of getting through the curriculum. However, it is context specific and is very difficult to implement in schools piloting the BSCs.

A major difficulty experienced by these students was poor literacy and numeracy skills that prevented them from accessing the curriculum. Difficulties with schoolwork, due to poor literacy and numeracy, were reported to elicit feelings of inadequacy that were detrimental to pupils’ feelings and to how others saw them, (Spratt 2006). There needs to be a large investment of time allocated to these areas in any type of intervention strategy. An option that could be put in place for the students is that, for the first year of secondary school, they would focus solely on literacy and numeracy skills. At the end of the year they would be better equipped for Junior Cycle. This problem was highlighted by a coordinator when she mentioned the case of a particular student:

‘We actually discovered a second year student who could not read the time on the clock.....no wonder the child misbehaves. How can he know when to get to class on time?’

One would not expect to come across similar problems in a secondary school. Unfortunately, there are still a certain number of students who do not have the basic competencies to make the transition to secondary schooling. Charlton et al. (2004) mention the possibility of an alternative curriculum that would help these students to re-engage or remain engaged with the educational system. The JCSP is an alternative for students; its aim is to provide a fresh approach for potential early school leavers who are struggling to cope with secondary school. This programme was on the curriculum in five of the six schools piloting the BSCs. It is an intervention for these students, based on the concept that all young people are capable of achieving real success in school. However, there still needs to be more options available to meet the diverse range of interests of these students.

5:6 Impact of Behaviour Support Classrooms on Stakeholders (Principals, Teachers, Students and Parents)

Overall there were beneficial outcomes for the diverse range of stakeholders following the introduction of the BSCs into the schools. Principals in the various schools were aware of the teachers' different viewpoints relating to the BSCs. At one end of the spectrum, there were the disciplinarians, while at the other end, those who adopted a pastoral approach. The success of the intervention was very much dependent on the ability of the principal and the Behaviour Support Team, in bringing all staff on board. It was noted by several principals that, when teachers were successful in applying strategies mentioned by the NBSS, this had a very positive impact on teachers working with these students. One principal commented, 'when teachers experience success by applying different strategies this improves their confidence in dealing with misbehaviour when it arises'. Staff, as a result, learn different coping strategies through professional development, and become more willing to discuss problems between themselves. Another principal mentioned the feelings of staff prior to the introduction of the BSCs 'staff were frustrated, because it was the same group of students causing the problems, day in day out, and they were getting nowhere with them'. The students were getting suspended but were coming back to school a few days later with no desirable change in their behaviour. In schools, teachers were beginning to lose faith in the options that were available to them to deal with disruptive students. The principals, in their dealings with the teachers, would pick up on the apathy amongst them.

There was divided opinion amongst principals regarding the impact of the new initiative on their workload. Some were of the belief that it had increased their workload, while others felt it had decreased it. The difference is best explained by the following comments: 'it reduced my time spent dealing with disciplinary issues, it is reducing my workload as they are not causing as many problems around the school'. In contrast, another principal felt that it had the opposite effect, 'it has increased my workload a hundred-fold, it involved a lot of work getting the room set up, getting staff for it, engaging with the NBSS and getting the paperwork done'. The general consensus among the principals is, that the amount of time spent dealing with disciplinary incidents has been reduced, but this has been offset by extra time spent ensuring the smooth running of the classroom. The immediate benefit to the principals of the schools is that there is a more positive atmosphere around the school, along with a reduction in suspensions involving these students. Overall, the benefits as stated by a principal are, that 'there is less teacher stress, students will improve their academic results and become more positive in their outlook, and parents will look on the school more favourably'.

The introduction of the BSC provided another option for teachers who had to deal with high levels of disruptive behaviour in class. Initially not all teachers were supportive and the following comments from the interview transcripts are illuminating, providing detail on the reasons why teachers might have been suspicious initially.

Principal 5: 'there is a certain amount of gratitude. There would also be a certain number of teachers who would be dubious about the whole set up out there, preferring mainly the route of exclusion for the disruptive students, and would not be sympathetic to their plight'.

Principal 3: 'it (NBSS initiative) was geared towards changing the teachers approach to dealing with misbehaviour subtly, as well as dealing with the student behaviour'.

Coordinator 2: 'the hardest thing is to change the teachers' attitudes and beliefs and help them realise that the manner they interact with the students has a serious impact on their behaviour'.

Teacher 4: 'certain teachers are not willing to push the boat out; they feel they are just there to teach their particular subject and should not have to deal with disciplinary issues'.

Teacher 2: 'the attitude towards the facility has improved. They have got more information on it and they realise that it can be of support to them when they are dealing with difficult students'.

The teachers that focus solely on teaching their subject, neglecting other vital issues such as dealing with disciplinary incidents, are those who constantly refer problems on to the class tutor and year head. Evans (1999) refers to the problems caused by these teachers because of their over utilisation of action referral. Their failure to deal with disciplinary incidents when they occur, results in increasing frustration for staff and students alike. These teachers should benefit from the in-services provided, and with some self-reflection, they should come to the realisation that they need to engage in alternative strategies.

Through their in-service courses the NBSS are emphasising that behaviour is a two-way process. To bring about the necessary change is not easy, especially when one is dealing with experienced teachers and those near retirement, as they might feel that it is not worthwhile to alter their teaching style. Humphreys (1996) mentions that often these teachers are ones who hanker back after a more authoritarian time when discipline was not a problem. During this time teacher/student relationships were based on fear, which did nothing to promote positive behaviour or learning in the classroom. By having this facility in place in the schools there was an initial fear that certain teachers might become over-reliant on this particular option. These fears have not been realised because the NBSS has very strict guidelines in place for referral. Commenting on the guidelines, a teacher mentions that 'It is very structured and you have to tick a lot of boxes before the student is referred here'.

While the vast majority of teachers in the schools are very supportive of this extra support, there still remain a small, but significant, number of teachers who are not fully convinced. Some of the comments verifying this include:

Coordinator 4: 'Some of the teachers are of the view that there is no point wasting more resources, money and time on these students as it will not change their behaviour'.

Teacher 6: 'Certain teachers believe that it is not possible to change their behaviour in such a short period of time, and are not committed to the intervention'.

These teachers would have probably spent a considerable amount of time dealing with these disruptive students trying to improve their behaviour but with limited or no success. They would also be sceptical of the level of work carried out in the BSC, and its potential positive effects, due to the small number of students attending at any one time. Thankfully, these teachers are

very much in the minority, with the vast majority realising that it is a worthwhile support for troublesome students and also that it benefits the well-behaved students in mainstream. Visser et al. (2002) note the importance of a 'critical mass' of staff that are committed to any new intervention. It is of the utmost importance that senior management are right behind those involved in the BSCs. Likewise, if it becomes apparent that senior management are apathetic towards the new initiative, it will be extremely difficult to achieve this 'critical mass' level of support.

In referring to successful change in schools Miller et al. (2005) stated that change that does not lead to behavioural transformation, for both school personnel and students, cannot be considered successful. This resonates very much with the BSCs. While a great effort is being made to improve student behaviour, much of the success will be determined by whether certain teachers are willing to improve on their own behaviour, and the manner in which they interact with students. The opinion of the majority of the teachers is that these classrooms are a valuable support to teachers, as they help to 'reduce stress levels and change the classroom (mainstream) dynamic for the better'. A crucial point made by one of the coordinators is that 'everyone has become more aware that these students can change'. This is an important realisation because, when teachers believe they can make a difference with these students they are more likely to be committed and make the required adjustments.

This would seem to be at odds with research carried out by Miller & Black (2001) and Swinson et al. (2003). A different viewpoint was taken by teachers, who were of the opinion that up to eighty per cent of the causes of challenging behaviour in the classroom were due to factors outside their control. The main contributory factors were 'within' the child factors and family issues. In the schools visited, teachers were proactive in addressing issues causing poor behaviour: they firmly believed that they had the power to make improvements. The easy option for teachers would be to put the blame elsewhere, outside the locus of their control. When teachers adopt this attitude they are, in essence, underplaying their role in changing pupil behaviour, and, in doing so, are over emphasising the impact of these other factors. The schools that are making progress are those where staff realise that the culture of the school, along with healthy interactions of those in the school community, can positively impact on student behaviour.

The reason why student behaviour had not improved in the past was because the strategies that were previously employed were not dealing with the root causes of the behaviour, and students were not receiving specialised intervention. The importance of maintaining good communication between the staff of the BSC and the teachers in mainstream classes was mentioned on a number of occasions. A coordinator noted that the 'attitude of staff has improved as they have got more information'. In changing school systems, such as that occurring in schools with BSCs, Mc Sherry (2004) notes that communication and negotiation is vital; if all staff are fully involved in the change process, they are more likely to support the change in the system. With any change there is always the fear of the unknown. Great care has to be taken to reduce this factor which can cause people to resist change.

Initially many teachers were probably unsure of the workings of the BSC but, by receiving regular information and in-service training, this increased their understanding of the facility. A

teacher working in a BSC explains how they communicate with teachers in mainstream classrooms, 'we send out e-mails to all staff to let them know who we are working with and to give staff strategies that have worked with these students'. This extra information provided to subject teachers, regarding what makes certain students tick or what acts as triggers for their poor behaviour, can be very useful when these students are reintegrated back into their mainstream class. It greatly assists mainstream teachers providing them with alternative strategies and ideas. Visser et al. (2002) recognise the importance of good staff training around behavioural issues. Good staff training allows for a greater understanding of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and enables them to differentiate this from the general naughtiness and transient behaviour in which most students engage. This is very important as not enough emphasis is placed on dealing effectively with the management of behavioural issues; it is very much left to individual teachers to develop themselves professionally in this area. The onus should be on senior management to provide all staff with training opportunities on behavioural issues in schools, so that there is a consistent approach when dealing with these students. Often, due to poor understanding of the situation or the individual involved, staff can actually make matters worse by the approach they take when dealing with disciplinary incidents.

There was uniform agreement among the personnel working in these classrooms that teachers do not receive sufficient training around issues relating to student behavioural problems. In certain schools, where there are little if any behavioural problems, teachers can get on with teaching the curriculum. In other schools, like the sixty-two schools involved in this pilot programme, teachers are under constant daily stress trying to maintain classroom discipline. Some of the comments made were:

Coordinator 2: 'they (teachers) are experts in their subject area but many lack the skills to survive in classrooms with a significant number of students with behavioural problems'.

Teacher 4: 'there should be some sort of induction programme introducing new teachers to the school and the students and the specific problems they will encounter in that school environment'.

Young teachers find out, to their regret when it is too late, that there is no point being knowledgeable in your subject area if you cannot control the class. There needs to be strategies in place for newly qualified teachers who are appointed to schools operating in challenging circumstances. An induction programme can be very useful. Another approach is the mentoring system, which 'is very helpful as it pairs off new teachers with more experienced teachers'.

The benefits of removing one or two of the troublesome students from the mainstream class are clearly explained by this coordinator when she says: 'Once these troublesome students are removed the whole dynamic of the classroom alters for the good. Previously a lot of the students felt peer pressure to act out as well and to misbehave in class'. This particular aspect of the BSCs is one of its major advantages, not only is the student that is removed benefiting but the teacher and the rest of the class are also benefiting. The class as a whole become more aware that there is an alternative option available to deal with those that cause continuous disruption. Students soon appreciate the more harmonious classroom environment, and what often results is positive peer pressure being put on the disruptive student to behave when they return to the class.

5:7 Impact of Behaviour Support Classrooms on Critical Performance Indicators and the Importance of Parental Involvement

The impact of the supports provided by the BSCs on student outcomes are clearly evident in the tables below, from the schools involved. Four of the schools participating in the research provided me with data on the critical performance indicators; the other two schools were not willing to provide this information. This data illustrates the performance of students that attended the BSCs during the academic year 2008-2009. The indicators that were monitored, over a five-week period pre- and post-intervention in the schools, were attendance, detention/suspension, academic achievement and punctuality. Hallam et al. (2005) refers to the educational hierarchy of needs of students, where the students' lower order needs must be fulfilled prior to their higher order needs. The first need is social and emotional well-being, this is followed by behaviour and attendance, and finally attainment. It makes sense for schools to follow this pathway, as there is no point in educators trying to increase school effectiveness by aiming to improve examination results if the lower order needs, such as behaviour and attendance, are not addressed first.

When the data is presented in table format (see below) for the four different schools, it is clearly evident that the assistance provided by the BSCs is having positive benefits on those students participating. After spending some time in the BSCs there is a significant improvement in their behaviour, attendance and punctuality. While there was an improvement in the academic performance of certain students overall there was no dramatic positive change. It would take much more time and effort to bring about improvements in examination results.

Table 5.2 School A

Students	Attendance 5 week sample *		IRF'S ** 5 week period		Suspension Rate over 5 week period		Academic Achievement Passes of End of term Exams ***		Punctuality 1 week sample each class recorded, lates only ****	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	8	3	9	3	1	0	6/12	7/12	2/42	0/42
2	6	3	21	2	0	0	1/12	3/12	15/42	14/42
3	11	8	17	4	0	0	2/12	2/12	12/42	9/42
4	8	6	12	6	1	1	4/11	3/12	15/42	11/42
5	10	6	8	4	0	0	3/12	5/12	3/42	1/42
6	4	2	11	3	0	0	2/12	3/12	10/42	7/42
7	6	3	14	2	1	0	6/11	7/12	4/42	0/42
8	8	4	8	2	0	0	4/12	5/11	11/42	7/42
9	11	5	10	4	0	1	5/10	4/10	8/42	4/42
10	12	7	16	8	0	0	2/10	3/10	11/42	12/42
11	6	1	9	4	1	1	5/10	5/10	4/42	1/42

*Attendance refers to number of days missed by each student pre- and post-intervention.

**IRF'S refer to the Individual Referral Forms that each student received for inappropriate behaviour.

***Academic Achievement refers to the number exams passed depending on whether student was doing 10, 11 or 12 subjects.

****Punctuality indicates the number of classes the student was late for throughout the week.

Table 5.3 School B

Students	Attendance 5 week sample*		Detentions over 5 week period		Suspension Rate over 5 week period		Academic Achievement Passes of End of term Exams **		Punctuality 1 week sample each class recorded, lates only ***	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	7	4	8	4	0	0	6/12	8/12	16/40	6/40
2	6	1	5	3	1	0	4/10	5/10	6/40	2/40
3	14	8	9	4	0	1	4/10	3/10	12/40	5/40
4	10	4	2	0	0	0	6/12	9/12	8/40	3/40
5	9	7	2	1	1	0	4/12	6/12	3/40	1/40
6	13	6	3	1	1	0	5/11	6/11	7/40	3/40
7	2	2	2	2	0	0	4/12	5/12	11/40	2/40
8	9	5	4	1	0	0	4/12	4/10	2/40	1/40
9	7	4	2	0	1	1	5/12	5/10	8/40	0/40
10	8	3	7	3	1	1	2/10	4/10	16/40	7/40
11	8	5	6	2	1	0	3/10	3/10	3/40	1/40
12	13	7	5	2	1	0	2/11	2/11	4/40	1/40
13	9	3	2	1	0	1	6/12	7/12	12/40	3/40
14	7	2	3	0	0	0	4/12	6/10	11/40	6/40
15	10	5	4	1	1	0	5/10	4/10	7/40	3/40

Table 5.4 School C

Students	Attendance 5 week sample *		Detentions over 5 week period		Suspension Rate over 5 week period		Academic Achievement Passes of End of term Exams **		Punctuality 1 week sample each class recorded, lates only***	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	12	10	5	2	1	1	5/10	5/12	7/40	6/40
2	10	9	3	1	0	0	5/12	6/12	10/40	8/40
3	9	7	2	2	0	1	3/12	N/A	4/40	2/40
4	8	6	3	2	1	0	7/12	7/12	5/40	5/40
5	10	7	4	2	0	0	4/11	4/12	7/40	5/40
6	8	6	2	0	1	0	6/10	5/12	1/40	0/40
7	14	12	1	0	0	1	4/12	6/12	6/40	2/40
8	9	7	4	2	2	1	6/12	5/12	2/40	4/40

*Attendance refers to number of days missed by each student pre- and post-intervention.

**Academic Achievement refers to the number exams passed depending on whether the student was doing 10, 11 or 12 subjects.

***Punctuality indicates the number of classes the student was late for throughout the week.

Table 5.5 School D

Students	Attendance 5 week sample*		Detentions over 5 week period		Suspension Rate over 5 week period		Academic Achievement Passes of End of term Exams **		Punctuality 1 week sample each class recorded, lates only ***	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	14	8	4	2	0	1	7/10	8/10	2/42	2/42
2	3	5	6	7	1	0	6/11	6/12	11/42	7/42
3	11	6	2	2	0	0	5/12	4/12	6/42	4/42
4	6	3	3	2	0	0	3/8	3/9	15/42	6/42
5	7	5	4	2	1	0	2/6	3/8	3/42	3/42
6	10	11	5	1	0	0	2/5	4/6	6/42	7/42
7	13	9	3	1	0	0	7/10	8/12	4/42	2/42
8	10	8	4	2	1	1	6/12	5/12	7/42	4/42
9	16	9	2	2	0	0	9/12	10/12	0/42	0/42
10	13	8	2	1	1	0	4/12	3/12	6/42	7/42
11	12	7	3	3	1	1	6/10	6/10	11/42	8/42
12	8	10	2	0	0	0	8/12	9/12	3/42	2/42

*Attendance refers to number of days missed by each student pre- and post-intervention.

**Academic Achievement refers to the number exams passed depending on whether student was doing 10, 11 or 12 subjects.

***Punctuality indicates the number of classes the student was late for throughout the week.

The bar graphs for attendance, punctuality and suspension rates indicate the level of improvements achieved in the different schools. Analysis of the data for the level of absenteeism (Fig 5.1) indicates that attendance rates for the students involved improved, in all the four schools, for the five weeks immediately after their time in the BSCs. The percentage improvement for each of the schools is as follows: School A (14.5%), School B (17.3%), School C (8%) and School D (11.4%). This is a strong indicator of what can be achieved when targeted interventions are used to address student attendance. Punctuality (Fig 5.2) improved in all schools. Where students are on time for class there is less disruption of lessons, increasing the amount of teaching and learning taking place. The percentage of classes that students were late for, pre- and post-intervention, were as follows: School A (20.56%, 14.29%), School B (21%, 7.3%), School C (13.10%, 10%) and School D (13.9%, 10.32%). Likewise there was a notable improvement in the behaviour of those students who had availed of the extra support from the BSC. There was a significant decrease in the number of detentions demonstrating that there were fewer pupils getting into trouble during the school day. A reduction in the use of detentions would be one of the main aims of the BSCs, as detentions can often lead on to suspensions. The number of suspensions in the different schools decreased and this is illustrated in (Fig 5.3).

Fig. 5.1

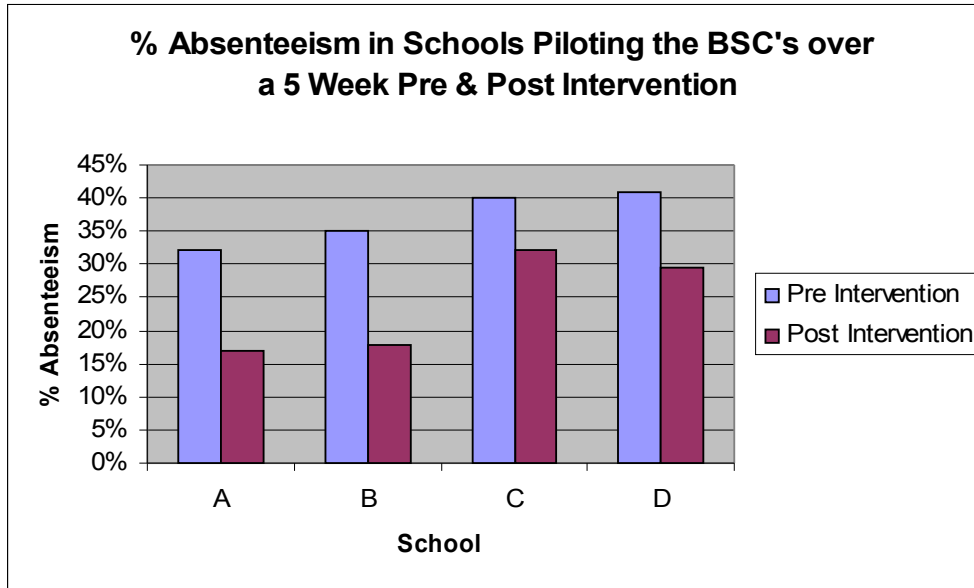


Fig 5.2

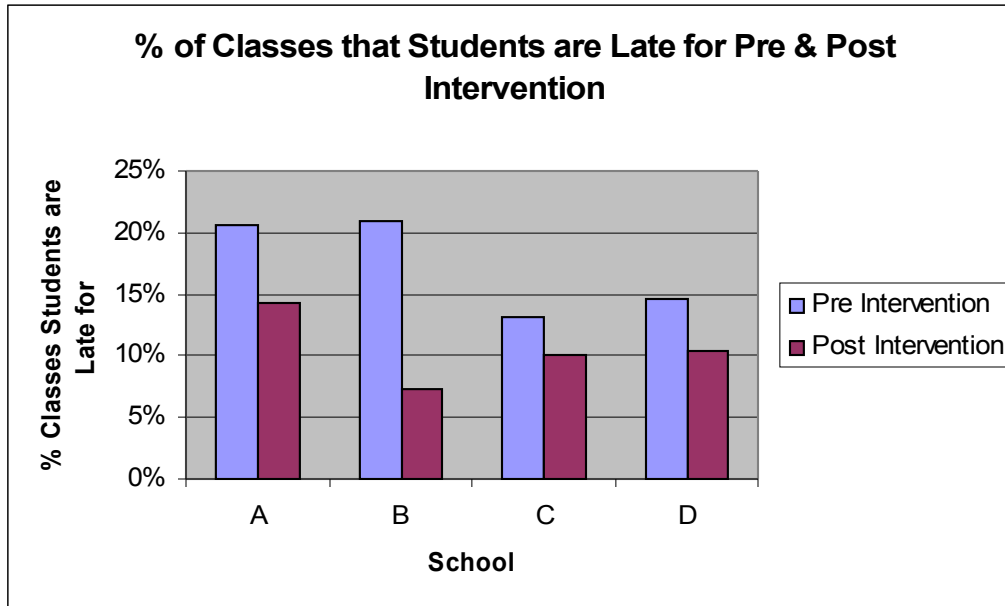
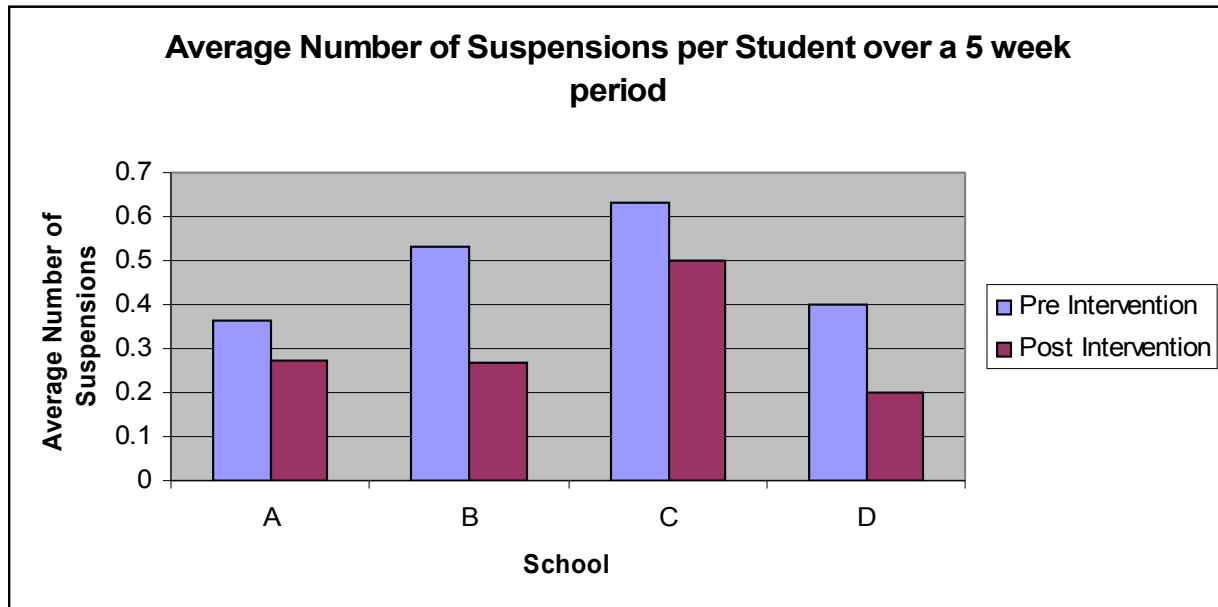


Fig 5.3



It makes sense that, if student attendance rates improve with a follow-on reduction in detention and suspension rates, students will be in the learning zone for longer which should result in better educational outcomes. One could argue that this data was collected immediately after the intervention and that if there was a greater time lapse the improvements might not be as startling. These results can act as a motivational tool for both students and teachers alike as they show what can be achieved when everyone makes the required effort. The results provide further evidence that these students are capable of changing for the better when the necessary supports are put in place. This in turn should help to ensure a more positive healthier atmosphere around the school where previously vulnerable students are now experiencing success. The warning signs of a school climate that promotes the occurrence of serious behaviours, such as delinquency, academic failure, and school dropout can be linked to school discipline referrals and lack of school attachment in youth, (Tobin & Sprague 2000).

While this facility does not provide an immediate solution it puts in place procedures to deal with persistently disruptive students. The stress levels for teachers are significantly reduced, as they know that a specific student will be absent from class for a definite period of time. In all the schools involved, prior to the BSCs, students with behavioural problems were not receiving intensive support to address their issues. Naturally, because of this, it wasn't long before the same difficulties resurfaced. With the new approach students develop several skills such as, 'learn communication skills and how to interact appropriately with peers and members of staff', along with help to 'deal with difficult situations and develop coping strategies to overcome obstacles they may encounter'. The small group, of not more than six at a time, allows the students to talk about their problems in a more relaxed atmosphere

Parental involvement and support was endorsed by all involved with these classrooms. A number of different techniques were utilised in an effort to get parental support. Some that were mentioned include, 'a coffee morning for parents which was very informal and it helped to break

down barriers that some of them had with teachers'. As some of the parents would have had negative interactions with the school great emphasis was placed on promoting the positive. McBeath (2007) refers to this when he talks of the prior negative experiences these parents have and their lack of confidence when dealing with professionals. A teacher spoke of one approach, 'if something good happens in the day we write it on a positive sheet and this note goes home'. It is the little things like this that make all the difference and aid the improvement of relations between teachers and parents.

There was a realisation that if the parents were not on the same side as the teachers, that the teachers would be fighting a losing battle with little chance of success for the student. OFSTED (2005) recommends that parents be seen as partners, rather than being blamed for the poor behaviour of their children. If parents feel valued and respected they will become more willing to contribute to school related issues, and greater progress will be made from this improved partnership. Too often the easy option for teachers is to blame the parents for the student's poor behaviour without getting a deeper appreciation of all the underlying relevant issues.

Regrettably some of the relevant parents have lost control over their son or daughter. With the introduction of the BSCs there has been greater support made available to them and feedback has been more positive. This has resulted in the parents becoming more supportive of what the school is doing, and they often call in looking for advice. The staff in one of the classrooms mentioned that 'they were thinking of putting together a booklet to give to parents to show things that they might want to try at home'. Hallam et al. (2004) have shown evidence indicating the effectiveness of parenting programmes which act as an extra support for families who might not have the necessary skills to cope with their child's behaviour. No matter what progress is made in school, it needs to be reinforced and supported at home to bring about desired changes in behaviour.

5:8 Cost Effectiveness of the Behaviour Support Classrooms, Long Term Benefits and Advantages of Having these Classroom and Potential Areas for Improvement

The overall consensus is that these classrooms are cost effective despite a large initial cost in setting them up. The opinions expressed were along the following lines:

Principal 6: 'Yes they are cost effective. The alternative is shocking, where you have children out on the streets once they are excluded from school. The net result is that very often they drift and become involved in anti-social behaviour'.

Principal 1: 'they are cost effective, maybe not in the short term, but it improves significantly their life chances and reduces the chances of problems resurfacing later on in adult life'.

Coordinator 5: 'If the challenging behaviour in adolescence doesn't get some kind of help, most of them go on to anti-social behaviour, then drugs and so forth, they end up in jail and jail costs a fortune'.

The Irish Prison Service Annual Report (2008) mentions, that it costs €92,717 to keep an individual in prison for a year. The cost of running a BSC is approximately €100,000 for the

year. I would consider this money well spent if it helped to prevent young people from becoming involved in a life of crime. The BSCs aim to reduce the amount of early school leaving by helping to ensure students are having their difficulties addressed at an earlier stage. Smyth and Mc Coy (2009) report that, higher rates of early school leaving mean higher expenditure on welfare, health and prisons and lower tax revenue. Their research clearly indicates that investment in education yields significant economic and social benefits for society at large. In the current difficult economic climate it is imperative that the long term importance of such investment in education is not forgotten.

Bullis et al. (2004) mention schools with significant numbers of students with unmet social, emotional and behavioural needs but, because of a lack of financial resources, their needs cannot be addressed. In the long run, these students will be the most costly to society because their problems were never properly dealt with. The earlier the supports are put in place for these students the less it will cost the state later on. Those directly involved with the BSCs strongly believe that it is worthwhile, but one could argue that they are doing so to ensure that the funding continues to secure their jobs. Although the schools are dealing with a small number of students it is vital that the proper resources and supports are put in place, so that when they leave school they can become productive members of society. Anything that helps to prevent students from leaving school early and deals with inappropriate behaviour must be viewed as worthwhile. Because the BSCs are only in their infancy it will take longer before the full extent of their benefits are realised. In England, Hallam & Castle (2001) showed that multidisciplinary behaviour support teams and in-school centres provided a cheaper alternative than the cost of educating pupils out of school. This was irrespective of the social costs to pupils, families and society. Consequently, every effort should be made to ensure that, where possible, the student remains on-site in the mainstream setting.

There are numerous advantages and long term benefits associated with this pilot programme when compared to what had previously existed in the schools. Some of the opinions expressed include:

Coordinator 5: ‘the thing about the BSCs and this kind of work is, I get an insight into their lives; an ordinary classroom teacher doesn’t have the time and, therefore, doesn’t know’.

Coordinator 6: ‘They have a greater opportunity to complete the Junior Cert and function better socially, communicate and not get into as much trouble’.

Teacher 2: ‘they learn communication skills and how to interact appropriately with both their peers and members of staff.....they develop coping strategies to overcome obstacles that they may encounter’.

In the hectic schedule of a secondary school these students sometimes do not receive the attention and assistance that they require. It is often the case that they don’t have a significant other in their lives at home, to talk about issues and problems facing them, resulting in them feeling overwhelmed and unhappy with their time in school. A major advantage of this approach is that it is ‘individualised and intensive for students who are sometimes neglected and ignored, due to the time constraints of getting through the curriculum’.

For far too long in these schools, the well-behaved students in mainstream classes have been subjected regularly to serious disruptive behaviour. Unfortunately, prior to this extra support, there were limited options available to teachers other than detention and suspension, that many teachers feel are totally ineffective for this type of student. Through involvement with the NBSS and the in-service training provided in areas such as behaviour management, de-escalating situations and understanding students with behavioural difficulties, there has been a significant impact which was noted by one coordinator: 'I suppose it has changed everyone's view to be more positive. We have all tried the negative approaches by putting them into detention and suspension and these strategies do not solve the issues'. This point was further elaborated on by another coordinator. Her view was that 'punishments do not work in every case, maybe with some kids they understand the reasoning behind them, but for the majority of the kids that are with us punishment has not worked'.

Like all new initiatives there is always room for improvement to ensure more beneficial outcomes for all concerned. There was a feeling that there 'could be more communication or networking with the various schools involved'. At present schools seem to be working in isolation with little or no collaboration. The only time the schools involved meet is when the NBSS organise in-service days. Several personnel involved felt that cluster meetings on a regular basis would be the best approach, where schools could discuss what was working and not working for them. Three of the schools believed that they would benefit more if other professionals were availed of on a regular basis: one coordinator commented, 'a social worker or psychologist who would be able to deal with the multitude of problems that these students have'. While the majority of teachers working in these classrooms have training related to behaviour management and dealing with students with special needs, often they do not have the expertise to deal with all of the students' problems. In other countries, like Sweden, in their secondary schools there is a psychologist, social worker and nurse on-site, thereby allowing a multi-agency approach to be adopted. This approach, while costly, appears to be very successful as problems can be addressed quickly by suitably qualified personnel. In Ireland schools do have access to these personnel, but the problem is that students often have to wait a long time.

Another fear that the Behaviour Support staff had was, that while they could be very successful with students while they attended the classroom, momentum was often lost on their return to mainstream class. As a teacher noted 'it is important that what we are doing is extended to the whole school. There is no point implementing new strategies in this classroom if, when the students returns to their class in mainstream, the teachers revert back to their old way of teaching'. There needs to be consistency between what is happening in the BSC and mainstream setting, if not, the impact of the effort will be severely undermined. The government needs to address the uncertainty expressed by individuals working within this classroom. A teacher expressed this uncertainty when saying, 'we are kept in the dark regarding whether the programme will be supported again next year, so it makes it difficult to forward plan and commit a hundred per cent to the programme'. As long as this situation persists there is going to be a significant turnover of staff due to job insecurity. If the government is serious about dealing with this problem a long term plan must be communicated to all those involved. A further difficulty expressed by several of the coordinators was finding time for planning, review and evaluation. There needs to be designated time periods set aside for these activities, as currently it was not easy to find time within the busy schedule to carry out these tasks. For future success and the

smooth running of these classrooms, it is essential that these tasks are carried out throughout the year.

There were a few other areas where principals felt that there was a need for improvement. Some of the ideas articulated were:

Principal 6: 'I would like to see improved support for the parents. The hardest thing for me to do is to call to some poor woman and say, "your son has been suspended for x, y and z", and she says, "I know, he is worse with me". There needs to be a parent support programme'.

Principal 3: 'The NBSS tends to have the philosophy that the student is the problem so therefore you change the student's behaviour; you work and focus on the student. My understanding is that it has to do with the student/teacher relationship and I always feel, by focusing on the student and not the teacher, you are not being fair'.

There is no point providing support for these students only when they are in school, support must also be put in place in their home environment. All the good work that takes place within the BSC will be quickly undone if it is not regularly reinforced at home. Regrettably, many of the parents of these students do not have the necessary skills to deal with their sons'/daughters' poor behaviour, and would greatly benefit from extra support and advice. Parents value these support programmes as they improve their emotional well being and their relationships with their children, (Barlow & Stewart-Brown 2001, Patterson et al. 2002). Parents also see it as a means to improve their influence on the behaviour of their children. This is the link that is missing in many schools at the moment. There is a requirement to fully engage the parents and to provide them with the skills in which they are deficient. The last comment above addresses the perceived imbalance in the focus of the NBSS. The principal believes that too much emphasis is being placed on student behaviour and not enough on teacher behaviour. There needs to be a greater emphasis placed on altering teacher behaviour. Once teachers come to the realisation that this impacts significantly on student behaviour there can be positive outcomes for the school.

The introduction of the BSCs into the schools has had a positive and beneficial impact on those schools participating. Unfortunately, because this extra support is only in its infancy it is not possible to determine its long term impact. With time and the support of all staff the BSCs should assist greatly in improving the educational outcomes of not only those students with behavioural problems, but the well-behaved majority also. To conclude, from the analysis of the data collected from the different sources and selected personnel, there is strong evidence that the BSCs are a worthwhile intervention. The initial fear of potential stigmatisation of those schools involved with the NBSS has not materialised. There has been a noticeable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of students attending the BSCs. There is an awareness that if this extra support is to have the desired impact, it is very much dependent on a whole school approach supported by the active involvement of parents. The main advantage from this intervention, when compared to others, is that individual attention is given to the students by a designated team. The facility is on-site, and time is spent identifying and dealing with issues causing the poor behaviour, with the result that students are more likely to stay in school for longer. With this extra support there is the increased likelihood that the environment for teaching and learning will improve, which will lead to better educational outcomes for all students. I shall now

continue with those DEIS schools that do not have the BSCs and determine the manner they go about dealing with disruptive behaviour.

Chapter Six: Data Analysis of DEIS Schools without the Behaviour Support Classrooms

6:1 Introduction

In the second part of this research six other schools, that were involved in the DEIS initiative (DEIS Action Plan 2005), which caters for schools in disadvantaged areas, were studied. The reason for choosing these schools was for comparative purposes, to determine how successful these schools were in dealing with seriously disruptive students. These schools did not have the extra resource of the BSC for dealing with disruptive students. Some of the schools had been unsuccessful in their application for this additional support; other schools had decided that they would be better off not having such a facility in the school. The reasons given were, a fear that the school might become further stigmatised in the local area, and the BSC might not be looked upon favourably by parents. In all the schools the principal and a year head from junior cycle completed a questionnaire which was followed by a semi-structured interview. Of the six schools, three were community colleges and three were vocational schools. The profile of the schools involved is as follows:

Table 6.1 Profile of Schools without BSCs

Type of School*	% of Students with Behavioural Difficulties	Socio-Economic Profile of Students	No. of Students	No. of Teachers
Rural Vocational	20 - 30%	Lower	150	19
Urban Community	<10%	Lower	340	38
Urban Vocational	<10%	Lower	426 Second Level 360 PLC	65
Urban Community	<10%	Lower	780	62
Urban Community	10 - 20%	Lower	350	40
Urban Vocational	10 - 20%	Lower	480	44

*All Schools Co-Educational

The areas discussed in the interviews included the perception school personnel had towards the BSCs and involvement with the NBSS, the different strategies used in the schools when dealing with seriously disruptive students and the factors contributing to their poor behaviour. Other issues covered included, whether there was too much inclusion of students with seriously disruptive behaviour, and if too much time was being spent on these students to the detriment of the well-behaved majority. The difficulties faced by these schools in dealing with this inappropriate behaviour, was also addressed.

6:2 Perception Towards the Behaviour Support Classrooms

There was divided opinion regarding the benefits of the BSCs in the schools. Three of the six schools had been unsuccessful in their application to the NBSS. These schools felt that they

would have benefited greatly if they had secured this additional resource. The remaining schools were of the opinion that they did not require such a facility, as behavioural problems were being dealt with in an effective manner, or that it would be too difficult to operate. A sample of the varying viewpoints expressed follow:

Principal 6: ‘The BSC would act as an extra support for year heads and senior management helping to significantly reduce their workload’.

Year Head 6: ‘We are a disadvantaged school and we have to see the reality of the situation. I think the BSC is a brilliant idea’.

Principal 2: ‘I just felt that the classroom would be very difficult to manage and you would need to have the right personnel in place to run it effectively. If not, it would become a dumping ground where disruptive students are put, and they may not be receiving any real benefit’.

Year Head 3: ‘Management felt that inappropriate behaviour was being dealt with effectively, and by having such a facility in the school it might be only drawing negative attention to the school, or implying that the school had a problem with behaviour’.

Naturally the principals in these schools were not as optimistic about this facility as the principals that already have the BSCs in place. The NBSS does a significant amount of work, initially, explaining to the teaching staff and management the purpose and operation of the BSC, prior to its introduction into the school. Through in-services many of the fears expressed by the staff are dealt with and everyone is informed, so that there is consistency in implementation of procedures. There was the possibility that the school principals might have viewed it as a sign of weakness to look for outside assistance to deal with inappropriate student behaviour. Senior school management might feel, that seeking outside expertise might reflect badly on them as leaders of the school. In one of the schools there was a time out room for disruptive students. The year head commented on the success of this facility, ‘things are more effective if you buy into them as a staff. We have our own support room. If something is working why twig it, why have someone else come in from the outside?’. There can often be resentment from certain staff in getting outside expertise, especially if the problems of disruptive behaviour are dealt with appropriately. Since the BSCs are introduced into schools from the outside, there is the possibility that certain staff might resent this outside interference from the NBSS.

Barth (1990) emphasises the importance of strong relationships among adults in a school, particularly those close to the students. These include the principal, teachers and parents; these are the most powerful agents when trying to introduce change and improvement with respect to student behaviour. There can be a lack of ownership and commitment amongst stakeholders if change is introduced from the outside, rather than improving schools from within. This is a realistic worry but the NBSS only gets things started in the schools; the key personnel within the school get all staff involved thereafter. In the schools piloting the BSCs, this was not a problem as very often personnel working in the BSCs were selected from the school staff. The NBSS were careful to ensure that school staff had an input into the running of the facility and, consequently, this helped to increase their commitment to the new initiative.

The fears of negative publicity are reasonable and one would expect them from schools not directly involved in the pilot programme. The stigma that some schools might feel as a result of this extra support is a reason why certain schools that could have availed of the support, declined it. A comment made by a principal was, that the danger that schools with the BSCs ‘could become refugee centres for children with behaviour problems, and that in itself can, from a school point of view, have a negative effect regarding enrolment’. Even though some of these schools could have benefited from this extra support, there was a fear that it could attract even more students with challenging behaviour to the school. This is a problem faced by many of these DEIS schools, which was explained by a year head when he stated: ‘the school has suffered from a fall-off in numbers in recent times, and the teachers would concur that this has been coupled with an increase in the number of challenging students enrolling’. Unfortunately, these schools are developing an image as a dumping ground for this particular type of student and increasingly losing out on the better type of student. There was a fear that the problem could have been further exacerbated if the schools availed of the BSCs.

There were positive comments made regarding the BSCs, that included allowing for more ‘intensive support on an individual basis for these disruptive students’, and ‘the value of having a designated team to deal with these students, which would free up time for senior management’. The positives mentioned were in areas where the current disciplinary structures in the schools were lacking. The importance of the more appropriate use of time, when there is a designated team, was really emphasised by a year head. He stated: ‘I have roughly one hundred and fifty students in fifth year; of those eight are seriously disruptive and take up to ninety per cent of my time’. While this is not the case in all schools, in those with a significant number of challenging students it causes serious problems for year heads, because of the limited time they have to sort out individual problems. Regrettably, there comes a point with every student when the year head has to weigh up the amount of time that they are investing in particular students, and decide whether it is having the desired impact, or if it would be put to better use elsewhere. It is clearly evident in these schools that a significant amount of time is invested in these disruptive students, when compared to those that are well-behaved. Another difficulty is that when serious behavioural incidents occur, the year head or other relevant personnel might not be available to deal with the situation straight away, due to other responsibilities. This is where having a designated team to deal with these students would be advantageous.

6:3 Alternative Strategies Used in these Schools

There were a number of different strategies utilised in dealing with those students that were seriously disruptive. There was a variety of opinions expressed which included:

Principal 6: ‘often those students with serious behavioural problems have no attachment to the school and it is important that efforts are made to involve them in some extracurricular activities’

Principal 2: ‘even before the students come into school in first year, there is a lot of work done in identifying those who will need extra assistance and support.....it is important to build strong relationships with these students from the outset, so that when problems do occur there is someone there to offer assistance and guidance’.

Year Head 5: ‘The Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) is vital, to visit the homes of the students to bring back information and get a better understanding of, maybe, why the student is misbehaving’.

Year Head 3: ‘The JCSP has been very successful in meeting the needs of students who find the traditional curriculum too academic. The whole aim is to set short targets for the students, focus on the positives and ensure that they complete their Junior Cert’.

The stronger the attachment students have to school, the better the chance they have of overcoming any obstacles that they may encounter. Furlong & Morrison (2000) and Martin (2003) refer to the protective factors schools can provide for these students with behavioural problems, by offering them a safe learning environment that will facilitate academic and social success. The protective factors present in these schools include supports, like breakfast clubs, after school homework club, involvement in extracurricular activities and mentoring of students with serious behavioural problems. These protective factors help to negate some of the difficulties students are exposed to; if they were not available to these students there is no doubt that their experiences of school would be less favourable. These shielding factors help to ease these students transition through secondary school, by providing them with healthy, positive and caring relationships that can help them break the cycle of disaffection. Through engaging in extracurricular activities, students exhibiting behavioural problems are given the opportunity to experience success and positive feelings. This helps in reducing the likelihood that they will become disengaged from the educational system.

A totally different approach was utilised in another school in an effort to engage with the disruptive students. The year head describes this project as the ‘trailer project where there are four lads in second year who are disruptive, we start from scratch buying the makings of the trailer, buying the steel, loading up the materials and bringing them back to the school’. These students stay behind one evening a week and they build the trailer from start to finish. There are several benefits for all involved: the students get to work in an area in which many of them have an interest. There is a more relaxed atmosphere and the work that they are doing has more of a relevance to the real world for them. It also develops their teamwork skills and they receive recognition later when the trailer is on display at open night. The year head also has the opportunity to develop more solid relationships with these students and experience at first hand, the beneficial impact that the successful completion of this project has on them.

This approach, while taking place after school hours, is somewhat similar to Skill Force which operates in the UK, (Hallam et al. 2007). Skill Force is an example of an alternative curriculum for helping young people, who may be disaffected from school and are at risk of dropping out, to re-engage with learning. It offers a key skills-based vocational alternative to the traditional curriculum. There was agreement that, although the resources made available to these schools had improved, further assistance was required. With the downturn in the economy there was a fear that there would be a significant reduction in the funding made available to the disadvantaged schools. Due to limited resources in certain schools efforts were made to get additional help from the local community. In one instance the school was heavily involved in the local community, getting the expertise of the ISPCC, a local doctor who was a clinical psychologist and the Gardaí. Using this multi-agency approach increases the likelihood of

success when dealing with the serious behavioural problems of these students. All too often schools on their own are expected to overcome the problems of poverty, underachievement and disruptive behaviour. Hamill & Boyd (2001) in advocating a multi-agency approach state that no one group has all the answers to the problems faced by these students and progress can only be made if the full range of professional skills are utilised. A comment made by a year head in the school was, that in the past 'there was no resources to deal with students with challenging behaviour and, consequently, a large proportion of these students dropped out of school'. This is what happens when the needs of these students are not met they gradually become disengaged from the educational system.

In another school the principal mentioned that the school had linked in with the local youth services. The school was not just interested in the students when they were in school, but a keen interest was also taken in their out of school activities. The principal elaborates when stating 'we are constantly trying to involve these students in activities that are taking place in the community where there is appropriate adult supervision, to keep them occupied during their holiday periods'. This makes sense, and if vulnerable students are involved in constructive activities outside of school time, this will help to reduce the likelihood of them becoming involved in anti-social behaviour. It should also decrease the chances of them becoming involved in disruptive challenging behaviour in the school setting.

A wide range of supports were provided for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties in these schools. Prior to the arrival of the students into secondary school, the principal in one of the schools explained that there was an immense amount of work done in identifying those needing extra help and assistance. Her reasons were that it was vital 'to build strong relationships with these students from the outset so that when problems occur there is someone there to offer assistance and direction'. In dealing with the seriously disruptive students, and because these schools do not have the option of the BSC, their choices are limited. Examples of interventions designed to improve disruptive behaviour were articulated as follows:

Principal 1: 'We have a reduced or limited timetable for certain students, which is carried out in conjunction with the parents and the NEWB coordinator. The number of classes increases gradually with the improvement in their behaviour'.

Principal 3: 'In the school at the moment we are running a positive behaviour management programme with a second year group that are particularly challenging. Indicators like attendance, behaviour, lateness etc. are monitored regularly throughout the school day and if targets are met rewards follow'.

In instances where a reduced timetable is utilised this is a strong indication that the school does not have the resources to deal in an adequate manner with the students' difficulties. In such circumstances, the teaching and learning of the majority of students is no longer impeded. However, this has serious negative consequences for the individual student who has a restricted educational experience. Currently this is where schools that are not involved with the NBSS, are experiencing difficulties, as they do not have the professional expertise or time to deal with such students. The latter approach mentioned above was modelled on the 'positive discipline' approach of O'Hara et al. (2000), where the focus was on promoting the positives and providing

students with rewards when targets were met. Due to the fact that many of these students were not future-orientated in their perspective, the use of regular rewards was essential to maintain momentum. A year head further commented stating, that the success of the intervention was due to 'strong involvement of senior management and the commitment and dedication of the teachers involved'.

6:4 Difficulties Faced by these DEIS Schools

There was a diverse range of problems faced by these schools when dealing with students with serious behavioural problems. A sample of the difficulties encountered is included in the comments below:

Year Head 4: 'If you have teachers that come from very prosperous middle-class areas and they are exposed to families who are struggling to make ends meet, it may be very hard for them to understand what is going on at home.'

Principal 2: 'I would be particularly mindful of young teachers starting off, that they would receive the necessary support and develop the appropriate mechanisms for implementing the proper behaviour'.

Year Head 6: 'Detention and suspension is only a quick fix and does not solve the problem in the long term. More time needs to be spent in getting to the underlying reasons that provoke the underlying behaviour'.

Year Head 1: 'there are six students in one class, of those it looks likely that four will not sit any exams.....a lot of work goes into tolerating their behaviour and minimising the impact of their behaviour on other students. The other twenty students in the class have had a severely diminished education as a result of the high proportion of disruptive students'.

The clash of cultures that occurs between teachers and students is most apparent in these designated disadvantaged schools. Bernstein & Brandis (1970) and Keddie (1973) refer to the problems that students from working-class backgrounds can experience in a school where there is predominantly middle-class values. These students are at a distinct disadvantage straight away as there is cultural discontinuity between their home and the school environment. This can be an additional obstacle faced by students with behavioural problems as they try to adapt to the school setting. Teachers need to take responsibility and endeavour to get a better understanding of where the students are coming from, and develop capabilities that enable them to empathise with the students' situation. In the in-services provided by the NBSS, information is provided to teachers regarding the triggers that cause inappropriate behaviour. Consequently, teachers develop skills in de-escalating situations and gain more knowledge of the many factors impinging on student behaviour.

The problems associated with action referral impact greatly on the workload of the principals and year heads. This occurs when problems that should be dealt with in the classroom situation are not, and they escalate and quickly move up the disciplinary chain. This puts an excessive workload on senior management, as valuable time is spent dealing with issues that should have

been addressed in the classroom. This is where the extra support of the designated team, which the schools with the BSCs have, would help to reduce significantly the amount of time spent by senior management dealing with disciplinary incidents. It is vital that young teachers starting off are given the appropriate guidance and support, so that they can develop good classroom practice and deal with problems that occur. Fields (2004), in talking about teachers and their approach to dealing with non-compliance and defiance, notes the importance of teachers controlling their emotions. He recommends a strategy called defensive behaviour management, which is all about avoiding collisions with disruptive students; when such clashes occur they can only result in damage and harm to the relationship. Defensive management sounds very effective, but in reality it can be next to impossible to avoid collisions with these disruptive students. The danger is that teachers, in their willingness to avoid collisions with these students, might end up losing control of the class.

Principals and year heads were critical of the effectiveness and use of exclusionary sanctions, such as suspension, especially when dealing with students with serious behavioural problems. The impact of these sanctions was questionable, especially suspension, as often what the student wants is a few days off school. Costenbader & Markson (1998) refer to the futility of suspension because it interferes with the students' educational progress and perpetuates a failure cycle, decreasing opportunities to gain academic skills and appropriate social behaviour. Until there are viable alternatives suspension will continue to be used in these schools, despite having no positive impact on the students. This is why these schools would benefit from having the BSC facility on-site; it would provide an alternative and help to reduce the number of suspensions. When there are significant numbers of challenging students in one school rather than being spread evenly, it brings with it associated problems. This difficulty is experienced by many DEIS schools and the trend can be very difficult to reverse. The result is that it can place a serious strain on resources in the school.

This inconvenience is further exacerbated by the phenomenon called 'cherry picking', where certain schools select the best students. Thomas et al. (1998) state that schools need to be communities that are open, positive and diverse, not selective, exclusive or rejecting. The following reflects the annoyance of a year head working in one of the disadvantaged schools, 'they (referring to the other schools) are not taking in people with special needs as they are telling parents that they do not have the resources to cater for their child's needs'. The reality is that these schools have the same access to resources as every other school, but very often they don't want the extra burden of these students, preferring to direct them elsewhere.

At a certain stage there must come a point where the rights of the willing learner need to be addressed over that of the disruptive learner. It is totally unfair that one or two individuals in a class can impact in a negative manner on the quality of teaching and learning taking place. Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 places too much emphasis on the rights of the disruptive student, neglecting the rights of the well-behaved majority. The main problem that needs to be rectified, according to this year head, is that 'in the classroom situation we cannot isolate them (disruptive students) from the class and continue with our work. If they could be removed quickly, then the learning of others would not be affected'. This issue is one faced by schools with the BSCs, and those without the facility. While students cannot be removed immediately to the BSCs, students are aware that if they continue to misbehave that they will end up spending

some time there, and that can act as a deterrent. The limited number of viable options available to teachers means that often the students remain in the classroom setting causing further disruption. Normally the majority of teachers make every effort to ensure that students remain within the boundaries of mainstream education, but in certain circumstances this might not be possible. Teachers are well aware of the problems associated with temporary or permanent exclusion of disruptive students as noted by Moss (1999). He mentions that it not only exacerbates their problem of educational underachievement, but it also puts them at a greater risk of disadvantage later on in life.

Despite the difficulties associated with trying to educate students with serious behavioural problems in a mainstream setting the overall consensus was that this was the best approach to take. Some of the opinions expressed included:

Principal 4: 'Inclusion is the most appropriate manner to educate these students, as it can result in academic and social gains making them better prepared for the real world. If they were educated in an alternative provision this would impact greatly on their confidence and self-esteem'.

Year Head 2: 'Inclusive schooling is the way forward. Unfortunately, at the moment schools in Ireland are not adequately resourced to deal with the diverse range of behavioural problems experienced by students. Regrettably, this cannot always be achieved, especially when an individual student is having a detrimental impact on teaching and learning'.

Begeny & Martens (2007) refer to the positive aspects of inclusion and I firmly believe that inclusion is the way forward. Currently students that are not suitable for mainstream education are being forced to remain in normal classes due to a lack of suitable alternatives.

A problem faced by another school, as a consequence of their success in achieving greater retention of students and improved academic performance, was that they were going to lose their disadvantaged status next year. The principal feels that the school is 'in a dilemma now, as the children that will be coming to the school in the next few years will be from more disadvantaged backgrounds than those that previously attended'. Schools are in a 'no win' situation in that, if they make a certain level of improvement, the resources that helped them reach these targets are often removed. Removing the additional resource of the HSLO will have a detrimental impact on school outcomes. In one way there is no real incentive for schools to improve performance indicators for fear that they might lose their extra resources. Schools need these additional resources long term, and it is ludicrous to remove them when they are making progress in the right direction.

6:5 Factors Contributing to Poor Student Behaviour

There are similar factors contributing to poor student behaviour in these schools. The contributing outside factors generally take up a lot of time to deal with, because normally these problems are more deep-seated. In the only school located in a rural setting, where you would expect to find little or no disciplinary problems, this was not the case. The principal refers to the concept of an 'urban village'; this is where 'many of the nearby villages, have many of the

problems associated with urban areas'. The problems referred to here would be drug and alcohol abuse along with anti-social behaviour. It will not take long before these problems overflow into the school community. The problems that the parents have, such as criminality, depression, alcohol and drug abuse, impact on the children causing poor behaviour, (Frick 1998).

In another instance, the principal had noticed that in recent years there had been an increase in poor behaviour among boys, especially those 'coming from single parent families where there is no father figure'. This is backed up by research carried out by Aguilar et al. (2000), which shows that children coming from a broken home or a single parent family are much more likely to develop anti-social behaviour. At the best of times it can be difficult to raise a child with behavioural problems, so it can be extremely hard for these single parents. The unsuitability of the curriculum was an in-school factor that was a major cause of concern for principals and year heads. A number of reasons were given as to why the curriculum was not suitable for certain students and suggestions were made where improvements could be made. These included:

Principal 6: 'for some students they are unable to adapt to the demands of the curriculum and it is like forcing square pegs into round holes'.

Principal 2: 'The Junior Cert Schools Programme (JCSP) has been very successful in meeting the needs of students who find the traditional curriculum too academic. Extra supports are put in place for these students, focusing on issues such as literacy and numeracy'.

Year Head 1: 'the curriculum is overloaded. There are too many wordy subjects as these students have low literacy levels.....as a result they become frustrated and bored'.

Year Head 4: 'these students would benefit from an alternative provision. I would be thinking of wood workshops, metal fabrication workshops where they could produce goods that could be sold in the local community'.

JCSP was running in four out of the six DEIS schools, and it was mentioned on numerous occasions as being valuable in helping these vulnerable students, assisting in improving their literacy and numeracy. The problem of boredom was reinforced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report '**Education at a Glance**' (2003). In a survey of student perceptions regarding the quality of teaching and learning taking place, it was noted that over two-thirds of Irish fifteen-year-olds 'often feel bored' at school. As a comparison the OECD average was below fifty per cent. There is no doubt that this high level of boredom is contributing to behavioural problems in the classroom. Kern et al. (2002, 2006) emphasise that these problem behaviours can occur when work assignments are too difficult, where there is an inappropriate matching of instruction to a pupil's skill and performance.

6:6 Quantitative Analysis of Annual Attendance Reports

The National Educational Welfare Board's report (2008) of the analysis of school attendance in post primary schools from 2003 to 2006 provides useful data for comparative purposes. It provides information on attendance, suspension and expulsion rates, allowing for comparison of schools piloting the BSCs and the other DEIS schools. Some of the key findings of this report

were as follows; it was found that 17% of the post-primary students (1 in 6) are absent 20 days or more during the school year. There were only 118 expulsions, and approximately 5% of post-primary students were suspended in 2005/2006. Rates of non-attendance were shown to be 25% higher in vocational schools than in secondary schools, and rates of over 20 day absences were 50% higher. Non-attendance figures for community schools fall in between those of secondary and vocational schools. The tables below represent the Annual Attendance Reports for the DEIS schools with the BSCs, and those without the facility for the academic years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009.

Table 6.2 Annual Attendance Report for the DEIS Schools without Behaviour Support Classrooms for the Academic Years 2007 - 2008 and 2008 - 2009

	Total Number of second level Students in School	Total Number of Students Absent for 20 days or more	Total Number of students suspended	Total Number of Students Expelled
School A				
2007 – 2008	181	72 (40%)	17 (9%)	0
2008 – 2009	176	79 (45%)	25 (14%)	0
School B				
2007 – 2008	333	122 (37%)	15 (4.5%)	0
2008 – 2009	338	136 (40%)	17 (5%)	0
School C				
2007 – 2008	426	114 (27%)	23 (5%)	0
2008 – 2009	433	241 (56%)	27 (6%)	0
School D				
2007 – 2008	780	218 (28%)	82 (10.5%)	0
2008 – 2009	787	205 (26%)	90 (11.5%)	1
School E				
2007 – 2008	342	130 (38%)	68 (20%)	0
2008 – 2009	350	114 (33%)	79 (23%)	1
School F*				
2007 – 2008				
2008 – 2009				

*School was not willing to provide relevant data

Table 6.3 Annual Attendance Report for the DEIS Schools with Behaviour Support Classrooms for the Academic Years 2007 – 2008 and 2008 – 2009

	Total Number of second level Students in School	Total Number of Students Absent for 20 days or more	Total Number of students suspended	Total Number of Students Expelled
School A				
2007 – 2008	173	87 (50%)	28 (16%)	1 (0.6%)
2008 – 2009	161	79 (49%)	22 (14%)	2 (1%)
School B				
2007 – 2008	410	200 (49%)	119 (29%)	1 (0.0024%)
2008 – 2009	401	195 (49%)	95 (24%)	1 (0.0025%)
School C				
2007 – 2008	189	64 (33%)	17 (9%)	1 (0.005%)
2008 – 2009	192	33 (18%)	20 (10%)	1 (0.005%)
School D				
2007 – 2008	497	121 (24%)	51 (10%)	1 (0.002%)
2008 – 2009	506	97 (19%)	40 (8%)	0
School E				
2007 – 2008	275	120 (44%)	117 (43%)	0
2008 – 2009	249	147 (59%)	88 (35%)	1 (0.004%)
School F*				
2007 – 2008				
2008 – 2009				

*School was not willing to provide relevant data

Ten out of the twelve schools involved in the research were willing to provide the relevant data; the other two were not willing to make available the confidential information. The alarming statistic from the DEIS schools, with and without the BSCs, was the percentage of students missing more than twenty days each year. The average for both types was approximately 40%, which is well above the national average of 17%. Attendance is closely linked to behavior, and students with high levels of absenteeism sometimes become involved in anti-social behavior, (Fortin 2003). When they return to school they often do not understand what is going on and become frustrated, which ultimately leads to disengagement from lessons and misbehavior.

I shall first look at the data from the DEIS schools without the BSCs. The principal in School A felt that the poor attendance in the school was somewhat skewed due to the large number of students from the travelling community. Research from the Department of Education and Science (2005) showed that the majority of traveller students are absent from school for up to 50% of the school year, and consequently have an interrupted experience of school life. School E was unsuccessful in its application to the NBSS, and it is evident from the data that it would benefit from having such a facility in place in the school. While the number of students missing

more than twenty days is about the same as in the other schools, it is the level of suspensions which are significantly higher. The level of suspensions was 20% and 23% for the two years, which is considerably higher than the national average of 5%. One of the possible reasons for the high level of suspensions was the high percentage of students with behavioural problems, over 20%. The disproportionate number of students with challenging behavior puts a serious strain on resources and personnel, who have to deal with the difficulties when they occur. Schools B and C, while they have problems with student absenteeism, are both coping well, when dealing with disciplinary incidents. The numbers suspended from these schools are close to the national average of 5%. Despite their disadvantaged status, the schools have developed appropriate strategies to deal with the disciplinary incidents. They were justified in their decision not to apply for the extra support of the BSCs.

The bar graphs that follow illustrate the changes that have occurred in those schools, with and without BSCs, for the academic years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009. They include:

- (1) Percentage of students absent for twenty days or more in schools with BSCs, Fig 6.1.
- (2) Percentage of students absent for twenty days or more in schools without BSCs, Fig 6.2.
- (3) Percentage of students suspended in schools with BSCs, Fig. 6.3.
- (4) Percentage of students suspended in schools without BSCs, Fig. 6.4.

Fig 6.1

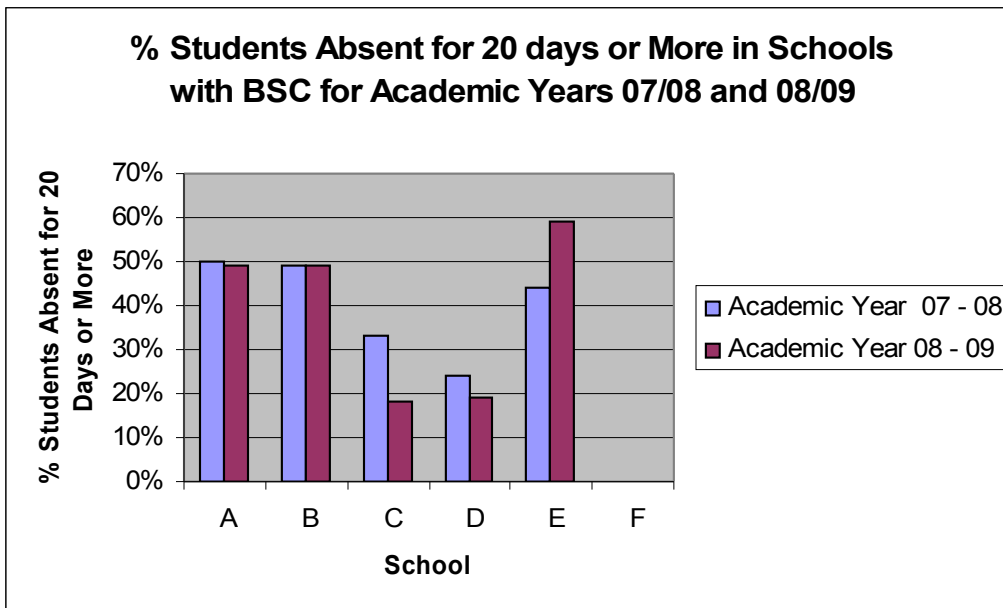


Fig 6.2

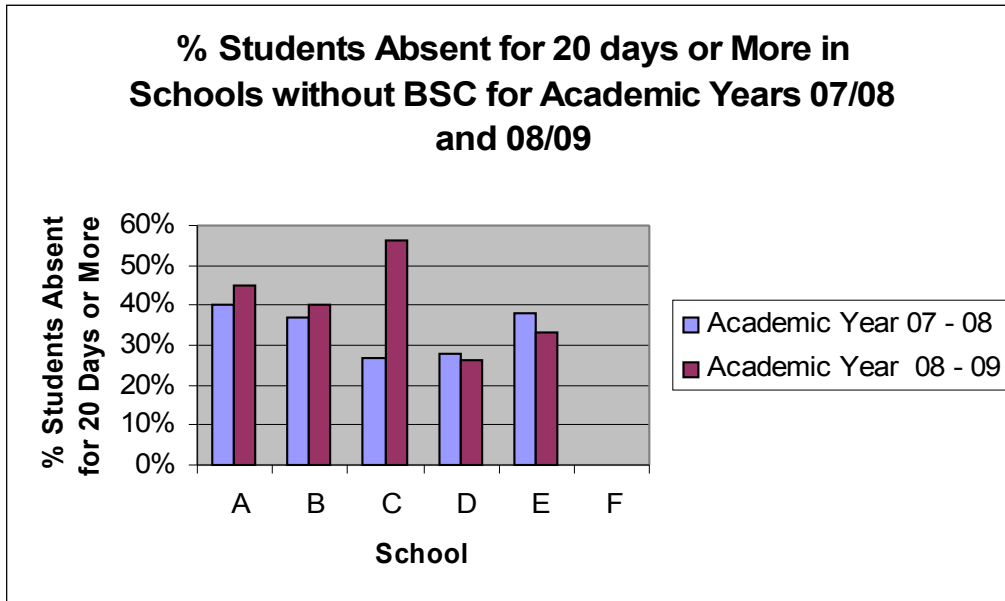


Fig 6.3

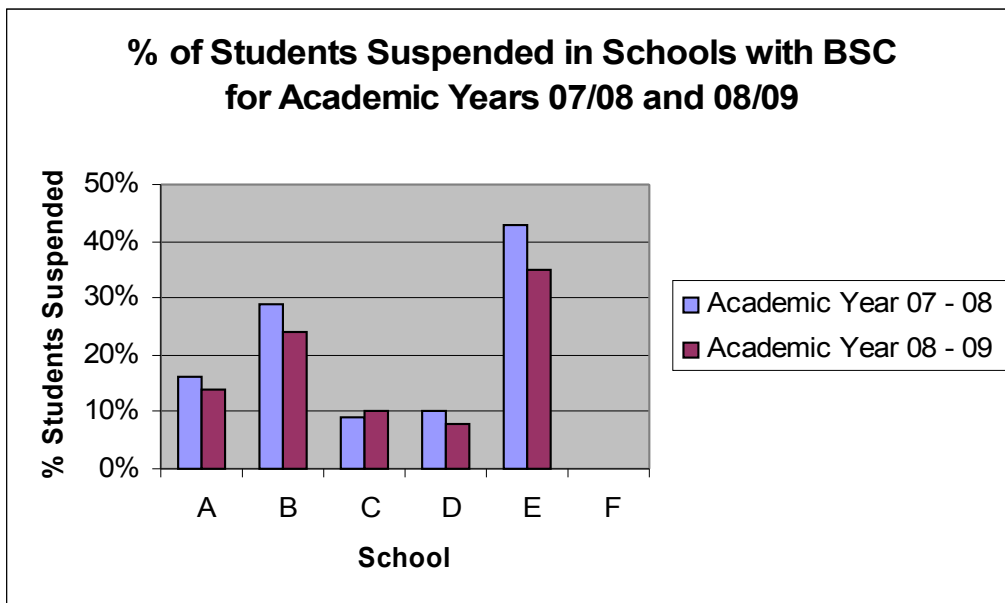
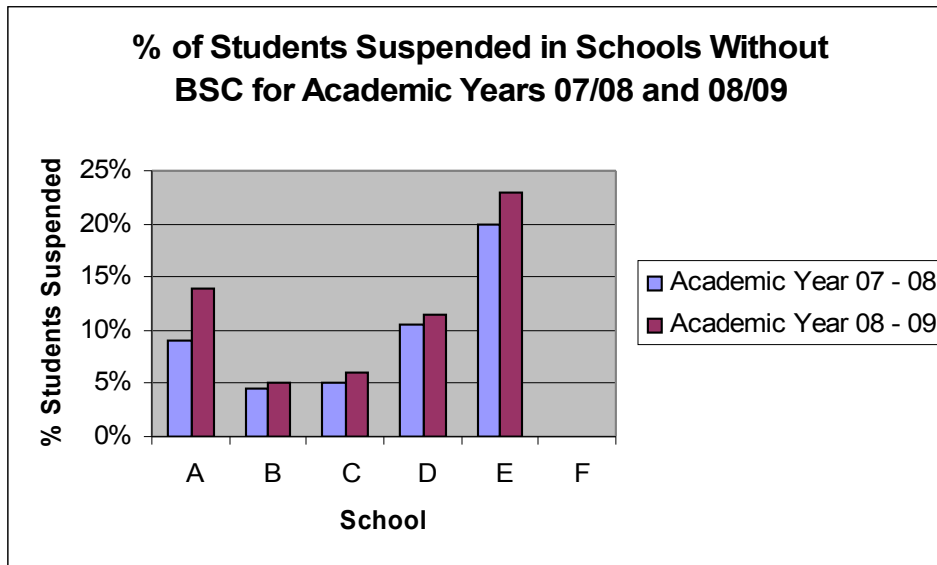


Fig 6.4



In the schools piloting the BSCs, the most notable difference was the higher levels of suspensions and expulsions. There were nine expulsions in the schools with the BSCs over the two years, in contrast to only two in the other schools. The average suspension rate in these schools was twenty per cent, while it was only ten per cent in the schools without the BSCs. In all of the schools except one, there has been a reduction in the number of students suspended. Therefore, it would appear that the BSCs are having the desired impact in reducing the number of suspensions. Although the decreases have been modest they are a strong indication that the work carried out in the BSCs, along with other supports in the school, can have positive impacts.

On analysing the attendance data (percentage of students missing more than twenty days) for schools with the BSCs, it was noticeable that there was no significant improvement in schools A and B. There was a reduction in the number of students missing twenty days or more in schools C and D. Unfortunately, for school E there was an increase in the number of students missing twenty days or more. In the schools without the BSCs, only schools D and E showed a reduction in the number of students missing twenty days or more. For schools A, B and C the numbers missing twenty days or more actually increased.

The DEIS schools not involved with the NBSS are coping admirably with the resources available to them, and they are providing a well-rounded education for the majority of the students. However, I strongly feel that the area in which the schools are experiencing the greatest difficulty, is in dealing with seriously disruptive students. In the schools these students are often regularly suspended, on a reduced timetable or internally suspended within the school. Currently the problem is that the schools do not have the expertise or the time to assist these students in a meaningful manner. This is why the BSCs should be extended to other schools operating in similar circumstances, so that these students are given the necessary assistance to guarantee more favourable outcomes from their time at school.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations

7:1 Conclusion

Through my research and evaluation of the effectiveness of the BSCs, I firmly believe that this intervention is the way forward for schools that are experiencing high levels of student disruption. There are a number of reasons for this, the main one being the ineffectiveness of sanctions and strategies that are currently in place to deal with serious student misbehaviour. Prior to the introduction of the BSCs, teachers and management in the relevant schools were becoming increasingly frustrated, as the difficulties experienced by these students were not being adequately addressed. Their poor behaviour was having an adverse impact on the classroom atmosphere, ultimately impinging on their classmates' education.

The following are the main reasons why, although only in its infancy, the BSCs have been a success. Having a designated team in place to deal with disruptive students, means that they receive intensive individualised support which helps to improve their behaviour. The designated team have the expertise to deal with their problems. They help to significantly reduce the workload of class teachers and year heads, so that they have more time to carry out the rest of their duties. Consequently, I cannot stress enough the need for such a team in schools experiencing high levels of serious disruption. From the start clear guidelines have been identified regarding entry and exit criteria to the BSCs. This is crucial because, in the past, similar facilities just became dumping grounds or 'sin bins' for disruptive students. So far this has not happened with the BSCs because there is good communication with mainstream teachers, which ensures that everyone is clear on the referral guidelines preventing anyone short-circuiting the procedures. This extra support not only assists the students with behavioural problems, but greatly benefits students and teachers in the mainstream setting as they can now get on with their lessons without the fear of constant disruption.

The value of having this classroom on-site should not be underestimated. It prevents the students from feeling further alienated and allows for easier and more successful reintegration. The in-services provided by the NBSS helped to provide teachers with an insight into the factors causing inappropriate student behaviour. This assisted greatly in encouraging teachers to reflect more on their behaviour and their interactions with students, especially those with behavioural problems. It provides them with methods they can use to guarantee more favourable outcomes.

From the analysis of the critical performance indicators from schools with the BSCs, it was clearly evident that the intervention was having the desired impact on student behaviour. There were noticeable improvements in student attendance, punctuality and also a reduction in detention and suspension rates. Certain students made progress with their academic work but, overall, there was no significant improvement in this area as it was over a short time period. From analysis of the Annual Attendance Reports, with the exception of one school, the schools with the BSCs had been successful in reducing the level of suspensions over the two-year period. This was in contrast to the DEIS schools, without the BSCs, where there was an increase in the numbers being suspended over the same time period. This is a strong indicator that the BSCs are an important contributory factor in reducing the number of suspensions in these schools. In time,

the schools without this facility could do with having the extra resource of the BSC to deal with their disruptive students.

The results show that once there is a plan in place to tackle student behavioural problems on an individual basis, great progress can be made. Great time and energy is expended by the personnel working in the BSCs in bringing the parents on board through positive interactions, and welcoming them into the school community. I am convinced that when there is parental backing it greatly impacts on the progress students can make, as the parents are more aware of what is happening in school and can assist their son/daughter in achieving his/her own personal behavioural targets. While there is a significant cost in setting up and staffing these classrooms, I am of the opinion that it is money well spent and that these classrooms are cost effective. Unfortunately, many of the benefits cannot be seen straight away and this is a difficulty when one is evaluating this intervention.

In the six other DEIS schools, without the BSCs, a number of different alternatives were used to deal with the disruptive students. Some of the in-school sanctions mentioned included the time out room, after school detention and internal suspension. School personnel expressed the futility of suspending students who were regularly in trouble but, unfortunately for these schools, there were limited viable alternatives available to them. There was constant pressure on teachers and management to protect the rights of the willing learner. Because of the lack of options teachers often tolerated poor student behaviour, which had a detrimental impact on the educational outcomes of the well-behaved majority.

There were concerns in these schools that teachers and year heads were spending far too much time dealing with disciplinary related incidents. This was having a detrimental impact on the quality of teaching and learning taking place. Great emphasis was placed on, and much time was spent on increasing the attachment of these vulnerable students to the school. This was achieved in a variety of ways: through encouraging them to participate in extracurricular activities, having after school clubs and activities during the summer to keep them out of trouble. Although the DEIS schools were in different locations throughout Ireland, they had many similar difficulties. The curriculum was viewed as being unsuitable for many students and as being an underlying reason for disruptive behaviour, because often these students had literacy and numeracy difficulties. Again, while the curriculum was a contributory factor, I noted that principals and year heads felt that there was a need for certain teachers to reflect more on their delivery of their subject. Certain teachers were inflexible in their teaching methodology. They were unable to differentiate what they taught and were failing to take into consideration the diverse range of students in front of them. On numerous occasions it was mentioned, that the teachers who had engaged in professional development had less difficulty dealing with the students, as they had a better understanding of the underlying reasons for their poor behaviour.

Despite all the positives and the benefits that are associated with the BSCs there are certain areas where improvements can be made. Going forward, there needs to be more of an emphasis placed on the role teachers can play in fostering more positive relations with the disruptive students. This can be achieved by good example shown by those in leadership positions, through in-service training or professional development in areas dealing with behavioural issues. While the BSCs provide early intervention in secondary schools, it is often too late for certain students who

are already disengaged from the educational system. There should be support structures in place in primary schools, located in disadvantaged areas that act as feeder schools for these secondary schools. This would help in earlier identification of problems and prevent them escalating into more serious ones. Hopefully in the future, there will be greater collaboration between the schools involved in the piloting of the BSCs. At present the schools are working in isolation. It is only through dialogue and consultation that the schools can improve on their approach. While there was a certain amount of planning and evaluation taking place in the schools, it was noticeable that it was not at the desired level. This is to be expected as the introduction of the BSCs into schools is only in its infancy. If these classrooms are to continue to evolve and improve, more time needs to be set aside for these vital activities.

Finally, due to the downturn in the economy, there is apprehension amongst those schools involved that the government and policy makers might decide to cease funding for the BSCs. This would be a very backward step to take and it is important that a long term view is taken. It means that the DES needs to be proactive in maintaining, or increasing, the level of funding that is currently allocated, because this extra resource not only benefits those students experiencing behavioural problems, but it has positive impacts on the educational experiences of the well-behaved majority. Teachers can get on with teaching and the students remaining in the class can get on with their work. The parents of the disruptive students also appreciate this extra support, as they are often struggling to control their son/daughter and ultimately, society benefits in the long term. To fail these students at such a critical stage in their development can have detrimental consequences, hindering their progress and impacting negatively on their confidence and self-esteem. Yes, there are significant costs in putting this provision in place, but I would confidently predict that the costs will be much greater in years to come, if the needs of these students are not addressed properly while they are in school.

7:2 Recommendations for the DEIS Schools with the Behaviour Support Classrooms

The recommendations that I shall make will be divided into two main sections. Firstly, I will make my recommendations regarding the BSCs; this will be followed by the recommendations for the other six DEIS schools that do not have this extra support. The following are the recommendations relating to the schools with BSCs.

In schools that are experiencing high levels of disruption, like those involved with the NBSS, there should be a designated team to deal with problem students. A team of two or three individuals has been shown to be effective in dealing with the students that require intensive support. Currently, class tutors/year heads do not have the time or often the expertise, to deal with these students who may have a multitude of problems. Hallam (2007) describes in detail the teams that are in operation in England, called BESTs. Although consisting of more personnel, they carry out similar functions as those working in the BSCs. Having a designated team in place reduces significantly the amount of time senior management spend dealing with disciplinary incidents. Their existence creates greater consistency for students and provides them with an extra support to rely on when difficulties arise.

Many different professionals should be involved when dealing with seriously disruptive students such as teachers, social workers, psychologists and health care professionals. There needs to be a

more integrated approach, with greater collaboration between the professionals, to ensure that the best interests of the students are met in every aspect of their lives. At present too many of the professionals are working in isolation, failing to see the overall picture. They are concentrating on the area of the student's life that is relevant to their expertise. Therefore, I would advocate a multi-agency approach when dealing with students with serious behavioural problems. Cole et al. (1998) refer to this multi-agency approach that is being utilised in England, and has acted as an appropriate working model for Irish schools.

There is a requirement for extra support for those parents who are experiencing problems with their extremely difficult children. In certain circumstances, parents can struggle to discipline their child at home. They would be greatly assisted if they received further information around behavioural issues, so that the good work and progress that is occurring at school can be continued in the home environment. If this does not happen the long term benefits of such an intervention will be seriously limited. I believe therefore, schools need to invest extra time and effort with these parents who can sometimes be difficult to engage, in order to ensure consistency of implementation. Raffaele (1999) mentions the importance of schools being proactive in reducing, and resolving, any past negative feelings or experiences that a parent might have retained from their time at school.

The NBSS recommends early intervention in secondary schools. The findings of my research lead me to believe that, in certain cases, for some students this can be too late. They have had such a negative experience of schooling that their confidence and self-esteem has been eroded, resulting in serious behavioural problems. I strongly believe that intervention strategies should be put in place for these vulnerable students, in the primary schools that act as feeder schools. This would mean that problems could be identified earlier and appropriate support programmes could be put in place, prior to students starting their secondary education. Farrington & West (1990) provide further evidence that this early intervention is necessary to prevent the likely occurrence of mental health problems and adult delinquency later on in life.

Currently in Ireland there is an unfair distribution of students with challenging behaviour, with certain schools having a disproportionate number of these students, while others have very few to accommodate. The Teachers Union of Ireland (2008) carried out an audit of second level school enrolment. The conclusion was that there are schools that carry out overt and covert selection practices; in effect, they engage in educational apartheid. Such practices take many forms and are designed to exclude those pupils perceived as being difficult, or requiring special and additional support. The DES needs to take a more proactive role in ensuring a more even distribution of students with challenging behaviour. This might, possibly, mean a centralised admission system, resulting in all schools taking their fair share of disruptive students. This present unfair distribution is well explained by Berliner (2006). Well-behaved students are viewed as 'score enhancers', while disruptive students are viewed as 'score detractors'. The result is that, as these disruptive students do not contribute positively to performance indicators, they are often encouraged to get their education elsewhere. I propose that there should be a more even distribution of such students, so that all schools share the burden more equitably. It is unfair on staff and management to be constantly dealing with an excessive amount of disciplinary-related incidents. Currently, because of the uneven distribution of students with challenging behaviour, the BSCs are required and are viewed as a vital resource for these schools.

The success of the BSCs is helped immensely by the fact that they are on-site. When dealing with the disruptive students I would suggest that it is vital that they remain in the mainstream environment, for a number of reasons. Firstly it is more cost effective; students can attend classes where they are behaving well and they can mix with their peers at break times. Hallam (2005), when referring to the English system, mentions the benefits of having these facilities on-site: students valued being able to drop in whenever they were experiencing difficulties, and this enabled issues to be addressed speedily. Approaches that are off-site make successful reintegration more difficult and further alienate the students as they are separated from the school community.

More of an emphasis needs to be placed on the role of teachers in dealing with students with behavioural problems. Too often the emphasis and blame is placed on the student. At times, as mentioned by Martin & Hayes (1998), certain teachers adopt a negative attitude. The teaching strategy they adopt is punitive and confrontational, which does nothing to improve teacher/student relations. While the NBSS acknowledges the role teachers can play in this relationship and provides in-service training for qualified teachers, I consider that it is important that teachers receive additional training on aspects of student behaviour. Through self-reflection and further education, certain teachers can come to the realisation that the problem is not solely caused by the student, and that the teacher's attitude and manner can be a contributory factor to student misbehaviour.

Despite the current unfavourable economic situation, the government needs to invest further resources into dealing with serious behavioural problems in disadvantaged areas. Failure to do so will have detrimental consequences for society in the years to come. Schools, operating in similar circumstances to those already involved with the NBSS, should be offered the opportunity to set up a BSC. The reason for recommending such a facility in schools is to increase the options available to teachers when dealing with serious disciplinary incidents. Rather than having to rely on sanctions and exclusionary measures, the problems and difficulties experienced by the students can be addressed by means of an individualised approach. Despite the considerable initial cost, these classrooms are potentially cost effective and will save money in the long run, by keeping students in school for longer and increasing their chances of contributing in a positive way to society. Currently ninety per cent of all prisoners in the state are early school leavers (Irish Independent Nov 19, 2009). These are individuals whose needs were not met at school and are now a major financial burden to the state.

There needs to be more planning and evaluation regarding the BSCs. Due to the fact that these classrooms have only been in operation for a few years there has been little opportunity to do this. The focus has been on setting them up, recruiting suitably qualified personnel and establishing their role within the school. It was very noticeable, when I was carrying out my research, that there had been very little consultation between the schools participating in the piloting of the BSCs. Regular cluster meetings would be a way of discussing best practice and areas where improvements could be made. As a contrast, Hayward (2005), in referring to the guidelines for setting up the LSUs on which the BSCs are modelled, noted that the areas covered in these units included personal and social education, anger management, conflict resolution and literacy and numeracy. There needs to be a more structured and uniform approach to the areas covered with the students while they are attending the facility. While it depends very much on

the school and the problems experienced by the student, there was a significant variation in the time spent dealing with personal and behavioural issues and the extra help with the curriculum. There need to be stricter guidelines to ensure that there are optimum benefits for the students attending.

More emphasis needs to be placed on the reintegration process from the BSCs to mainstream classes. There is the possibility that most of the effort is expended on these students while they are in the BSC; it is much more difficult to monitor their behaviour once the students return to the mainstream setting. The potential problems associated with reintegration were emphasised by Mc Sherry (2001) and also in the Evaluation of the LSUs by OFSTED (2006). Several difficulties were noted, such as teachers not being sufficiently accommodating of students returning from the LSUs. Another perceived problem was in providing adequate support and monitoring for students returning to mainstream education. The personnel working in this classroom must convince mainstream teachers that this approach is worthwhile and will make the difference in the long run. It is vital that regular communication and checking of these students occurs to determine how they are progressing, so that if difficulties arise the appropriate supports can be provided.

7:3 Recommendations for the DEIS Schools without the Behaviour Support Classrooms

The following are the recommendations that I would see as important for the DEIS schools without the BSCs, which could aid greatly in reducing the level of misbehaviour in the schools.

In many cases students with behavioural problems would benefit from a trimmed curriculum. Currently at Junior Certificate level there are too many subjects. Often their problems are compounded by poor literacy and numeracy. I have no doubt that certain students would benefit immensely from spending the first year of secondary school focusing solely on their literacy and numeracy skills, and as a result they would be better prepared for dealing with the curriculum. While progress has been made in diversifying the curriculum, some of the students would be further helped if an alternative curriculum, more vocational in orientation, was provided. It was noticeable that school personnel commented on the suitability of the JCSP for certain students. The JCSP has been very successful in meeting the needs of students who find the traditional curriculum too academic. The JCSP is based on the concept that all young people are capable of real success in school, and that they can have a positive experience when conditions are favourable. The JCSP should be an integral part of the curriculum in certain schools at Junior Cycle, because it can assist disruptive students, who have become disaffected with the educational system, to re-engage with learning.

In spite of the downturn in the economy, it is of utmost importance that funding and resource allocation for assisting these disadvantaged schools is not cut. The designated disadvantaged schools that improve critical performance indicators, such as retention rates and academic results should not lose their funding as a result of this progress. Positive improvements should be rewarded and not punished by a reduction in funding and resources for these schools.

It is vital that, in schools operating in such challenging circumstances, there is strong purposeful leadership. I would recommend the distributed leadership model, where all teachers would take

on the responsibility for dealing effectively with misbehaviour as it occurs, thereby preventing escalation of the problems. Likewise, Silns & Mulford (2002) provide further evidence that student outcomes, including behaviour, are more likely to improve when the leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community.

From my research it was clearly evident that teachers, who had engaged in professional development, had a better understanding of the changes taking place in the educational system with regards to behavioural issues. The culture within schools should be one of lifelong learning and this should be encouraged by the school principal. Consequently, the teachers will be more reflective and more understanding of the issues around student behaviour.

When dealing with seriously disruptive students schools need to move away from an over-reliance on sanctions such as detention and suspension. It was noticeable that school personnel felt that suspension did not have any positive impact. Costenbader & Markson (1990) refer to the futility of suspension as students are outside the learning zone, and it results in students falling further behind with their work. There needs to be more of an emphasis by senior management on using less exclusionary methods. More time and effort needs to go into addressing the underlying reasons causing the problem behaviour. Too often, when students return from suspension, they are reintegrated back into their class and the same problems resurface again later. Alternative strategies that keep the students in the learning zone, such as internal suspension, evening detentions and having a facility like a time out room will have more positive outcomes in the long run.

There should be mandatory induction for new teachers arriving to work in the DEIS schools, particularly if there are a significant number of classes containing students with challenging behaviour. Information concerning the code of behaviour and behavioural issues should be conveyed to them by experienced teachers. The tips and antecedent strategies, (Bambara & Kern 2005) that they are informed about can make all the difference when the teachers are starting to teach these difficult classes.

It is important that schools located in disadvantaged areas should work in collaboration with other community groups, to ensure that there would be other activities and supports available for students outside of school hours. This point was made by Christle et al. (2005) where the importance of well-supervised activities for these students after school was mentioned. It helps to reduce the likelihood of them becoming involved in anti-social behaviour by assisting them to become more responsible members of society.

Those schools, with a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour in their first year intake, need to carry out extensive preparatory work prior to the arrival of these students in September. This can be achieved by regular communication with key personnel in the feeder schools and by having the appropriate resources and supports in place, so that when difficulties arise they can be rectified quickly.

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APPENDIX 1

Cover letter attached to Questionnaires

Dear Participant,

I am a teacher in Enniscorthy Vocational College and am currently in my third year of the Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Dublin City University. My thesis is concerned with carrying out a comparative evaluation on the various approaches to tackling inappropriate student behaviour from both a teacher's and Principal's perspective. My supervisor is Professor Gerry Mc Namara, the Head of the Education Department at D.C.U.

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation would be greatly appreciated and would involve the completion of a questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview. Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

This data collected will be analysed for my thesis and the results may appear in publications. The results will be reported in a manner which does not enable you or the school to be identified. Thus the reporting will protect your confidentiality. I shall be following strict ethical guidelines.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact my supervisor (gerry.manamara@dcu.ie) or **The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000.**

Yours Sincerely,

Iain Wickham

APPENDIX 2

NBSS forms used in the Behaviour Support Classroom

Form 1 – Form to be completed by all subject teachers

Form 2 – Form to be completed by BSC staff member

Form 3 – Form to be completed by Student



***Form A to be completed by all subject teachers**

National Behaviour Support Service

Confidential

Learning Behaviour Checklist

Name of Pupil: _____ Date: _____

Name of Teacher: _____ Subject: _____

Please use the ratings 1 to 5 and comment further if needed

1=Always 2=Most of the time 3=Sometimes 4=Infrequently 5=Never

General Behaviour	Rating	Comments
Attends School		
Arrives on time for lessons		
Can enter the classroom quietly		
Can collect, organise and take care of books, pencils, equipment, etc.		
Tries hard with homework		
Respects school property		
Learning Behaviour	Rating	Comments
Is able to settle at the beginning of lessons		
Is able and willing to follow verbal instructions		
Can begin a task quickly eg. at the same time as other pupils		



Can stay on task (within her/his capabilities)		
Can complete a task		
Gives effort to her/his written work		
Presents work well		

Classroom Behaviour	Rating	Comments
Works well in a group		
Participates well in class discussions		
Can work without direct supervision		
Requests help appropriately		
Can work without constant reassurance / attention		
Social & Emotional Behaviours	Rating	Comments
Is able to remember and follow school rules		
Is able to speak appropriately to adults		
Is able to interact appropriately with peers		
Is respectful of peers		
Is respectful of adults		



***Form D to be completed by BSC staff Member**

National Behaviour Support Service

PUPIL BEHAVIOUR PLAN (PBP)

Pupil's name:	Parent /Guardian permission: Yes / No
Class:	Date of permission:
Date of Birth:	

In Attendance									
1.	Position								
2.	Position								
3.	Position								
4.	Position								
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">(A) Pupil Profile</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(B) Learning Behaviour Checklist</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(C) My Work in School</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Yes / No</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">(D) Other (observation) etc.</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Yes / No</td> </tr> </table>		(A) Pupil Profile	Yes / No	(B) Learning Behaviour Checklist	Yes / No	(C) My Work in School	Yes / No	(D) Other (observation) etc.	Yes / No
(A) Pupil Profile	Yes / No								
(B) Learning Behaviour Checklist	Yes / No								
(C) My Work in School	Yes / No								
(D) Other (observation) etc.	Yes / No								

Action(s) to be taken

	Who	What	When
1.			
2.			
3.			

Support(s) to be put in place

	Who	What	When
1.			
2.			
3.			

Strategies / methods for monitoring and recording progress:

Review date:

Pupil's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's signature: _____ Date: _____

BSC teacher's signature: _____ Date: _____



***Form C to be completed by Pupil**

National Behaviour Support Service
My Work at School

Name: _____ Today's Date: _____

Age: _____ Year Group: _____

School: _____

Please answer the following questions about your work in school. For each question circle one answer from the list (“always”, “most of the time”, “sometimes”, “hardly ever” or “never”). If you do not understand what a word means, please ask your teacher.

1. I arrive on time for class	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
2. I complete my homework	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
3. I work well on my own in class	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
4. I work well in a group in class	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
5. I follow instructions in class	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
6. I try to do my best at school	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
7. I like to learn new things	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
8. I ask questions if I don't understand something	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never



9. I talk to my teachers	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
10. I follow the school rules	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
11. I feel happy at school	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
12. I like school	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
13. I like to get on with my work at school	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never
14. I am proud of my work at school	always	most of the time	sometimes	hardly ever	never

APPENDIX 3

Questionnaire for DEIS Schools with Behaviour Support Classrooms

Questionnaire

School Profile:

School Type:

Please tick appropriate box(es).

Co – Educational

Vocational

All Boys

Community

All Girls

Other (please state) _____

Rural

Urban / Town

Number of Students Enrolled at Second Level:

Number of Teachers:

Approximate percentage of Students with Behavioural Difficulties:

Less than 10%

Between 10% and 20%

Between 20% and 30%

If greater than 30% please state the approximate percentage

Predominant Socio-Economic Profile of Students background:

Lower Socio Economic Grouping

Middle Socio Economic Grouping

Upper Socio Economic Grouping

Does the School have a Behaviour Support Classroom?

Yes

No

Prior to intervention by the National Behaviour Support Services:

Please complete by ticking the most appropriate box:

(1) The school had a high level of disciplinary issues with follow-on suspensions and expulsions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) Staff were beginning to lose faith in the disciplinary system as many felt it was ineffective.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) Teachers in the school felt that pupil behaviour was spiralling out of control.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) Far too much time was being spent by senior management dealing with disciplinary issues to the detriment of other school activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) The school adhered rigidly to the code of behaviour and consequently the disciplinary system was punitive in its approach.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) All staff were supportive of the new initiative involving outside expertise in order to promote more positive behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) The links between home and school for these disruptive students was poor prior to outside intervention.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) Teachers did not have the necessary skills / training to deal with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) There was a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour were outside of the schools control eg. home issues, student issues.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) There was a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour were due to in-school factors eg. large classes, unsuitable curriculum, teacher performance.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(11) School Management did not view this as a sign of weakness by looking for outside assistance.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(12) There was an initial fear that the school might become stigmatised in the local community by becoming involved in such a pilot programme.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Post Intervention from the National Behaviour Support Service:

Please complete by ticking the most appropriate box:

(1) So far the intervention has been successful in reducing the number of disciplinary incidents in the school leading to reduced suspensions and expulsions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) In the mainstream setting because certain students are removed there is a better classroom atmosphere more conducive to teaching and learning.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) There has been a significant reduction in the workload of teaching staff relating to disciplinary issues since its introduction.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) School leadership determines greatly the impact of the intervention and its success.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) There is now a greater realisation that the school / teachers can do much to reduce the level of misbehaviour taking place.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) There is a requirement for key members of staff to understand the nature of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties so that they can distinguish it from routine misbehaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) As a result of in-service training staff are more sympathetic and understanding of the students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) It is of utmost importance that all the relevant parents are actively involved in this approach to improving their sons / daughters behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) Regular planning and review takes place to ensure the needs of students in the Behaviour Support Classroom are met.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) The pilot programme has resulted in improved access to other services which has been facilitated through our contact with NBSS.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(11) In the long term if the pilot is continued it should have the effect of improving examination results for the majority of the students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(12) There have been no negative effects as a result of the introduction of this pilot project.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Behaviour Support Classrooms:

Please complete /comment:

(1) What support / advice did the school get from the NBSS regarding the setting up of these classrooms?

(2) Describe the professional background of staff involved with students in these classrooms.

(3) Is there a danger that teachers could use this facility as a dumping ground for troublesome students? Please comment.

(4) What would be the desired traits / attributes of the professionals working in such a setting?

(5) What are the main differences regarding the activities / structure of the day in these specialised settings compared to classes in the mainstream setting?

(6) Who decides and what are the procedures in place in the school for a student who needs to be referred to such a classroom?

(7) What particular areas do these students experience difficulties with that require intensive effort?

(8) How long do students spend in these classrooms before they are reintegrated back into mainstream education?

(9) Is there a possibility that students might deliberately misbehave so as to gain entry into this classroom? If yes, what does the school do to prevent this from happening.

(10) After spending time in these classrooms what are the areas where students show greatest improvements?

Behaviour Support Classrooms continued:

Please tick the most appropriate box:

(1) Initially there were problems due to roles and responsibilities and getting used to the multi agency approach to dealing with behavioural problems.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) Poor literacy and numeracy have been identified as the main factors contributing to unruly behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) The ability to address a wide range of different issues speedily before further escalation of problems is seen as a key strength of these classrooms.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) On returning to mainstream education these students are more responsible in their behaviour and value the benefits to themselves as well as others of behaving appropriately.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) All students are successfully reintegrated into back into the mainstream setting.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) The overall success is very much determined by parental input and helping them realise the importance of their efforts.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) Referrals to services both within and outside of these classrooms seems to be quicker and less bureaucratic than in the past.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) There is a positive relationship between school staff and personnel in the Behaviour Support Classroom.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) The Behaviour Support Classroom is well resourced and is a suitable environment for students experiencing difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) By working with the Behaviour Support Team teachers have experienced professional development which has allowed them to more fully understand the issues surrounding student behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Concluding Remarks Regarding the Impact to date of the Behaviour Support Classroom:

Please complete / comment:

(1) What are the main advantages of having this in place in the school?

(2) Are there any associated disadvantages of having it in place?

(3) At the start what were the main areas targeted for improvement?

(4) Have these targets been met or is it too difficult to measure the benefits in a short period of time?

(5) Has there been a definite improvement in student behaviour and what evidence is there to show that this has occurred?

(6) From talking to students involved what has been their feedback?

(7) From informal feedback from parents what has been their opinion on the pilot project?

(8) How did the school go about building relationships with certain parents who may have had very negative experiences of their own education?

(9) Is this intervention cost effective so as to warrant its introduction on a wider scale?

(10) What has been the most positive aspect of participating in such a programme?

APPENDIX 4

Behaviour Support Classrooms Analysis of Data Collected from Questionnaires

- Table 1 – Questions relating to Prior Intervention from the National Behaviour Support Service
- Table 2 – Questions relating to Post Intervention from the National Behaviour Support Service
- Table 3 – Data gathered regarding National Behaviour Support Service Support / Advice
- Table 4 – Desired Attributes of Staff Working in Behaviour Staff Classroom
- Table 5 – Typical Referral Procedure
- Table 6 – Difficulties Experienced by Students who Attend Behaviour Support Classroom
- Table 7 – Structure of School Day in Behaviour Support Classroom
- Table 8 – Areas Targeted for Improvement
- Table 9 – Advantages and Disadvantages of Behaviour Support Classrooms
- Table 10 – Areas of Greatest Improvements in Behaviour Support Classroom
- Table 11 – Evidence of Improvement in Student Behaviour when Re-Integrated to Mainstream
- Table 12 – Feedback Teachers received from Students who spent on time in the Behaviour Support Classroom
- Table 13 – Additional Questions regarding the Introduction of the Behaviour Support Classroom

Table 1 – Questions relating to Prior Intervention from the National Behaviour Support Service

	Prior BSC*		
	Agree**	Disagree***	Don't Know
The school had a high level of disciplinary issues with follow-on suspensions and expulsions..	100%	0%	0%
Staff were beginning to lose faith in the disciplinary system as many felt it was ineffective.	69%	31%	0%
Teachers in the school felt that pupil behaviour was spiraling out of control.	62%	31%	7%
Far too much time was being spent by senior management dealing with disciplinary issues to the detriment of other school activities.	92%	8%	0%
The school adhered rigidly to the code of behaviour and consequently the disciplinary system was punitive in its approach.	54%	46%	0%
All staff were supportive of the new initiative involving outside expertise in order to promote more positive behaviour.	62%	31%	7%
The links between home and school for these disruptive students was poor prior to outside intervention.	77%	16%	7%
Teachers do not have the necessary skills / training to deal with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.	69%	31%	0%
There was a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour were outside the schools control eg. school issues, student issues	77%	23%	0%
There was a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour were due to in-school factors eg. large classes, unsuitable curriculum, teacher performance.	31%	69%	0%
School Management did not view this as a sign of weakness by looking for outside assistance.	69%	24%	7%
There was an initial fear that the school might become stigmatised in the local community by becoming involved in such a pilot programme/	92%	8%	0%

* Behaviour Support Classroom

** Includes those that Agreed and Strongly Agreed

*** Includes those that Disagreed and Strongly Disagree

Table 2 – Questions relating to Post Intervention from the National Behaviour Support Service

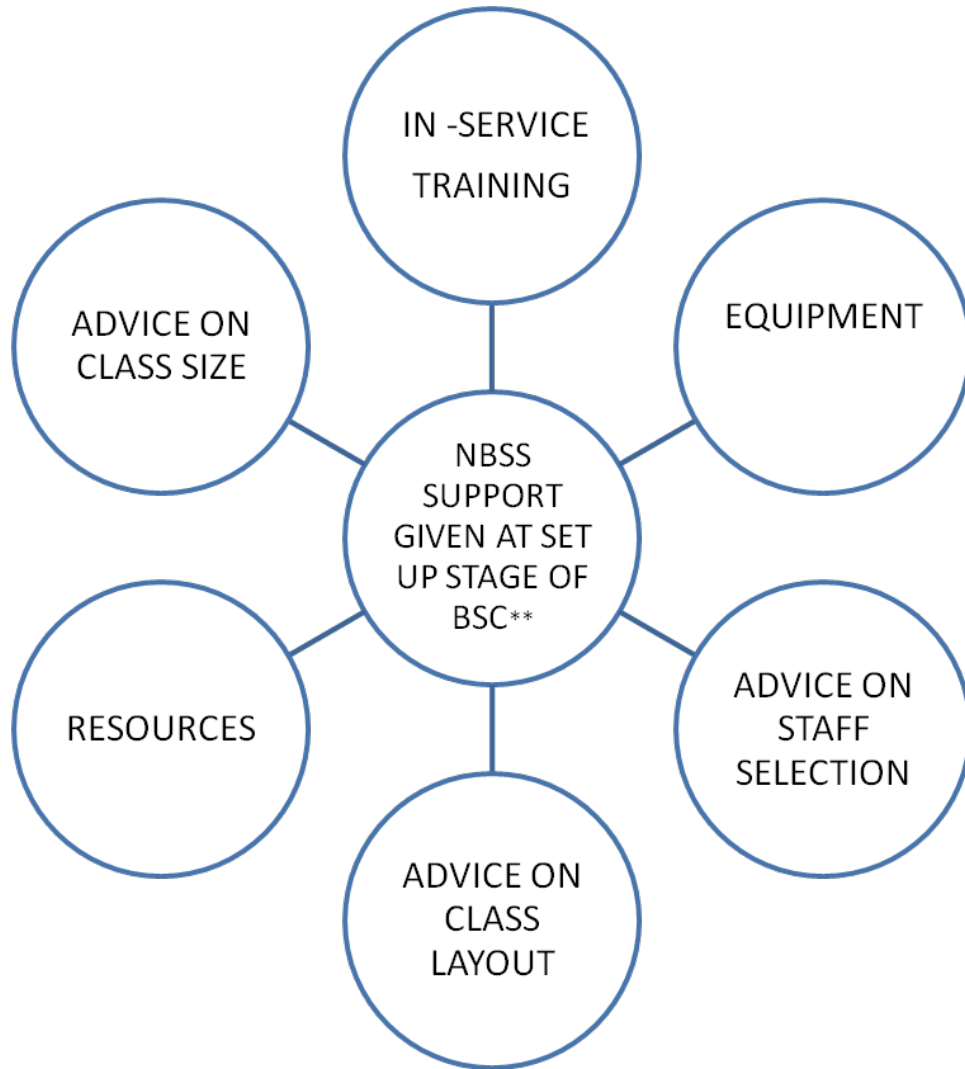
	Post BSC*		
	Agree**	Disagree***	Don't Know
So far the intervention has been successful in reducing the number of disciplinary incidents in the school leading to reduced suspensions and expulsions.	69%	24%	7%
In the mainstream setting because certain students are removed there is a better classroom atmosphere more conducive to teaching and learning.	100%	0%	0%
There has been significant reduction in the workload of teaching staff relating to disciplinary issues since its introduction.	62%	38%	0%
School leadership determines greatly the impact of the intervention and its success.	85%	15%	0%
There is now a greater realisation that the school / teachers can do much to reduce the level of misbehaviour taking place.	77%	16%	7%
There is a requirement for key members of staff to understand the nature of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties so that they can distinguish it from routine misbehaviour.	85%	0%	15%
As a result of in-service training staff are more sympathetic and understanding of the students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.	77%	23%	0%
It is of utmost importance that all relevant parents are actively involved in this approach to improving their sons / daughters behaviour.	100%	0%	0%
Regular planning and review takes place to ensure the needs of students in the Behaviour Support Classroom are met.	46%	31%	23%
The pilot programme has resulted in improved access to other services which has been facilitated through our contact with the NBSS.	54%	39%	7%
In the long term if the pilot is continued it should have the effect of improving examination results for the majority of students	54%	15%	31%
There have been no negative effects as a result of the introduction of this pilot project.	70%	15%	15%

* Behaviour Support Classroom

** Includes those that Agreed and Strongly Agreed

*** Includes those that Disagreed and Strongly Disagree

Table 3 – NBSS* Support / Advice



*National Behaviour Support Service

**Behaviour Support Classroom

Table 4 – Desired Attributes of Staff Working in Behaviour Support Classroom



*Behaviour Support Classroom

Table 5 – Typical Referral Procedure

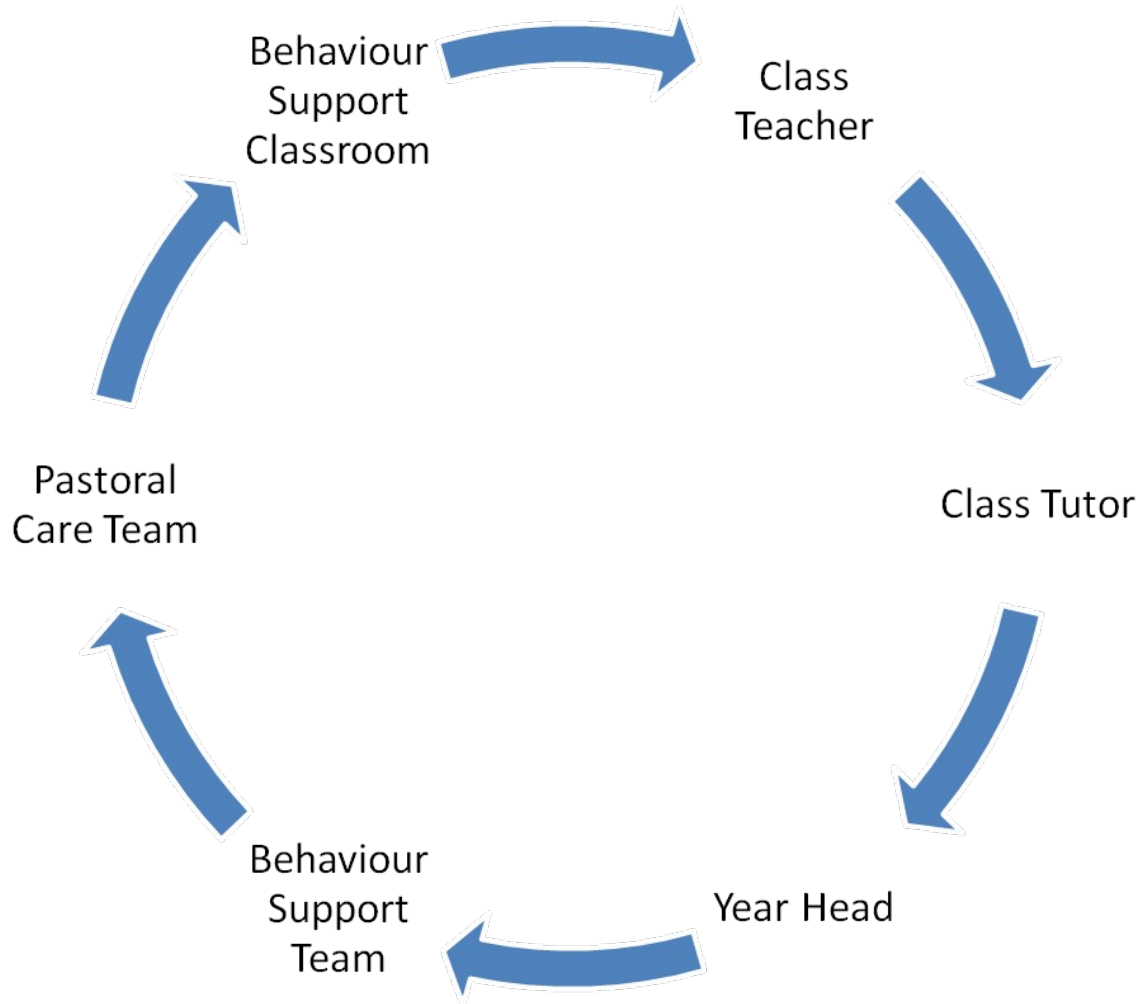


Table 6 – Difficulties Experienced by Students who Attend Behaviour Support Classroom

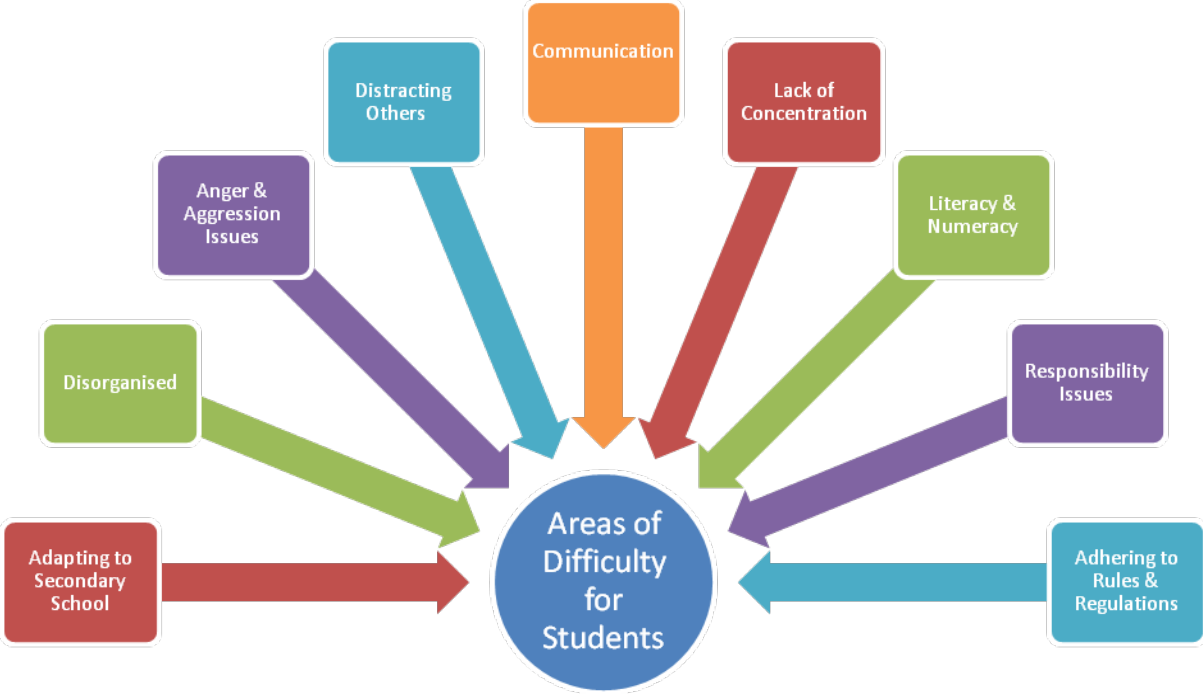


Table 7 – Structure of School Day in Behaviour Support Classroom

MAIN DIFFERENCES IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL DAY IN THE BEHAVIOURAL SUPPORT CLASSROOMS



Table 8 – Areas Targeted for Improvement

AREAS TARGETED FOR IMPROVEMENT

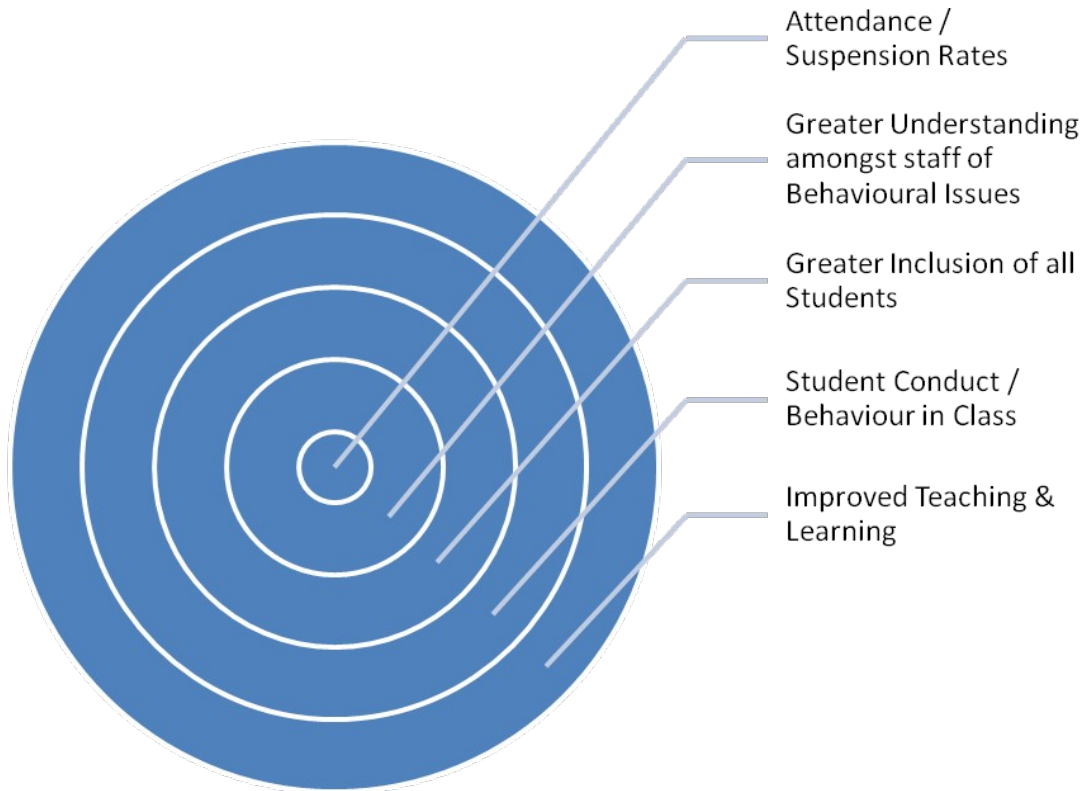
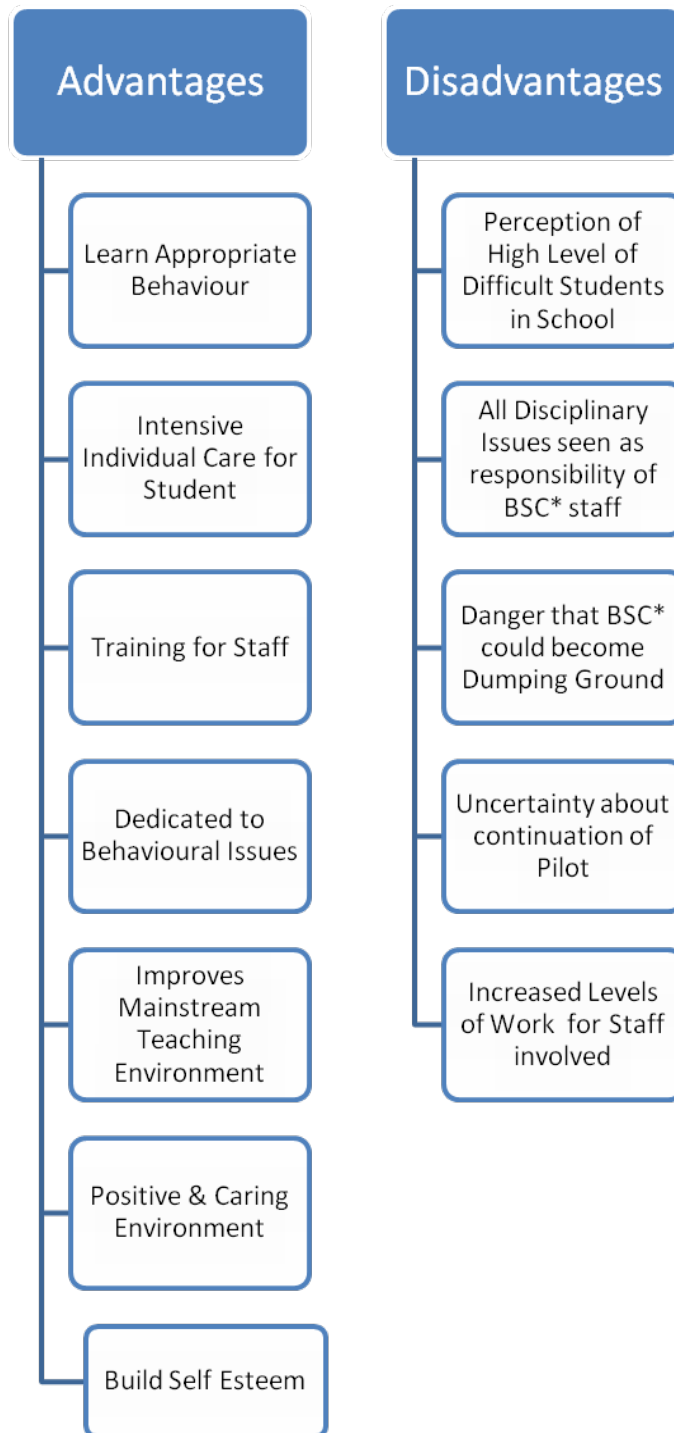


Table 9 – Advantages and Disadvantages of Behaviour Support Classrooms



* Behaviour Support Classroom

Table 10 – Areas of Greatest Improvements in the Behaviour Support Classroom

AREAS WHERE STUDENTS SHOW GREATEST IMPROVEMENTS

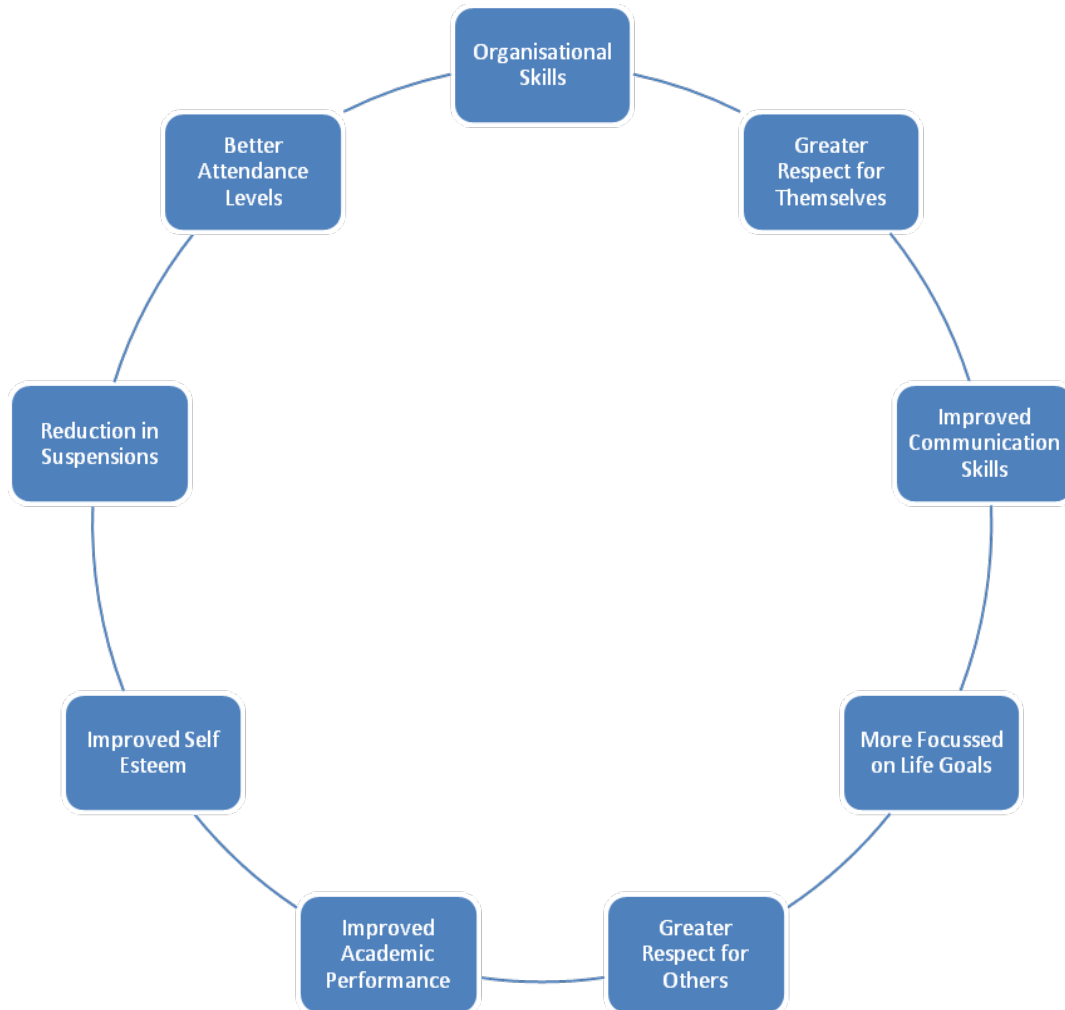


Table 11 – Evidence of Improvement in Student Behaviour when Re-Integrated in Mainstream

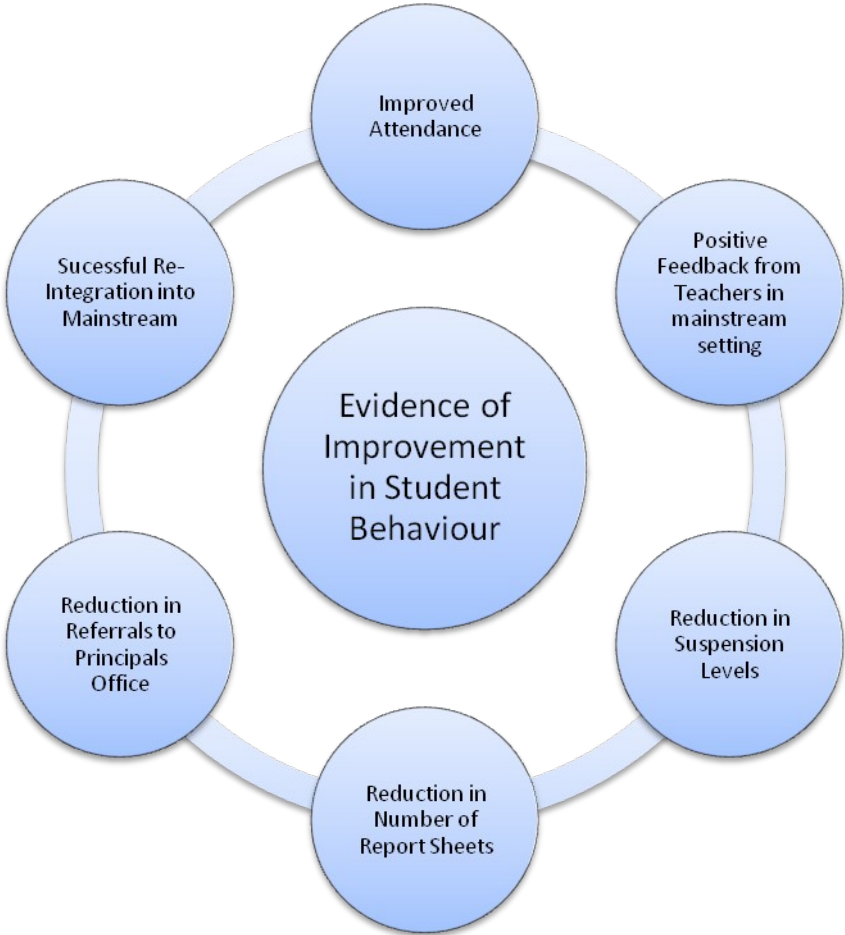


Table 12 – Student Feedback on time in Behaviour Support Classroom



Table 13 – Additional Questions regarding the introduction of the Behaviour Support Classrooms

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Initially there were problems due to roles & responsibilities & getting used to the multi agency approach to dealing with behavioural problems.	0%	54%	31%	0%	15%
Poor literacy & numeracy have been identified as the main factors contributing to unruly behaviour.	15%	70%	15%	0%	0%
The ability to address a wide range of different issues speedily before further escalation of problems is seen as a key strength of these classrooms.	85%	15%	0%	0%	0%
On returning to mainstream education these students are more responsible in their behaviour & value the benefits to themselves as well as others of behaving appropriately.	15%	70%	0%	0%	15%
All students are successfully reintegrated into back into the mainstream setting.	0%	69%	31%	0%	0%
The overall success is very much determined by parental input & helping them realise the importance of their efforts.	54%	46%	0%	0%	0%
Referrals to services both within & outside of these classrooms seems to be quicker & less bureaucratic than in the past.	0%	69%	0%	0%	31%
There is a positive relationship between school staff & personnel in the Behaviour Support Classroom.	46%	54%	0%	0%	0%
The Behaviour Support Classroom is well resourced & is a suitable environment for students experiencing difficulties.	85%	0%	0%	0%	15%
By working with the Behaviour Support Team teachers have experienced professional development which has allowed them to more fully understand & the issues surrounding student behaviour.	54%	46%	0%	0%	0%

APPENDIX 5

Questionnaire for DEIS Schools without a Behaviour Support Classroom:

Questionnaire

School Profile:

School Type:

Please tick appropriate box(es).

Co – Educational

Vocational

All Boys

Community

All Girls

Other (please state) _____

Rural

Urban / Town

Number of Students Enrolled at Second Level:

Number of Teachers:

Approximate percentage of Students with Behavioural Difficulties:

Less than 10%

Between 10% and 20%

Between 20% and 30%

If greater than 30% please state the approximate percentage

Predominant Socio-Economic Profile of Students background:

Lower Socio Economic Grouping

Middle Socio Economic Grouping

Upper Socio Economic Grouping

Does the School have a Behaviour Support Classroom?

Yes

No

Background information:

Please complete by ticking the most appropriate box:

(1) The school has a high level of disciplinary issues with follow-on suspensions and expulsions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) All Staff are proactive in the implementation of the schools code of behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) Far too much time is spent by Senior Management dealing with disciplinary issues to the detriment of other school activities.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) In the past the school personnel would have adhered rigidly to the code of behaviour and consequently the disciplinary system was punitive in its approach.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) Currently there is a flexible approach to the schools code of behaviour taking into consideration students with special needs.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) All staff are supportive and have a good understanding of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) Staff appreciate and recognise the benefits in involving outside expertise so as to promote more positive behaviour in the school environment.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) The links between home and school for students who are persistently disruptive are poor and are difficult to improve.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) Teachers do not have the necessary skills / training to deal with students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) There is a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour are outside of the schools control eg. home issues, student issues.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(11) There is a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour are due to in-school factors eg. large classes, unsuitable curriculum, teacher performance.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(12)The vast majority of disciplinary incidents are caused by a small number of students

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(13)Many disciplinary related issues could be handled more effectively by using more appropriate classroom management techniques.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Current situation in the schools:

Please complete by ticking the most appropriate box:

(1) By taking a more positive / flexible approach to discipline it has resulted in a reduction in disciplinary related incidents with follow-on suspensions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) School leadership determines greatly the impact of positive disciplinary related interventions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) There is now a greater realisation that the school / teachers can do much to reduce the level of misbehaviour taking place.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) Key members of staff now have a better understanding of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and can distinguish it more easily from routine misbehaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) As a result of in-service training staff are more sympathetic and understanding of the students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) To ensure better outcomes for troublesome students active parental involvement is crucial.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) Regular planning, monitoring and evaluation of positive behavioural supports takes place to ensure that the desired outcome are being achieved.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) Along with this positive approach from school staff other agencies need to be involved to ensure that optimum progress is made.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) In the long term if this approach is maintained it should have the effect of improving attendance and examination results for the majority of the students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) Lack of consistency is one of the main problems in that the code of behaviour is not implemented by all teachers in a regular manner.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Positive Behaviour Support / Management:

Please complete /comment:

(1) What are the distinct features of this positive approach to discipline?

(2) Describe the disciplinary sequence of events for dealing with disruptive students.

(3) What would be the desired traits / attributes of teachers who work with these challenging students ?

(4) What are the main areas of school life that these students experience difficulty with?

(5) What supports are in place in the school to deal with students that are not responsive to universal interventions?

(6) What outside agencies are involved when dealing with the most troublesome students?

(7) Are sanctions totally ineffective for certain students?

(8) What rewards are in place in the school for these students when they meet certain targets?

(9) What can subject teachers do to reduce the incidences of misbehaviour within the classroom?

(10) Did the school consider applying to the NBSS for a Behavioural Support Classroom? Explain your answer.

Please tick the most appropriate box:

(1) Poor literacy and numeracy have been identified as the main factors contributing to unruly behaviour.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Don't Know

(2) The lack of suitable alternatives other than suspension for seriously disruptive students is a major problem faced by school administrators.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) Some teachers adopt safe teaching styles which can result in boredom for students and an increase in the level of disruption.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) Second year is the time when it most likely that serious behavioural issues will surface.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) Currently in Ireland cherry picking of students is occurring resulting in certain schools having to take a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(6) Schools cater for the majority of students very well but there are not enough resources in schools to deal with the seriously disruptive students.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(7) The resistance of certain staff to change with regard to the promotion of positive behaviour severely impacts on the effectiveness of the initiative.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(8) A multi agency approach involving trained professionals is the most appropriate manner to deal with students with serious behavioural problems.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(9) Students from lower socio economic backgrounds require more immediate rewards.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(10) Teachers are very negative in their interactions with these disruptive students and rarely praise them.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Concluding remarks regarding the impact to date of the Promotion of Positive Behaviour:

Please complete / comment:

(1) What are the main advantages of having this positive approach to discipline in the school?

(2) How were all stakeholders involved in the formulation of the code of behaviour?

(3) What additional supports do you feel would help to improve the behaviour of these disruptive students?

(4) How can one ensure that teaching and learning are not severely effected by these unruly students?

(5) What key performance indicators are monitored to determine whether this approach is having the desired effect?

(6) What change if any would you make to the Irish Education system to tackle the problem of serious misbehaviour in the classroom?

(7) How does the school go about building positive relationships with certain parents who may have had very negative experiences of their own education?

(8) What areas could teachers receive in service training so as to promote more positive behaviour?

APPENDIX 6

Designated Disadvantaged Schools without Behaviour Support Classrooms

Analysis of Data Collected from Questionnaires

- Table 1 – Profile of Schools Involved
- Table 2 – Ways of Promoting Positive Behaviour
- Table 3 – Desired Traits/Attributes of Teachers Working with Challenging Students
- Table 4 – Supports in the School to deal with Students requiring more intensive intervention
- Table 5 – Ways by which Subject Teachers can reduce the Incidence of Misbehaviour in the Classroom
- Table 6 – Advantages of this Positive Approach to Discipline
- Table 7 – Additional Supports that would help to Improve the Behaviour of these Disruptive Students
- Table 8 – Key Performance Indicators which are Monitored to Determine Effectiveness
- Table 9 – Areas where Teachers would Benefit from In-Service Training
- Table 10 – Data gathered on Background Information on the Schools Approach to Behaviour Management
- Table 11 – Data gathered around Current Situation in the School
- Table 12 – Additional Questions regarding Behaviour Management in the DEIS Schools

Table 1 – Profile of Schools Involved

**Schools Designated Disadvantaged -
DEIS**

Type of School	% of Students with Behavioural Difficulties	Socio-Economic Profile of Students	No. of Students	No. of Teachers
Urban Vocational	10 - 20%	Lower	480	44
Rural Vocational	20 - 30%	Lower	150	19
Urban Community	<10%	Lower	791	60
Urban Vocational	<10%	Lower	426 Second Level 360 PLC	65
Urban Community	10 - 20%	Lower	350	40
Urban Community	<10%	Lower	780	62

All Schools Co-Educational.

Table 2 - Ways of Promoting Positive Behaviour

Distinctive Features of this Positive Approach to Discipline							
Rewards for Good Behaviour	Focus on Positives	Consistency	Partnership Approach	Setting Realistic Expectations / Targets	Good Communication between Home & School	Non-Confrontational, Respect Based Relationship	Clear Explanation of Rules

Table 3 – Desired Traits / Attributes of Teacher Working with Challenging Students

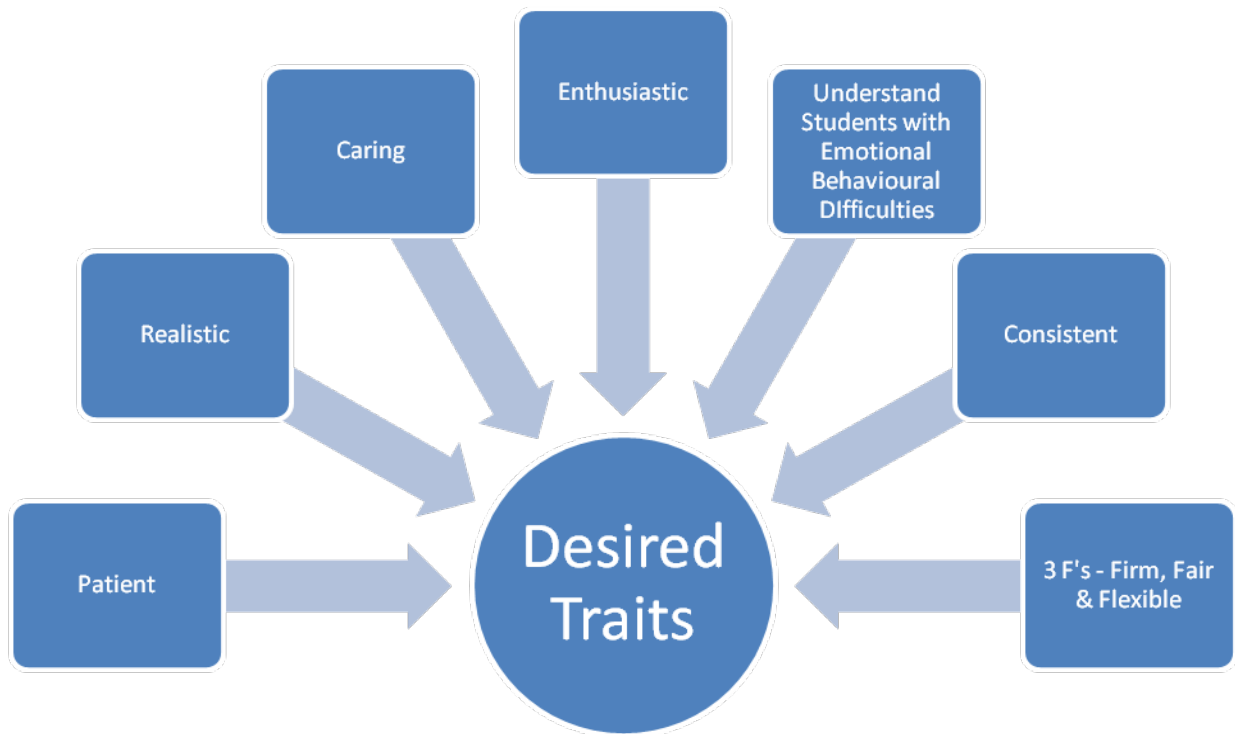


Table 4 – Supports in the School to deal with Students Requiring more Intensive Intervention

Home School Liaison Officer	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
School Completion Programme	Guidance Counsellor / School Counsellor
Mentoring System	Pastoral Care Team

Table 5 – Ways by which Subject Teachers can reduce the Incidence of Misbehaviour in the Classroom

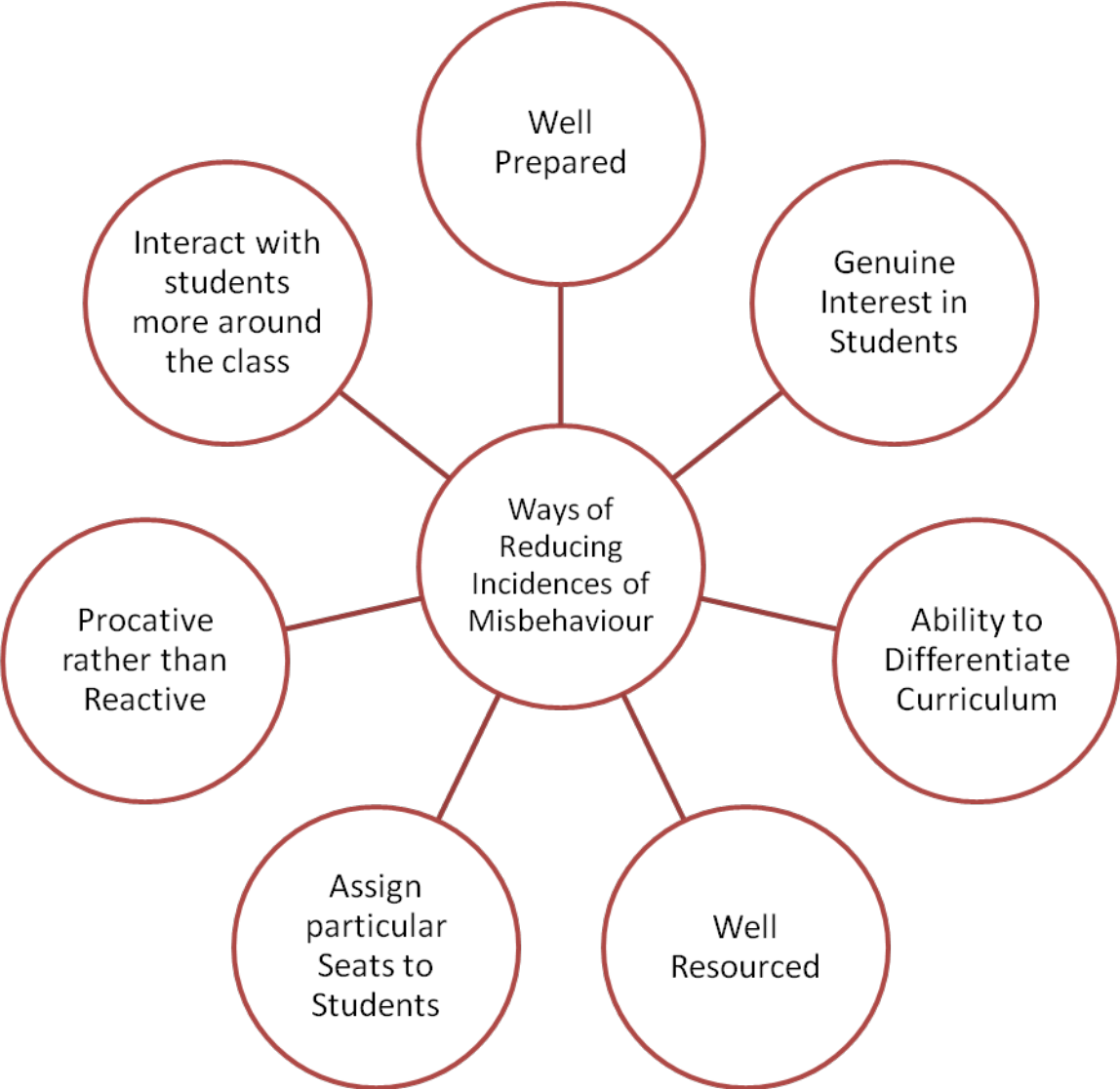


Table 6 – Advantages of this Positive Approach to Discipline

Happier Atmosphere
Better Relationship Pupil - Teacher
Less Confrontations
Reduction in Behaviour Related Incidents
Greater Staff Collaboration
Better Learning Environment in Classroom
More Critical Reflection by Teachers

Table 7 – Additional Supports that would help to Improve the Behaviour of these Disruptive Students

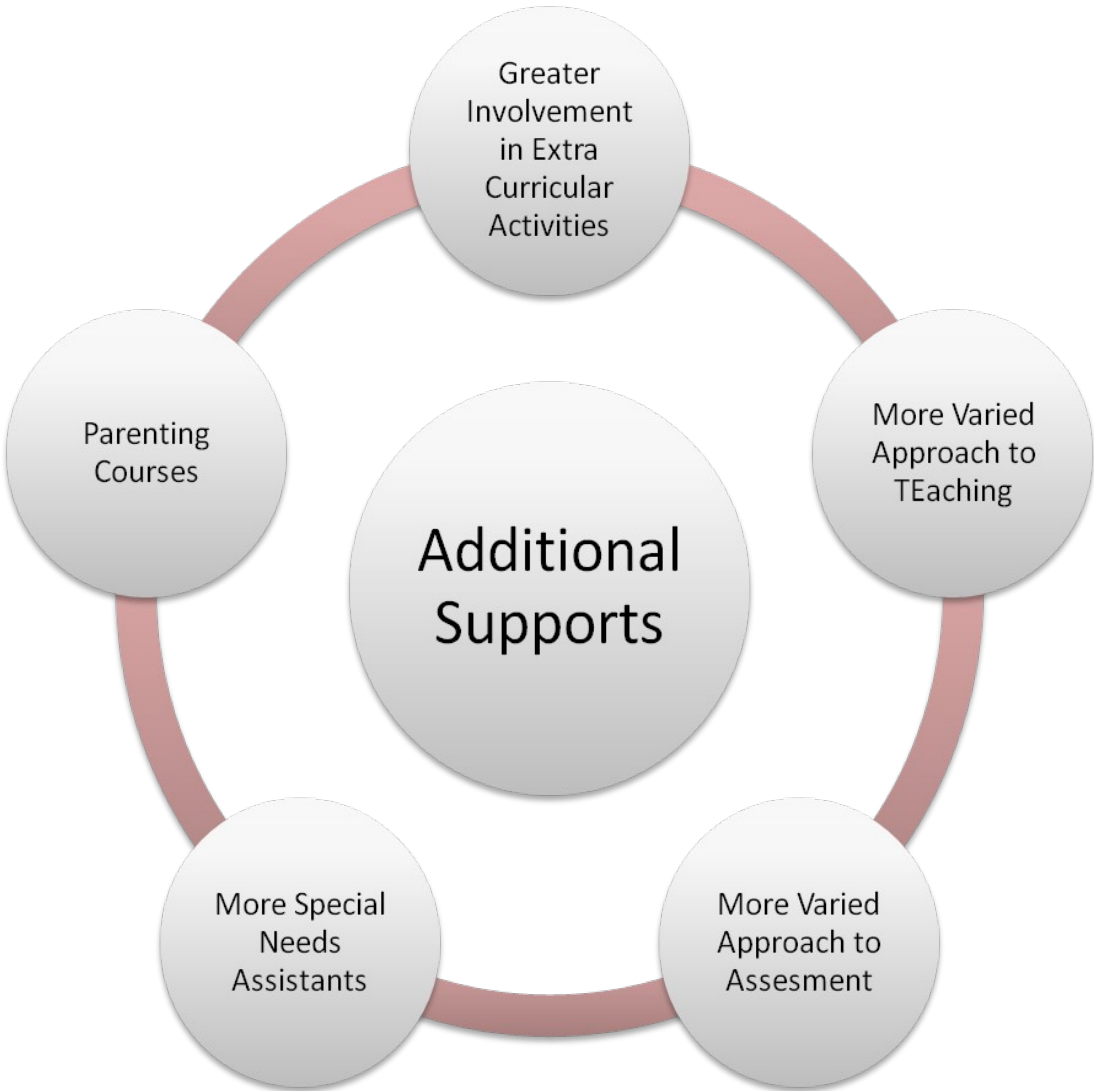


Table 8– Key Performance Indicators which are Monitored to Determine Effectiveness

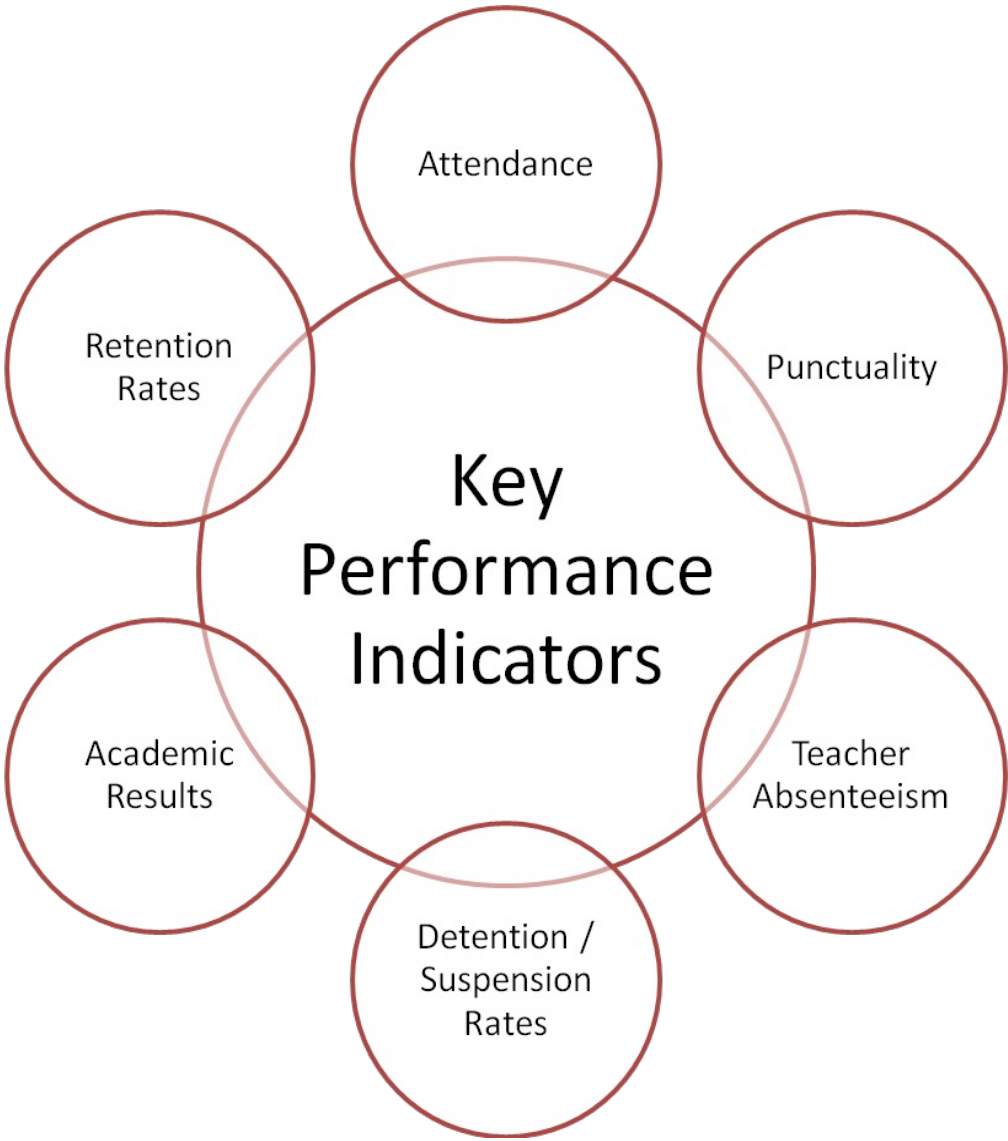


Table 9 – Areas where Teachers would Benefit from In-Service Training

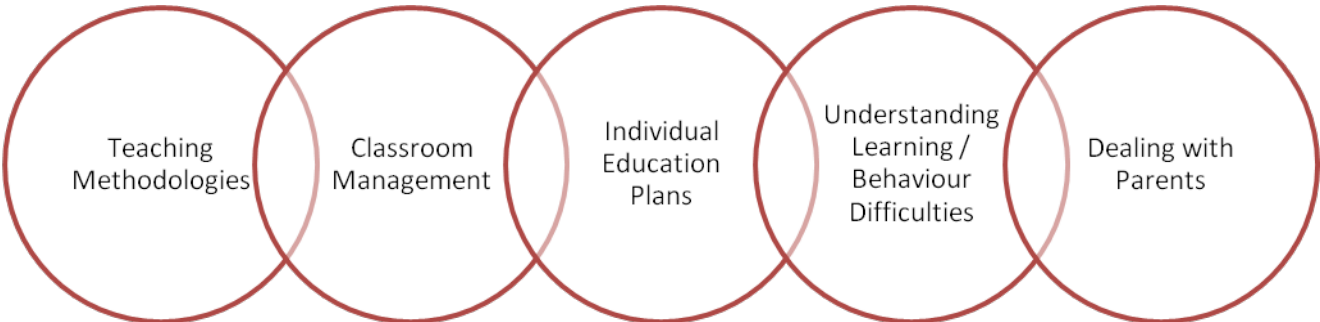


Table 10 – Data Gathered on Background Information on the Schools Approach to Behaviour Management

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
The school has a high level of disciplinary issues with follow-on suspensions & expulsions.	12.5%	37.5%	25%	25%	0%
All Staff are proactive in the implementation of the schools code of behaviour.	25%	25%	50%	0%	0%
Far too much time is spent by Senior Management dealing with disciplinary issues to the detriment of other school activities.	12.5%	62.5%	25%	0%	0%
In the past the school personnel would have adhered rigidly to the code of behaviour & consequently the disciplinary system was punitive in its approach.	12.5%	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	0%
Currently there is a flexible approach to the schools code of behaviour taking into consideration students with special needs.	12.5%	50%	37.5%	0%	0%
All staff are supportive & have a good understanding of students with emotional & behavioural difficulties.	12.5%	25%	62.5%	0%	0%
Staff appreciate & recognise the benefits in involving outside expertise so as to promote more positive behaviour in the school environment.	12.5%	75%	12.5%	0%	0%
The links between home & school for students who are persistently disruptive are poor & are difficult to improve.	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%
Teachers do not have the necessary skills / training to deal with students with social, emotional & behavioural difficulties.	0%	62.5%	25%	12.5%	0%
There is a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour are outside of the schools control eg. home issues, student issues.	37.5%	62.5%	0%	0%	0%
There is a belief amongst school staff that many of the contributing factors to student misbehaviour are due to in-school factors eg. large classes, unsuitable curriculum, teacher performance.	0%	25%	62.5%	12.5%	0%
The vast majority of disciplinary incidents are caused by a small number of students	62.5%	37.5%	0%	0%	0%
Many disciplinary related issues could be handled more effectively by using more appropriate classroom management techniques.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	12.5%	0%

Table 11 – Data Gathered around the Current Situation at the Schools

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
By taking a more positive / flexible approach to discipline it has resulted in a reduction in disciplinary related incidents with follow-on suspensions.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
School leadership determines greatly the impact of positive disciplinary related interventions.	62.5%	37.5%	0%	0%	0%
There is now a greater realisation that the school / teachers can do much to reduce the level of misbehaviour taking place.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Key members of staff now have a better understanding of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and can distinguish it more easily from routine misbehaviour.	25%	62.5%	12.5%	0%	0%
As a result of in-service training staff are more sympathetic and understanding of the students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.	0%	75%	25%	0%	0%
To ensure better outcomes for troublesome students active parental involvement is crucial.	87.5%	12.5%	0%	0%	0%
Regular planning, monitoring and evaluation of positive behavioural supports takes place to ensure that the desired outcome are being achieved.	12.5%	50%	25%	0%	12.5%
Along with this positive approach from school staff other agencies need to be involved to ensure that optimum progress is made.	12.5%	75%	12.5%	0%	0%
In the long term if this approach is maintained it should have the effect of improving attendance and examination results for the majority of the students.	25%	62.5%	12.5%	0%	0%
Lack of consistency is one of the main problems in that the code of behaviour is not implemented by all teachers in a regular manner.	12.5%	75%	12.5%	0%	0%

Table 12 – Additional Questions regarding Behaviour Management in the DEIS Schools interviewed

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Poor literacy & numeracy have been identified as the main factors contributing to unruly behaviour.	12.5%	50%	37.5%	0%	0%
The lack of suitable alternatives other than suspension for seriously disruptive students is a major problem faced by school administrators.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Some teachers adopt safe teaching styles which can result in boredom for students & an increase in the level of disruption.	50%	37.5%	12.5%	0%	0%
Second year is the time when it most likely that serious behavioural issues will surface.	50%	12.5%	25%	0%	12.5%
Currently in Ireland cherry picking of students is occurring resulting in certain schools having to take a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour.	87.5%	0%	0%	0%	12.5%
Schools cater for the majority of students very well but there are not enough resources in schools to deal with the seriously disruptive students.	62.5%	12.5%	25%	0%	0%
The resistance of certain staff to change with regard to the promotion of positive behaviour severely impacts on the effectiveness of the initiative.	50%	37.5%	12.5%	0%	0%
A multi agency approach involving trained professionals is the most appropriate manner to deal with students with serious behavioural problems.	25%	50%	25%	0%	0%
Students from lower socio economic backgrounds require more immediate rewards.	12.5%	62.5%	12.5%	0%	12.5%
Teachers are very negative in their interactions with these disruptive students & rarely praise them.	12.5%	25%	50%	12.5%	0%

