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Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Schools[1] in Britain – are all schools 'at risk'?

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[1] This paper draws on a forthcoming edited collection: **Hayden, C. and Martin, D. (eds.) (forthcoming, 2011)** ***Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Schools.*** **Basingstoke: Palgrave/MacMillan.**

Some questions to have in mind when reading this paper

Were young people better behaved in school in the past?
'Winchester [the public school] *was often hit by serious disturbances, one rising there in 1818 required the intervention of soldiers armed with fixed bayonets before order was restored'* (Tubbs, 1996, p.12).

Is breaking the law common?
'It is probably a minority of children who grow up without ever behaving in ways which may be contrary to the law' (HMSO, 1969, p.3).

Do we demonise children?
'It is crucial not to demonise children…. There are issues of behaviour that need to be addressed but the vast majority of children are as supportive, idealistic and inspirational as young people have ever been.'
(Sir Alan Steer, former head teacher and leader of the school disciplinary task force, 2005, p.1)

Do some schools need a police officer on the school site?
'Police were called to deal with violence in schools more than 7,000 times last year.....................teaching unions described the statistics as scaremongering and said schools were safe places. ....Fear of violence among teenagers has been exacerbated by numerous high-profile stabbings and similar gang-related crimes' (The Independent, 2008, paras. 1,5 & 6).

'Beat officers being assigned to secondary schools in Southwark... has led to an improvement in behaviour.....Police have been able to assist staff with truancy reduction work, support the on-site learning support unit and run specialist days on topics such as anti-bullying, anti-drugs and accidents and emergencies (Teachernet, 2010, paras. 1& 3).

Have standards of behaviour in schools improved in recent years?
'.....there is strong evidence from a range of sources that the overall standards of behaviour achieved by schools is good and has improved in recent years'
(Steer, 2009, p.4).

Is problematic behaviour in schools largely a question of 'discipline' and redressing the balance of power between teachers and children?
'*The greatest concern voiced by new teachers and a very common reason experienced teachers cite for leaving the profession is poor pupil behaviour. We know that a minority of pupils can cause serious disruption in the classroom. The number of serious physical assaults on teachers has risen. And poorly disciplined children cause misery for other pupils by bullying them and disrupting learning. It is vital that we restore the authority of teachers and head teachers. And it is crucial that we protect them from false allegations of excessive use of force or inappropriate contact. Unless we act more good people will leave the profession – without good discipline teachers cannot teach and pupils cannot learn'* (DfE, 2010a, p. 6).

Introduction

These opening quotes illustrate that contemporary concerns about the behaviour of children and young people are not new and that there are some very different perspectives about this. Steer (a former head teacher) reminds us that '*the vast majority*' of children are '*idealistic and inspirational*', whilst a government document in 1969 acknowledges that only '*a minority*' are likely to grow up '*without ever behaving in ways which may be contrary to the law*'. A moment's reflection on our own past may well confirm the latter observation. The most recent White Paper (DfE, 2010a) acknowledges that it is '*a minority*' who cause '*serious disruption in the classroom*'. This paper will try and make sense of all this; focusing on the behaviour of children and young people[2] in and around schools.

The paper covers three main themes:

A critical look at how, in late modernity, we have come to focus on schools in relation to crime prevention.

An overview of the evidence about the prevalence of different types of problematic behaviour, from young people, in and around schools.

An argument about the connection between the most serious behaviours; and, the maintenance of inequality through schooling.

The paper aims to raise questions about the way access to schooling is organised in Britain; arguing that the system is profoundly and damagingly unequal in a way that actively helps to create the social conditions many fear most. Inequality and its interaction with the school system is something about which there is agreement across the main political parties; it is the solutions to the situation that differ. As Gove (Secretary of State for Education) recently said:

> *'....we have one of the most unequal education systems in the world, one of the most stratified, segregated and unfair education systems of any developed nation'* (Gove, 2010, BBC interview, November 24th).

Inequality and unfairness matters to us all because it effects the way people behave and is associated with '*worse health, social conflict and violence*' (Reiner, 2007, p. 10).

The main focus of this paper is on the state education system, although it should be acknowledged at the outset that private education is a very important part of the segregation of children in Britain (which is one possible reading of the quote from Gove).

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[2] It is recognised that **adults** (some of them teachers, school staff, parents and carers) also act in highly problematic, abusive and criminal ways towards children, but this is not the focus of this paper.

Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Schools in Britain

You are likely to have different reactions to the title of this paper possibly dependent on personal (or professional) knowledge and experience, what newspapers and books you read, or what films you watch. Schools and related issues about the behaviour of children and young people tend to be a topic about which most people have an opinion, as well as personal experience. We all make everyday observations about the behaviour of young people we encounter; some of them may be on the way to, or from school. It would be useful for the reader to reflect for a moment on their own perception of young people's behaviour and the role of schools in this respect, and then review this at the end of this paper.

At the time of writing 'fairness' is a focus of a great deal of popular debate. This concept is of central importance in relation to understanding the pattern of access to schools in Britain and the processes set in motion by this. The paper argues that differential (and often unfair) access to schools in Britain is central to the way inequality is reproduced and entrenched; contributes to fear and misunderstanding and the process of 'othering'[3] which in turn helps to create insecurity and make society less safe. The creation of this fear and insecurity feeds into wider concerns about risk, that have been referred to as 'the risk society' [4]; in which all kinds of 'risks' have to be identified and 'managed'. The potentially anti-social or criminal behaviour of young people in and around schools is one such 'risk.'

As 'risk' is highlighted in contemporary society the security industry (and a range of commercial organisations) have responded with services and products. Some responses, such as 'stab proof blazers' clearly playing to the worst fears of parents (BBC, 2007), others are already commonplace. CCTV, keypad entry systems and so on are now generally taken for granted as necessary in schools. Yet these are relatively recent developments. Who and what this security is for is worthy of more consideration: is it primarily to protect children and staff, or property? And, from whom or what? Is security primarily focussed on those outside or those inside the school?

The initial use of CCTV in schools can be connected to high profile incidents (that might be referred to as a 'critical' incident'[5]) in the 1990s: such as the

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[3] **Othering:** is a way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of an 'other.' The 'other' is different in some readily identifiable way (see Young, 2003).

[4] **The risk society:** according to Giddens (1999) a risk society is '*a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk'* (p.3). Beck (1992) defines it as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself.

[5] **A critical incident:** is any event that is unexpected, acute, stressful and exceeds the normal coping capacities of individuals (See Flanagan, 1954).

murder of head teacher Philip Lawrence at the school gates in 1995 (when he intervened to protect one of his pupils from a knife attack from a 15 year old from another school) and the Dunblane 'massacre' in 1996 (in which 16 people, mostly primary aged children, were killed by a lone gunman). In other words the initial use of CCTV was *protection from outsiders,* rather than surveillance of insiders. One could view the current use of CCTV in schools with reference to Foucault's writings on the panopticon. The panoptican was Bentham's design for a prison (published in 1791) which used visibility as a trap, with the 'inmate' subject to the possibility of constant surveillance. Hope (2009) argues that there has been 'function creep' in the use of CCTV in schools; so that this initial use of *protection from* 'outsiders' has moved to a more routine surveillance device used to monitor and gather *evidence on* insiders (pupil behaviour). Hope's (2009) research found that 'disciplinary action' in schools is often dependent on the production of evidence and that CCTV is often used retrospectively to produce evidence; sometimes as proof of behaviour to parents. Whether this use of CCTV simply replaces the informal controls and guardianship previously provided by adults and children in schools, or is a more insidious and problematic development is highly debatable. It could also be argued that the use of CCTV in schools is evidence of the 'morality of low expectation' (Furedi, 1997) in which problematic behaviour is expected and is responded to by situational control, rather than through the problem solving responses and actions of adults and children in schools.

Since the late 1990s many projects based in and around schools have used the concept of 'risk' in a variety of ways (as in the 'risk' of educational 'failure'), but often in relation to some form of crime prevention work: a process that has been referred to as the 'criminalisation of social policy'. This move has been facilitated by a number of other changes that have occurred in Western societies since the late 1990s (Rodger , 2008). These changes have included the subordination of social policy (and its focus on welfare, social injustice and poverty) to the criminal justice system and a focus on controlling 'anti-social' and criminal behaviour. There has been a blurring of professional boundaries and paradigms across social welfare, education and criminal justice; with an increase in 'partnership' working, inter-professional and multi-professional working and so on. These changes have made their incursions into schools in a variety of guises: Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs)[6]; behaviour support teams and so on. The connection to crime prevention with SSPs is very clear. The first SSPs in 2002 developed in crime 'hot spots' around some inner city schools and at a time when there was heightened concern about street crime.

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[6] **Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs).** An SSP is a formal agreement between a school or partnership of schools and police to work together in order to keep young people safe, reduce crime and the fear of crime and improve behaviour in schools and their communities. This will involve a police officer or police community support officer regularly working at a school or across a number of schools on a full time or part time basis.
See: http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/sspg/definition/ [downloaded 8.11.10]

Problem behaviours and the criminalisation of social policy

We will now briefly consider the place and relative importance of crime and anti-social behaviour, in relation to the variety of problem behaviours in and around schools. A wide range of problematic behaviours are likely to be found in any school. Not everyone wants to be in school, or at least not for all of the activities on offer. The opportunities for conflict are numerous, as are the sources of stress. Children and young people have relatively little control over how they spend a large proportion of their day throughout their childhood. They have to learn how to get on with others (often in large groups) under the close supervision of adults who are greatly out-numbered by young people. Teachers in state schools (93% of all schools) are heavily monitored by the state; so this combination of being out-numbered as well as heavily monitored can lead to a focus on maintaining order. Critical incidents that occur in a school affect the whole school community; so a single event can become a more general perception about what is happening in and around schools.

Figure 1 illustrates some of the key aspects of problematic behaviour in schools. Most of this behaviour is neither 'anti-social' nor 'criminal'. Some of these behaviours can overlap such as 'mental health' and 'disaffection'; 'special educational need' and 'testing the boundaries'. In other words understanding young people's behaviour in schools is not straight-forward. Furthermore there is ample evidence that individual teachers, as well as schools, have an influence on how children behave (and how well their behaviour is understood). Moreover, much of the focus is on what constitutes a problem *for adults*; as in behaviour that makes the teaching and other adult roles in schools more difficult.

Figure 1: The range of problem behaviours

Naughtiness and disruption – talking out of turn, not responding to teacher's instructions

Testing the boundaries/ adolescent behaviour - challenging adult authority

Special educational needs – such as impulsivity and attention problems

Distressed behaviour – indicative of abuse or neglect, mental health and family problems

Disaffected behaviour *– poor attendance, more serious disruptive behaviour*

Bullying and other forms of ***aggression and violence*** – very varied eg cyber-bullying, physical and psychological bullying; playground fights, assaults and 'gang' or group related aggression and violence. ***Much of this can also be seen as 'anti-social behaviour'***

Criminal behaviour – behaviour that breaks the criminal law

General 'naughtiness' or 'testing the boundaries' is to be expected in any group of children and young people. Teacher surveys and enquiries show that it is these behaviours that are most frequent and wearing for classroom teachers (DES/WO, 1989; Steer, 2005, 2009). Special educational need

(SEN) affects around 1in 5 children at some point during their schooling. Although most SEN is not SEBD (Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties); children having trouble with any aspect of their learning can behave in a problematic way. Identifying distressed behaviour (and its myriad causes) is another important consideration in relation to understanding behaviour that can pose a problem for adults in schools. Disaffected behaviour is equally complex: lack of affection for school can arise because of SEN, bullying, home or community based problems, as well as a range of other specific issues such as particular relationships (with teachers, or other young people). Non-attendance is a common indicator of disaffection, which in turn is associated with an increased likelihood of offending behaviour. Yet non—attendance can also be due to school phobia or because the young person is a young carer (amongst other reasons).

When it comes to conceptualising bullying, aggressive and violent behaviour it is clearer that such behaviour could be seen as 'anti-social' and might sometimes be serious enough to be criminal. Millie and Moore (forthcoming) consider the similarities and differences between bullying and anti-social behaviour, noting that repetition and cumulative effect are generally agreed to be characteristic of both. It has also been argued that some forms of bullying could be seen as a form of 'hate crime' (Hall and Hayden, 2007). Furniss (2000) contends that some forms of more serious bullying are criminal offences and should be seen as such. Behaviour that breaks the law is clearly criminal. However, language is important here – given that a playground fight might be referred to as an 'assault' and minor 'theft' is not uncommon in schools. That is adults in schools can (and do) exercise choice and discretion about how they view a particular behaviour or incident. Figure 2 locates 'problem behaviour' in relation to anti-social and criminal behaviour. Notice how bullying behaviour appears in all four quarters of the diagram as do other behaviours). The point being made is that legally and practically schools have a great deal of power over how they use their discretion in how they label and respond to young people's behaviour.

Criminal behaviour can be more easily defined than anti-social behaviour, as behaviour that is against the law. Although it is well known that adult discretion means that many minor 'offences' are ignored or not treated as criminal, both by the police and other adults. Anti-social behaviour is not necessarily against the law. Generally both terms would be fairly sparingly used by people working in schools. Figure 2 illustrates some of the complexities of the language we use in relation to children's behaviour in schools, linking this to debates about the criminalisation of social policy. Figure 2 shows how the boundaries are blurring between some problem behaviours (that break social norms or rules) and behaviours that are increasingly viewed as 'anti-social' and sometimes 'criminal'. There is an additional blurring of boundaries between anti-social behaviour (which does not necessarily break the criminal law) and criminal behaviour, which does.

Figure 2: Problem, Anti-Social and Criminal Behaviour

<table>
<tr><th>Problem Behaviour</th><td rowspan="3">B
O
U
N
D
A
R
I
E
S</td><th>Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Breaks social norms or rules</td><td>Breaks more serious social norms or rules and often (but not always) involves physical threat or contact</td></tr>
<tr><td>Behaviour that is described by teachers as ‘disruptive’, ‘challenging’, ‘disaffected’, ‘inappropriate’ or ‘unacceptable’

Some forms of bullying (non-physical)
Some forms of non-attendance
Offensive language</td><td>Behaviour that is described by teachers as ‘anti-social’, ‘violent’ or ‘threatening’; ASB (like bullying) tends to be repeated and cumulative

Bullying that involves threats of, or actual violence/physical contact
Pushing, touching, unwanted physical contact
Offensive language (with threats of violence)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">BOUNDARIES BLURRING

The criminalisation of social policy?</td></tr>
<tr><th>ASB and Criminal Behaviour</th><td rowspan="3">B
L
U
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R
I
N
G</td><th>Criminal Behaviour</th></tr>
<tr><td>ASB often (but not always) breaks the law – often referred to as ‘delinquent’ in the past</td><td>Breaks the law</td></tr>
<tr><td>Behaviour that is threatening to the sense of security, physical and mental health of others; some behaviour is repeated and cumulative

Serious bullying-involving social exclusion and humiliation
Theft, robbery and ‘break-ins’
Vandalism and criminal damage
Weapons carrying (for ‘protection’)</td><td>Behaviour that is seriously threatening to the sense of security, physical and mental health of others; some behaviour is repeated and cumulative

Assault and other specific crimes like ABH
Some forms of bullying as ‘hate crime’
Theft, robbery and ‘break-ins’
Vandalism and criminal damage
Weapons carrying (for ‘threats’ or ‘attack’)</td></tr>
</table>

The prevalence of problem and offending behaviours in schools

A number of disciplines have an interest in problem and offending behaviours. We will focus here primarily on the work of educationalists and criminologists. These two disciplines have a different focus and language when talking about young people in schools. For educationalists the primary focus is schools as a site of teaching and learning. Problematic behaviour is often seen as related either to inappropriate teaching strategies, special educational need or behaviour which is in effect bringing problems into school that originate in the home or community. Surveys of teachers generally show that it is the low-level disruption to lessons, answering back and non-compliance to teacher requests that are the everyday problem behaviours faced (DES/WO, 1989; Gill and Hearnshaw, 1997; Neill 2002; Wright and Keetley, 2003; Neill, 2008). Educational researchers have also focussed on particular issues that relate to behaviour in school; such as truancy (Reid, 2003), exclusion (Hayden, 1997) and bullying (Smith, 2002). For criminologists the focus is on the more extreme end of behaviours; often schools become data gathering sites for

studies about offending and victimisation (Smith and McVie, 2003). The overlap between problematic behaviour in school and the likelihood of offending behaviour is well established, as are the complex links between offending and victimisation (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Roe and Ashe, 2008; YJB, 2009a&b). However, some surveys have mixed up behaviours that are clearly against the law, with behaviours (such as bulling) that may not be. Furthermore some surveys do not always make clear *where* the offending behaviour took place.

Despite the lack of good quality evidence about any trends in highly problematic and criminal behaviour in and around the school site, it is common for teaching unions and the media to provide us with stories and anecdotes that fuel the perception of an increasing problem. These concerns are part of the wider discourse about 'risk' and 'safety' and the anxieties adults project on to children and schools. The particular reference to 'schools' or 'pupils' within the latter discourse is sometimes a demographic description or grouping; rather than an accurate reference to the location and nature of the problem behaviour, thus adding to generalised concerns about young

Figure 3: Problem behaviour in schools - reported by teachers

Behaviour (frequency experienced by TEACHERS)	**Year** 2001	2008
Disruption to lesson	%	%
Yearly	3.1	5.2
Termly	5.2	6.2
Monthly	12.5	8.5
Weekly	**68.9**	**68.5**
Behaviour not reported	10.3	11.6
Offensive language	%	%
Yearly	4.0	5.2
Termly	6.7	6.4
Monthly	13.8	10.4
Weekly	**60.3**	**59.8**
Behaviour not reported	*15.1*	*18.2*
Pushing/touching of the teacher/other unwanted physical contact	%	%
Yearly	10.9	8.8
Termly	8.2	6.3
Monthly	8.9	6.6
Weekly	**8.9**	**11.6**
Behaviour not reported	*63.1*	*66.7*
Weapons brought into school	%	%
Yearly	20.5	12.6
Termly	9.2	4.6
Monthly	2.5	3.3
Weekly	**0.5**	**1.9**
Behaviour not reported	67.5	77.5

(Adapted from Neill, 2008, Appendix 2, pp.13-17)

people and schools. Furthermore this focus on the school environment can fail to acknowledge places where children are more 'at risk' and feel less safe. Research illustrates that young people tend to feel safer in school than in the community (Hayden and Martin, forthcoming).

There is a fair amount of data on teacher perceptions of pupil behaviour, both through surveys and enquiries (most recently the Steer Committee, 2009). Neill (2002, 2008) has conducted a national survey of NUT (National Union of Teachers) members twice in the last decade (during 2001 and 2008). Interestingly, in terms of his use of terminology, the first survey referred to 'unacceptable behaviour', the second survey refers to 'disruptive behaviour'. Figure 3 summarises selected aspects of these surveys. Neill found that the overall pattern of behaviour had not changed much over this time period: some behaviours were common and experienced by around two-thirds of teachers over a one year period (disruption to a lesson and offensive language). The reverse was true for more extreme behaviours (unwanted physical contact, weapons brought into school): two-thirds, or more, of teachers had not experienced this. However, there was a small increase in the frequency of these behaviours, with a minority of teachers experiencing more severe problems in 2008.

National surveys of Scottish teachers' experiences of pupil behaviour have been conducted since 1990. Munn *et al* (2007, 2009) have examined a range of types of behaviours from general disruption and talking out of turn, to aggression. Between 1990 and 2004 they found that an increasing proportion of teachers and head teachers reported serious indiscipline in their schools (Munn *et al,* 2007, p.64). By 2009 the picture appeared to have changed for the better.

Figure 4: Staff perceptions of the overall impact of serious indiscipline/pupil violence (Scotland, 2009)

Seriousness of impact Five Point Scale	**Secondary School Teachers (%) (N=1,427)**	**Secondary School Heads (%) (N=237)**	**Secondary Support Staff (%) (N=633)**
Very serious 1	8	1	9
2	16	5	15
3	25	16	33
4	30	45	24
Not at all serious 5	21	32	19

(Source: adapted from Munn *et al*, 2009, p.59)

Figure 4 illustrates that a minority of staff rated the impact of serious indiscipline/pupil violence on the running of their school as 'very serious' in their school (teachers 8%, head teachers 1% and support staff 9%). Many staff rated the impact of these behaviours as 'not at all serious' (teachers 21%, head teachers 32% and support staff 19%). However, we should not lose sight of *the majority* of staff who indicate through their responses that these behaviours do have some impact in most schools. We can also see

from this survey that head teachers tended to be more positive than other teachers and support staff.

The research from Munn *et al* (2009) illustrates how relatively rare physically aggressive and violent behaviour is towards teachers, although this behaviour was more frequently witnessed between pupils:

> *'Three out of 557 (<1%) primary and four out of 1,460 (<1%) secondary teachers reported experiencing physical violence towards them around the school at least once in the last full teaching week. Six primary out of 558 (<1%) and 39 out of 1460 secondary teachers (3%) reported physical aggression towards them around the school at least once in the last full teaching week. Many more teachers and head teachers in both sectors report meeting pupil-to pupil physical violence and aggression around the school'* (p.vii).

A strong focus in educational research has been self report surveys of young people's experiences of bullying. Educationalists don't generally classify bullying as 'offending' behaviour, although criminologists sometimes do. According to Smith (2002, pp.117-18) and based on the pioneering work of Olweus (1993) '*bullying is a subset of aggressive behaviours, characterised by repetition and power imbalance*'. Bullying takes various forms – physical, verbal, social exclusion and indirect forms such as spreading rumours. Technology is helping to increase the forms bullying might take: for example 'cyber- bullying', where young people use text messages from mobile phones and the internet to bully others (DCSF, 2007a). Attacks on young people are sometimes filmed, again using mobile phones; these events may then be posted on the internet (known as 'happy slapping'). The MORI (YJB, 2009&b) surveys show the high prevalence of threatening messages sent by voicemail or text (22%) and 'happy slapping' (16%) by mainstream pupils. Overall, Smith and Myron-Wilson (1998, p.406) estimate that: '*around 1 in 5 children are involved in bully-victim problems*' in the UK, with similar incidences reported in other countries. As already noted, Furniss (2000) discusses whether some forms of bullying should be considered to be a crime, rather than as a school disciplinary matter.

Self-report surveys conducted with school pupils (for the Youth Justice Board and Home Office) have provided us with a picture of young people's overall involvement in criminal activity (YJB/MORI, 2000-2009; Roe and Ashe, 2008). These surveys show that around a quarter of young people admit to offending behaviour over a one year period. However, there is relatively little research explicitly focusing specifically on criminal acts committed *on the school site*, presumably because of the extreme sensitivity of such data and the difficulties of gaining access to undertake the research. Rowe and Ashe (2008) report that 7% of 10-17 year olds admit to an act of theft on the school site in a year; but there is no further context provided to this. Boxford's (2006) research provides a lot more context and analysis. His self-report study of a sample of pupils from 20 state secondary schools (3,103 respondents) in Cardiff (South Wales) found that a fifth (20.3%) of all pupils reported involvement in one of

five categories of offence *on the school site* in a one year period (Boxford, 2006).

Figure 5: Offending on the school site (over a one year period)

Offence	All (boys and girls)	Boys only	Girls only
Assault	13.2%	18.8%	7.7%
Vandalism	6.7%	8.3%	5.2%
Theft	6.0%	7.7%	4.2%
Robbery	0.7%	1.1%	0.4%
Break-in	0.7%	0.8%	0.1%
Any offence*	20.3%	26.9%	13.6%

(Adapted from Boxford, 2006, p.71) *some have committed > 1 type of offence

Figure 5 illustrates the differences in prevalence of offending behaviours between boys and girls. This study reports varying levels of impact on offending behaviour in relation to individual and lifestyle factors, with school context exercising a different level of relative protection in relation to these factors. The study confirms the importance of *school climate* (defined as encompassing school ethos, respect for authority and parental school interest) and adds to current understanding in the finding that *pupil relations* (defined as based on pupils' social capital and school disorder) also have significant associations with pupils' involvement in crime *in schools*. This sort of study is important in a number of ways: it illustrates the high level of offending that may be occurring in schools; it adds to the debate about the extent to which schools (in combination with other agencies) can address these issues and it reminds us that some of the acts dealt with as a within-school disciplinary issue could be treated as a criminal offence. Indeed DCSF/ACPO (2007) guidance allows for incidents on school property, that are in law a crime, to remain within school disciplinary processes – unless the child or parent/guardian asks for the incident to be recorded as a crime or the crime is deemed more serious (in Millard and Flatley, 2010).

Although it is common for criminologists to focus on offending behaviour some surveys focus on victimisation. During 2009, for the first time, the British Crime Survey included a sample of 3,661 children aged 10-15 years. This survey takes a more complex view of victimisation. Figure 6 illustrates how the rate of victimisation varies according to the conception or definition of

Figure 6: Levels of victimisation from personal crime – different conceptions

Different conceptions	% risk of being a victim	Number of crimes
'All in law'	23.8%	2,153,000
'Norms based'[7]	13.5%	1,055,000
'All in law outside school'	9.3%	643,000
'Victim perceived'	6.0%	404,000

(Source: Millard and Flatley, 2010, pp.16-17)

[7] **Norms based:** whether or not children thought an incident was serious enough to be considered a crime, based on an explicit set of normative rules (developed with children) that excluded relatively minor incidents.

victimisation used. Interestingly the lowest rate of victimisation (6.0%) relates to whether the victim perceived the incident as a crime.

The more recent MORI surveys (YJB, 2009a&b) have also focussed on the location of victimisations and school age children. Figure 7 illustrates the location of victimisation, for those who have experienced various types of victimisation. This shows that some types of victimisations (especially bullying, but also phone theft) are happening in schools, more than elsewhere. A notable exception to this pattern is threats with a knife or gun, which are much more likely to happen outside school.

Figure 7: Sites of victimisation – schools and elsewhere **(over a one year period)**

Victimisation **Number and % experiencing**	**Where victimisation happened** **(some were victimised in more than one place, eg bullied in school and elsewhere)**			
	At School	**Travelling to and from school**	**Where yp lives**	**Elsewhere**
Bullied (n= 1,100)* **23%**	76%	20%	20%	14%
Belongings damages/destroyed (n= 625) **13%**	39%	8%	31%	18%
Physical attack (n=851) **18%**	37%	17%	38%	22%
Mobile stolen (n=492) **10%**	37%	7%	26%	19%
Threatened with a knife/gun (n=295) **6%**	9%	6%	42%	34%

*n = number experiencing this victimisation, from a total of 4,750 pupils aged 11-16 in 194 schools in England and Wales (Adapted from YJB, 2009a, p.43). For example, o*f those bullied (1,100 or 23% of the whole sample):* 76% had experienced bullying at school; 20% travelling to and from school; 20% where they lived; 14% elsewhere. That is some young people had experienced bullying in more than one place.

A theme that has run through several of the figures already presented in this paper is that of 'weapons' and it is to this issue and its connection to 'gangs' that the paper now turns. 'Weapons' carrying, 'gang' related activity and school children, has received some high profile coverage in the media in recent years, not least because of very public events like the fatal stabbing, of 15-year-old Sofyen Belamouadden, during rush hour in Victoria Underground station in London, in March 2010. The attack involved a group of young people, some of whom were reported to be wearing school uniforms. In July 2010, 15-year-old Zac Olumegbon was stabbed in what has been described as a 'planned attack by a rival gang'. This happened at around 9am on his way to a school for young people with SEBD in South London. These events are relatively rare[8] but highly emotive and receive a great deal of media coverage.

There has been research evidence and debate about weapons carrying and 'gang' related activity amongst young people for some time in criminology. The connection with schools is often in the background in much of this

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[8] Zac was the 13th teenager killed in London (by July 2nd , 2010) and the 9th to die in a stabbing. 2009: 14 teenagers were murdered in London, 10 of them stabbed and one shot. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/jul/02/west-norwood-school-stabbing [accessed 8.7.2010.

research, but highly relevant when you think about how young people of school age spend their time. In particular the potential effects of group behaviour and allegiance associated with schools can overlap with other allegiances to do with specific postcodes, housing estates and so on. There are huge problems in getting valid and reliable data about these issues. However, the evidence that does exist suggests that it is a problem that is more concentrated in schools in the most adverse circumstances. It is both part of and adds to the challenges of working and achieving in those environments. At the same time, it is worthy of note that work by the author (Hayden, 2008) showed that all 14 secondary schools in a provincial city had young people who admitted to having carried an item as a weapon in a one year period. This study included a girls school. 'Protection' was the most common reason for carrying an item as a weapon.

Guidance about 'screening and searching pupils for weapons' (DCSF, 2007b) as well as responding to 'gangs and group offending' in the school context has been issued to schools (DCSF, 2008). Commenting on this guidance, a spokesperson for the National Union of Teachers (NUT) emphasises their belief that problems are concentrated in a minority of schools:

> '*The Government's guidance on gangs is a compilation of good sense and practical advice. Our evidence shows that there are a minority of schools which face increasing difficulties from weapons brought on to school premises. These schools need all the support they can get'*
> (NUT, 2008, para 1).

Teachers and academics have also warned about these issues being overplayed, indeed '*sensationalised to absurdity'* (Hallsworth and Young, 2004, p.12). Specifically in the school context, the possibility has been highlighted that ill-thought through interventions may backfire and that some interventions can unintentionally glamorize violence (Richardson, 2008).

Figure 8 illustrates a wide range of estimates on weapons carrying by young people in Britain. The problem of understanding and interpreting these estimates is illustrated by this range, alerting us to the need to look carefully at *how, where* and *with whom* particular surveys are carried out; whether they are nationally representative and what specific questions are asked. It should also be noted that the more recent MORI surveys (YJB, 2009 a&b) show that one in five young people were not prepared to answer this question; this is a large proportion that clearly affects the accuracy of estimated prevalence. Furthermore there is always the possibility that some young people may chose to reinvent themselves in the way they complete a survey. On the other hand, the prevalence data from teachers is probably the most alarming as it might be assumed that they are less likely to be overestimates, at least of teacher experience. However, several teachers (or even all) teachers in a school may be referring to one particularly high profile incident. That said, it is clear that weapons are carried sometimes in the school environment (however infrequently); so it is reasonable to conclude that there are no grounds for complacency in relation to responding to this issue in schools.

Disputes about terminology as well as sensitivity about the issues are another part of the reason why it is difficult to get accurate and meaningful prevalence data about weapons-carrying and gangs in (or out) of schools. For example, some surveys have asked questions about the *lifetime prevalence* of weapons

Figure 8: Weapons carrying and school age young people

Authors	Area/sample size	Respondents	Prevalence
Gill & Hearnshaw (1997)	Random national sample in England: 3,986 schools	Secondary school teachers	Schools: 12.1% had weapons carried by pupils, on school site in the last year
McKeganey & Norris (2000)	Scotland: 3,121 pupils across 20 schools	Secondary school pupils	Pupils *who had ever (in their lives)* carried a weapon, *anywhere (ie either in or outside school)*: Males: 34.1% Females: 8.6%
CtC (2005)	Inner London schools: 11,400 pupils	Secondary school pupils	Pupils in the last 12 months, carried a weapon *anywhere*: Knife carrying, *anywhere*: 10% Gun carrying, anywhere: 6% Other weapon, anywhere: 7%
Neill (2008)	13 local authorities in England and Wales: 1,500 teachers	School teachers	Teachers during the last year, *witnessed* pupil with an offensive weapon: 22.5% *(of whom 5.2% did so monthly or weekly)*
Hayden (2008)	One provincial city in England: 1,426 pupils (aged 14-15) 14 schools	Secondary school pupils	Pupils in the last 12 months - carried *in school*: Knife: 3.4% Gun: 2.0% Other weapon: 4.8%
YJB (2009a*) *See also 2009b for evidence about excluded yps	England and Wales: 4,750 pupils (aged 11-16) 194 schools	Secondary school pupils	Pupils in the last year - carried *anywhere*: Penknife: 17% Other knife: 13% BB Gun: 15% Airgun: 5% Firearm:2% Other gun:3% None: 47% Not stated: 21%

-carrying (McKeganey and Norris, 2000); others ask *what a school as a whole has experienced* (Gill and Hearnshaw, 1997); some surveys focus on *what teachers have witnessed* (Neill, 2008); whereas with young people it is

common to ask *what they themselves have done or experienced* in the last twelve months (or a year).

As already noted, Neill's (2001, 2008) surveys show an increasing polarisation between schools in their experiences of highly problematic behaviour. Whilst the majority of schools show no increase in the presence of weapons or problem behaviour, it is reported that these issues appear to be getting worse in a minority of schools that are also in poor socio-economic circumstances. Other work by Neill (2005) on London schools found that the proportion of young people taking free school meals was the strongest indicator of willingness to carry weapons. The proportion of young people taking free school meals is often used as a proxy indicator for low income in school based research (Hobbs and Vignoles, 2007). Overall this evidence accords with wider debates about the pattern of social harms and inequality in Britain (Reiner, 2007).

Figure 9: Prevalence – 'gangs' or 'delinquent youth groups'

Authors	Area/sample size	Respondents	Prevalence
Smith and Bradshaw (2005)	Scotland, Edinburgh. Secondary pupils starting school in 1998 (The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime)	4,300 school pupils	Self nomination only: 21% (13 yr olds) Using identifiers*: 3.3% (13 year olds)
Klein *et al* (2006)	United States, 13-15 year olds in 11 cities	5,935 school pupils	Using identifiers*: 8% (13-15 yr olds)
Sharp, Aldridge and Medina (2006)	England and Wales, 10-19 year olds (from the OCJS)	3,827 young people (not all still at school)	6% (10-19 yr olds) 12% (14-15 yr olds) 9% (16-17 yr olds)
Hayden (2008)	One provincial city in England, 14-15 year olds, 14 schools	1,426 school pupils	Self nomination only: 23 % (14-15 yr olds) Using identifiers*: 3.9% (14-15 yr olds)

Note: 'identifiers*' include aspects of behaviour and lifestyle, such as a 'gang' having a name, territory, engaging in illegal activity as a group and so on (see overleaf, Sharp *et al*, 2006).

Although some academic research uses the term 'gang', carefully qualified, recent Home Office and Youth Justice Board (YJB) research uses different terminology and not all research sets out to provide an estimate of prevalence. YJB (2007) research uses the term 'troublesome youth group', whilst the Home Office uses the term 'delinquent youth group' (Sharp, Aldridge and Medina, 2006). Both pieces of research appear to want things both ways: to distance themselves from using the word 'gang', yet both reports also conclude that there are 'gangs.' So, for example, practitioners (interviewed as part of research funded by the YJB) were said to be concerned by what they saw as the indiscriminate use of the term 'gang'. Nevertheless, the same research reports that practitioners and young men involved in group offending did agree about the nature of 'real gangs' (as opposed to young people who offend in groups). 'Real gangs' were involved in more serious types of behaviour:

> '*Real gangs were distinguished by transgressing certain norms…particularly regarding the use of unacceptable levels of violence* '(YJB, 2007, p.9).

The YJB (2007) research concluded that 'real gangs' are more likely to involve young adults than teenagers. Group offending by young people was thought to be a wider phenomenon, but did not necessitate being part of a gang.

The Home Office (Sharp, Aldridge and Medina, 2006, p.v) research defines 'delinquent youth groups' in the following way:

- Young people who spend time in groups of three or more (including themselves)
- The group spend a lot of time in public places
- The group has existed for three months or more
- The group has engaged in delinquent or criminal behaviour together in the last 12 months
- The group has at least one structural feature (either a name, an area, a leader, or rules)

The above *identifiers* (as used in estimates in Figure 9) are based on the work of Klein *et al*, 2006, an American research group on youth gangs, who have also conducted research in Europe. In Britain, Sharp *et al (*2006, p.v) found that being in a 'delinquent youth group' is associated with: having friends in trouble with the police; having run away from home; commitment to deviant peers; having been expelled or suspended from school; and, being drunk on a frequent basis. This research also illustrates the different rates of prevalence according to age group, with 14-15 year olds having the highest rate of prevalence for being part of a delinquent youth group.

Gordon (2000) presents a more useful distinction between various forms of youth group, youth movement, 'wanna-bes', street gangs and organised criminals. A 'street gang' is defined as:

> *'Groups of young people, mainly young adults, who band together to form a semi-structured organisation, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behaviour or organised violence against rival street gangs*' (p.48).

'Wanna-be groups' are defined as:

> *'….young people who band together in a loosely structured group to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths. A wanna-be group will be highly visible and its members will openly acknowledge their 'gang' involvement because they want to be seen by others as gang members'* (p.48-49).

In Gordon's research both of the above groups self identified as being part of a 'gang'. Pitts (2008) concludes that in trying to agree the definition of a gang we need to take into account the particular locality and situation we are researching. Further he notes that '*gangs range from the relatively innocuous to the highly dangerous*' (p.20) and that we need to be able to distinguish between these different kinds of gang. Further he points up the lack of reference to 'conflict' as a central issue and situation that binds 'gangs' together. Protection from and responses to violence are central features of neighbourhoods where 'gangs' are likely to flourish.

In various ways this paper has now referred to the evidence that major behavioural and safety problems are concentrated in particular schools, localities or neighbourhoods. In Britain (as elsewhere in the world) the biggest problems with 'gangs' and weapons tend to be concentrated in the disadvantaged communities, which need the possibilities that education might provide most.

Education: a route out of poverty?

Education has been the traditional route out of poverty, and is also a well known protective factor against offending. These are major reasons for any government to be interested in enhancing educational opportunity. *The Equalities Review* (2007) looked at the longer view in considering the pattern of changes in Britain since the Welfare State was established in 1947. This Review was wide ranging and focussed not only on the existing patterns of inequality and discrimination, but also the challenges posed by demographic changes and globalised labour markets. This government initiated review acknowledges that by the mid 1990s the UK was second only to the United States for income inequality, with the very richest people increasing their relative share to date:

> '*Today's top Chief Executives are paid 100 times as much as the average worker: ten years ago their earnings were only 40 times higher. These trends have been paralleled by a widening gap in wealth inequality'* (p.32).

The review argues that there is '*a uniquely destructive class of equality gap*' in the UK (p.47); one of which relates to education:

> *'People with low levels of educational achievement can expect to be less employable, therefore poorer, therefore less healthy and probably less likely to participate in civic activity. The kinds of people who are less likely to be employable are also more likely to be involved in crime, to have shorter life-spans and to have less fulfilling family lives'* (p.48).

The Review also notes the different patterns of achievement in relation to ethnicity in the UK, concluding that:

> *'Though class background is still the strongest indicator of educational attainment, ethnicity can have a substantial impact. That is to say,*

groups of pupils of different ethnicities may do better or worse even if they have the same economic status' (p.52).

Figure 10, based on data from the Youth Cohort Study (DfE, 2010b) illustrates some of these patterns.

Figure 10: Education, employment and status at age 18

Main activity at the age of 18	**Gender**	**Ethnicity**	**Free School Meals (In year 11, age 16)**
In full-time education (All = 45%)	Men: 42% Women: 48%	Black African:85% Black Caribbean: 57% Indian: 78% Mixed: 48% White: 41%	Yes: 41% No:44%
In a job with training (All = 11%)	Men:11% Women:11%	Black African: 2% Black Caribbean:8% Indian: 5% Mixed: 11% White: 12%	Yes:7% No:12%
NEET (not in education, employment or training) (All = 15%)	Men:16% Women:14%	Black African:7% Black Caribbean: 16% Indian:9% Mixed: 16% White: 16%	Yes:29% No:13%

(Source: DfE, 2010b, Table 2.1.1, p.6)

The Youth Cohort Study is a longitudinal government survey that is useful in following through what happens to a cohort of young people over time. The sample is weighted to represent key socio-economic characteristics of the whole population. Figure 10 is a very small extract from some of the data collected by this survey. This shows how gender and ethnicity inter-relate with socio-economic status (as indicated by eligibility for Free School Meals). Women are *more* likely than men to be in full-time education at the age of 18; they are equally likely to be in a job with training at the same age; and, are a bit less likely to be NEET (not in education, employment of training) at this age (14% of young women compared with 16% of young men). The pattern in relation to ethnicity adds another layer to this picture, with 'White' young men and women at the age of 18 being *less* likely to be in full-time education than other ethnic groups; *more* likely to be in a job without training; and, *equally* likely to be NEET, compared with Black Caribbean and Mixed Heritage young people. The data on free school meals illustrates the *increased* likelihood of being NEET amongst relatively poor young people and the *decreased* likelihood of being in a job with training. Parental education is a good indicator of whether a young person is likely to be in full time education at the age of 18: 62% of young people whose parents were educated to degree level, compared with 38% of those with parents educated to below A level standard (DfE, 2010b, p.6). On the other hand, as these figures illustrate, although a child's chances of educational achievement are

better when they come from a relatively educated background, this is by no means a foregone conclusion. This in part explains the well documented anxieties (about schools and educational qualifications more generally) of some middle class parents.

A range of socio-economic and policy changes have come together to make the fears and anxieties about the future focus ever more strongly on children, young people and their schooling. These fears might be seen as part of the more generalised fears and conceptions of risk in late modernity that are referred to at the start of this paper (see Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999). There is an increased appreciation that educational qualifications are a critical part of individual success in 'knowledge economies'. Widening participation to Higher Education has increased the competition around access to professional and well paid jobs. This situation is coupled with continuing and marked inequalities in relation to income and life chances. These inequalities are played out in services like schools, where geographical location inter-relate with social and economic capital, which disadvantage the poor. Performance management and specifically school inspections have made available a wealth of data to the discerning parent that further advantages and privileges their access to popular (usually high achieving) schools. The wide availability of such data and the media treatment of it enhances the climate of fear in relation to access to popular state schools. As with 'fear of crime', the available evidence about direct experiences of the state education system is more positive than public fears (as expressed in everyday discourse and media representations) might suggest.

Sammons (2008) reviewed the impact on school standards of ten years of Labour administrations (1997-2007). She concluded that there was evidence of significant and sustained improvements in overall pupil attainment levels for the majority of schools but that relative inequality has not been successfully tackled. A 'zero tolerance' approach to new conceptions of 'failure' has meant that the continuing drive to improve standards has tended to 'name and shame' schools, whatever the intention. For example, the launch of the 'National Challenge' in 2008, was followed by the publication in the national media of a list of 638 schools in England that did not have 30% or more of their pupils achieving five GCSE's A*-C, including English and Maths. This amounted to most local authorities (134 out of 150) having one or more secondary schools on this list that needed to improve to meet this 'challenge'. Such tactics remain highly contentious; with some head teachers claiming that identification as a National Challenge school is counterproductive, adversely affecting pupil and staff recruitment. Certainly the individual dynamics around schools in this situation can mean that those teachers and families able to exercise choice, may be less likely to 'choose' such a school. However, for many pupils and teachers in particular localities there may be no option but to carry on working and attending what is often seen as a publicly named and shamed 'failing school', despite the more optimistic language of being a 'National Challenge' school.

The link between school 'failure', poverty and inequality is well appreciated by many commentators on the issue (as noted earlier). Indeed, a former

inspector (Blatchford) with responsibility for 'failing schools', is quoted as saying that:

> '…. *schools which struggle are nearly always on what the Americans call 'the wrong side of the tracks'. It is rare to find a school in difficulties serving a catchment area that is truly comprehensive - as opposed to being skewed towards the poorer families'* (Richardson, 2008, paras 6 and 7).

Harris and Ranson (2005) argue that part of being disadvantaged means ending up at poorer institutions and the promotion of 'choice' and 'diversity' is unlikely to break this link. The emphasis on 'choice' has been a feature of public service provision since the early 1990s. According to Gavron (2009) this has:

> *'.....entrenched the ability of the middle and upper classes to avoid downward social mobility and preserve the best of life's goods for their own children. Moreover, the rhetoric of politicians and commentators has tended to abandon the description 'working-class', preferring instead to use terms such as 'hard working families' in order to contrast the virtuous many with the underclass perceived as feckless and undeserving'* (Gavron, 2009, p.2).

Diversity of school provision also changes the nature of control of state education and its purpose. Traditional forms of governance are being steadily eroded – religious denominational interests, as well as business and private sector interests are increasingly involved in the provision of state education. The involvement of private capital in the rebuilding and renovation of schools can enable such corporate sponsors to gain influence (even a controlling influence) over the ethos and accompanying practices of a school (Harris and Ranson, 2005). The extent to which a schools outside local authority control can act in a different way is illustrated by government monitoring data on academies. For example, government data on exclusion from school has illustrated for several years now that academies permanently exclude pupils at around twice the rate of local authority run schools. These schools also send children home on a fixed period exclusion at a higher rate. The 133 academies that opened between 2002 and 2008 permanently excluded 370 pupils and sent home 8,850 pupils one or more times for a fixed period, the latter number equating to 7.27% of the school population in academies at the time (DfE, 2010c, Table 14).

Although education is still a route out of poverty for some children, it would be difficult to over-estimate the difficulties in taking up this route for children in the poorest households. Evidence shows that social mobility in Britain has slowed and that access to professional jobs has got *more* socially exclusive; this means that even families with average incomes have less chance of entering the professions in Britain today, compared with those born in the 1950s (Milburn, 2007).

Schools as a response to crime and anti-social behaviour

Most of the time most schools are orderly environments and are generally safer than the community and some home environments. In that sense schools are less 'risky' than other settings and the great majority of schools cannot be considered to be 'at risk.' However, parental anxiety about their children's education, coupled with politicians (over the last 20 years) emphasising parental 'choice' in relation to schools has created an increasingly divisive situation. Simply put, the most popular schools are full and the least popular are not. The least popular schools are generally perceived as having an array of problems to do with behaviour as well as achievement. Children attending these schools cannot escape the regular adverse press, which feeds into popular debate. This situation adds to wider concerns about crime, anti-social behaviour and risk, feeding into a more generalised fear of 'the other'. These fears play into parental concerns about protecting their own children, trying to give them 'the best' opportunities and so on. This individualisation of concern about access to schools is part of similar processes in the wider 'risk society'. Getting a child into a particular school can be seen as a process of risk avoidance – the risk of educational 'failure', the risk of exposure to adverse 'influences' and so on. Yet, how we configure access to schools matters to everybody. Processes that disadvantage, limit and exclude children from developing and using their abilities are a problem for society as a whole. The behaviour that results from the frustrations of young people who are marginalised by schooling, as in other aspects of their lives, affects us all. More 'policing' of schools in the most adverse circumstances can address some of the most immediate and pressing problems in and around the school site, but cannot be a solution to the systematic and ongoing (re)creation of these problems.

Beck (1992) contends that risk aversion can lead to behaviours that in turn produce risks and that some widespread risks contain a 'boomerang' effect, in which those trying to avoid or reduce risk cannot escape the wider risks generated. This is evident in the desire to try and maintain positional advantage by obtaining access to the most favoured schools, which in turn creates less favoured schools and the social divisions (and fear of 'the other') in communities that ensue. Young (2003) warns of the dangers of false binaries that tend to characterise the poorest as 'excluded' from the mainstream, occupying spaces separate from 'the included':

> *'The dual city where the poor are morally segregated from the majority and are held physically apart by barriers is a myth. The borderlines are regularly crossed, the underclass exists on both sides anyway, but those who are clustered in the poorer parts of town regularly work across the tracks to keep the well-off families functioning'* (Young, 2003, p.396)

Furthermore, access to a media that promotes material aspirations and 'lifestyles' adds to the frustrations of those who don't have access to the ideals presented to them. The humiliation and disparagement that goes with this situation is part of the process of 'othering' and promotes and facilitates violence (Young, 2003, p.400). In response to this situation we need to avoid

policies that are likely to further increase social polarisation in its various forms. Indeed policies that actively promote greater social mixing are urgently required. The more schools are places where people of different socio-economic backgrounds, cultures and beliefs mix, the more hope there is for a less divided and more harmonious civil society.

Focussing our concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour on schools *per se* is a misplaced and negative activity. A key problem with this focus is encapsulated by Raymond Chandler in *The Long Goodbye:*

> '*Crime isn't a disease, it's a symptom. Cops are like a doctor that gives you aspirin for a brain tumour'* (quoted in Reiner, 2007, pp.18-19).

Likewise highly problematic behaviour in and around schools is generally a symptom of a wider problem. Part of the problem is the way we organise access to schooling in Britain; this is not only unfair but helps to maintain inequality, which in turn make us more fearful and less safe. So, whilst the great majority of schools cannot be seen as 'at risk' because of crime and anti-social behaviour, they are part of a system that generates a more generalised sense of risk in wider society and contributes to the very real risks associated with easily recognised unfairness.

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