Discipline in Scottish Schools:
A comparative survey over time of teachers' and headteachers' perceptions

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Acknowledgements

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1   Introduction

Discipline in schools, or more accurately, the levels of indiscipline in schools, is an emotive topic. This is so because good discipline is seen as fulfilling two separate, but related functions. First it is a means to an end, effective learning. Good discipline does not in itself guarantee effective learning but it is an important influence. An orderly, purposeful classroom with pupils actively engaged in learning at least provides positive conditions for learning to take place. Reports of disruption in the classroom, fights among pupils for instance, naturally create concern about the lack of opportunity for learning, and thus for attainment and thus for life chances. Good discipline, however, is also an end in itself, an outcome of schooling. We expect schools together with parents and others to promote values such as courtesy, kindness and respect for others, in young people. So reports of indiscipline make us wonder about the kind of society we are becoming and about whether the younger generation will subscribe to the same broad values as ourselves. This is not a new phenomenon. Concerns about pupil behaviour are almost as old as schools. For example, in 1675 the Synod of Aberdeen asked its presbyteries only to demand three questions of the school master: whether he makes the bairns learn the catechism, whether he teaches them prayers for morning and evening … and whether he 'chastises them for cursing, swearing, lying, speaking profanietie: for disobedience to parents and what vices that appeares in them' (quoted in Smout 1987: 83-84).

Standards of discipline are notoriously difficult to measure because of the context dependent nature of the interpretation of behaviour. What counts as indiscipline in one school or classroom may not be seen that way elsewhere. Even the same teacher may vary in his or her standard of discipline depending on circumstances such as the age or stage of the class, the history or reputation of a particular pupil, the time of day or year and the teacher's own mood. A previous

study in Scotland, the Pack report (1977) on truancy and indiscipline, was unable to report on the extent and nature of indiscipline in schools for this reason and confined itself to the itemising of contexts likely to create problems for teachers.

The survey, whose results are reported below, attempted to minimise the context dependence of teachers' perceptions by asking about the frequency and difficulty of dealing with particular behaviours encountered in the classroom and around the school, during a specific week. The survey was adapted from that used by Gray and Sime for the work of the Elton Committee (DES 1989), set up to investigate indiscipline in schools in England and Wales.

In the period since the first national survey of teachers' perceptions in 1990, there has been continuing research focussing on the nature and extent of indiscipline, including topics such as bullying in schools, (eg Mellor 1993; 1995) exclusions, (Lawrence and Hayden 1997; Munn et al 2001; Parsons 1996) and school violence. There have also been several initiatives to support positive discipline and to share good practice. Chief amongst these have been:

- Promoting positive discipline

- The Anti-Bullying Network

- The Scottish Schools Ethos network

- Alternatives to Exclusion from School

- A range of developments initiated by the voluntary sector (often in collaboration with local authorities) designed to sustain pupils in mainstream education or to provide innovative

alternatives to mainstream schooling. Many of these developments involve work with parents.

Most recently a major development programme has been implemented across Scotland as a result of the recommendations contained in the report of the Discipline Task Group, *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*. This Task group was established in December 2000 by the then Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, Jack McConnell, in response to concerns from teachers' professional associations and others about deteriorating standards of behaviour in schools. The report recognised the complexity of the causes of indiscipline, social, psychological and medical, and advocated the development of a national strategy to manage the implementation of its recommendations. These ranged across a number of areas and identified responsibilities at school, local authority and national level. Financial support was provided initially to undertake reviews of discipline policy at local and school level and to create support units within schools to provide a focus for children requiring additional help to manage their behaviour and learning. Beyond this, there were a number of recommendations. For example, local authorities and schools were encouraged to employ classroom assistants and home-school link workers to help troubled and troublesome children. Some authorities also adopted a scheme developed in Birmingham, *Framework for Intervention*[1] which uses a three stage approach to managing classroom disruption. The first stage is an analysis of classroom climate in order to determine if there are reasonably straightforward pedagogical and/or curriculum interventions which might be adopted to improve pupils' behaviour. Other stages require progressively more specialist intervention. This approach recognises that there are strategies at whole school and at

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[1]Now called Staged Intervention (FFI) in Scotland

classroom level which teachers can employ to improve or manage more effectively the behaviour of pupils. It also recognises that specialist intervention is sometimes necessary.

Key characteristics of the scheme are peer support, teachers helping each other to analyse their teaching strategies and a no blame approach. Beyond this, other initiatives are being piloted including restorative practices and a web site has been established to share the wealth of approaches to promoting good discipline which exist in Scotland.

In addition to national initiatives, a wide range of books and other resources on promoting good discipline have been produced which can be used in in-service training at school, cluster or local authority levels (eg Lane 1994; Lloyd et al 2001; McLean 2003; Marshall 1998; Mosley 1995). All these sources contain practical ideas about strategies which can be adopted to improve pupils' behaviour and learning. There have also been several well attended national and local conferences organised by the Scottish Schools Ethos Network in collaboration with local authorities and others which highlight recent research on promoting good discipline and encourage schools to share experience and ideas. In summary, there has been a great deal of research and development on indiscipline, recognising the centrality of well managed classrooms and well motivated children and young people to the Executive's education policy agenda. Nevertheless, there is continuing concern about the level of indiscipline in schools. The survey reported here provides a unique perspective on the issue as it compares teachers' views over time.

2   Sample and Method

An initial context is needed before describing some findings from this survey. The

questionnaires centred on teachers' and headteachers' experiences during one week of school, and

had been used in earlier surveys, in 1990 and 1996 (Johnstone and Munn, 1992; Munn,

Johnstone and Sharp, 1998). The response rate has dropped with each administration. In 1990,

the response rate was 87% for secondary teachers and 90% for secondary heads. This was

extraordinarily high, possibly reflecting national (British) publicity then given to the question of

discipline in schools, with the publication of the Elton Report (DES 1989). In 1996, the response

rate had dropped to 62% for secondary school teachers and 53% for primary school teachers.

The latter seemed rather disappointing, given that this group had not been asked for their views

before. In 2004, the respective response rates were: primary teachers 48% (N=699), secondary

teachers 53% (N=528), primary headteachers 67% (N=276) and secondary headteachers 71%

(N=275). Of course, few people write to say why they are not replying. It cannot be assumed

that the non-response implies teachers with few or no problems, nor can it be assumed that the

non-response arose from too much to do and too little time to do it in. The response rate does

mean that the views should perhaps be taken as indicative rather than definitive.

It is worth noting that the great majority of those who replied in 2004 said that the survey week

had been typical or fairly typical. This had also been found in 1990 and in 1996. The typicality

of the week does not mean that the same pattern would be reported for every week of the school

year. Nevertheless, although not necessarily average, the week reported was not unusual for

most people.

A final and important point in respect of the samples concerns generalisation from the data reported here to all schools and classrooms in primary and secondary schools in Scotland. The survey provides a statistically accurate picture of the perceptions of those who responded, the problems teachers and headteachers identified and the behaviours they found difficult to deal with. The schools sampled were broadly representative of primary and secondary schools in Scotland. Thus we can be reasonably confident about the picture being presented by teachers. There are two important cautionary notes about the data, however.

- We are reporting teachers' *perceptions*, not objective measures of indiscipline. It is possible that we are reporting a decline in teacher morale so that they perceive indiscipline more readily than in the past.
- We report how frequently teachers encounter a particular behaviour in the classroom or around the school. The emphasis is on the behaviour, not on the number of pupils behaving in particular ways. Indeed, by and large, teachers said that the majority of their pupils were well behaved.

The body of the Report has been organised to present the data by sector, and comparatively to previous survey data where available within each sector. That is, the material from secondary schools is presented first, as this is where there is most comparative data available. There are three separate teacher samples and two separate headteacher samples from secondaries. After looking at possible change in secondary schools over the years 1990, 1996 and 2004, we then move on to the primary school. For the primary sector, there are two teacher samples but only one headteacher sample, the current 2004 cohort.

The Technical Appendix contains further detail on the history of the questionnaire and the

composition of the current sample.

3   Indiscipline in the Secondary School

3.1   Has the classroom situation changed?

Introduction

The classroom is where pupils and teachers spend most of their time at school and is the focus of learning and teaching. It is therefore important to gather teachers' perceptions of pupils' behaviour in a typical school week, as this presents us with a limited picture of life in classrooms. A fuller picture of classroom life would, of course, require pupil perceptions and indeed detailed observations and analysis such as that presented in the classic study by Jackson (1968). Our previous work on effective discipline (Munn, Johnstone and Chalmers 1992 a & b) included in-depth case studies of teachers identified as effective and revealed something of the complexity of teachers' decision-making in the classroom. The picture presented by the survey therefore, is necessarily more superficial, an inevitable trade off between breadth and depth. Nevertheless, the historical and the current data from teachers and headteachers allows us to compare reports of pupil behaviour in fairly typical school weeks and to judge whether the situation has changed. Table 1 presents this data. The focus is on reports of behaviours encountered weekly. This is to enable ease of comparison. Table A7 in the Technical Appendix reports the behaviours encountered on a daily basis.

Table 1 presents a complexity of percentages and is perhaps best considered as two groups of data, teachers and headteachers.

Table 1 Percentages of secondary teachers and headteachers reporting different pupil behaviours as occurring/referred in the classroom at least once during a week, in 1990, 1996 and 2004

	Type of Pupil Behaviour	% Secondary School Teachers			% Secondary Headteachers	
		1990 N= 883	1996 N=561	2004 N=528	1990 N=386	2004 N=275 †
1	Talking out of turn	98	99	99	26	55
2	Making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise	80	80	88**	7	33
3	Hindering other pupils	90	90	95**	19	65
4	Getting out of seat without permission	71	71	81**	4	27
5	Not being punctual	83	85	94**	27	56
6	Persistently infringing class rules	72	72	84**	17	73
7	Eating/chewing in class	85	85	94 **	6	29
8	Calculated idleness or work avoidance	90	92	94	18	56
9	Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	71	72	87**	21	75
10	General rowdiness, horseplay or mucking about	67	65	82**	17	68
11	Use of mobile phones/texting	-	-	58	-	41
12	Physical destructiveness	18	18	39**	4	38
13	Racist abuse towards other pupils	-	6	11**	-	11
14	Sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils	-	17	33**	-	30
15	General verbal abuse towards other pupils	66	69	79**	22	74
16	Racist abuse towards you	-	0.5	2*	-	3
17	Sexist abuse or harassment towards you	-	3	5	-	16
18	General verbal abuse towards you	21	27	45**	21	67
19	Physical aggression towards other pupils	50	50	56	21	83
20	Physical aggression towards you	2	1	8*	2	17

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level
† all items are statistically significant

Secondary teachers

For the secondary school teacher data in Table 1, the prevalence of asterisks indicating a statistically significant change over time is very striking. There were 20 possible classroom behaviours listed in the 2004 version of the questionnaire. Of the 19 behaviours which were listed in 1996, 15 of these had increased in 2004 in a way which could not be attributed statistically to chance. However, a note of caution is needed in that a significant increase in percentage can be observed even while the real number of teachers is quite small. For example, physical aggression towards the teacher rose from 1% reporting this in 1996 to 8% in 2004, a statistically significant increase. In real numbers, physical aggression was reported by 6 people in 1996 and 40 in 2004. We do not know what counts as physical aggression and so we should not necessarily assume outright violence occurred or that physical aggression was intentional.

Nevertheless, the increase in reporting of a wide range of behaviours potentially disruptive to teaching and learning is marked. There is no pupil behaviour which has decreased over the years, unlike the situation in the primary school (see section 4.1). There is a non-significant increase in three areas: calculated idleness or work avoidance, pupil to pupil physical aggression, and sexist abuse/harassment towards the teacher. Talking out of turn, the behaviour reported by almost all respondents in earlier years, remains at the top of the list. 'The old drip, drip effect' of continually tackling low level behaviours, as one teacher put it, was noted in 2004 as in earlier years.

Although individual teachers might be more optimistic (or pessimistic) there was general

agreement in the open response, where teachers wrote generally about their views, given by 40%

of the secondary teachers that pupils had changed:

> *Pupils appear to arrive in secondary school with little control over their*
> *behaviour. They are not badly behaved as such but they have limited*
> *understanding of the rules re talk, getting teacher's attention, being organised for*
> *classes etc.*

> *I have seen the gradual and systematic erosion of discipline over the years. This*
> *is not really of the very violent type - it would be unusual for me to witness a*
> *violently aggressive incident. However, the daily* verbal *abuse and tiring*
> *continual poor behaviour is demanding for staff and good pupils.*

The data give a rather depressing picture of the secondary school classroom, although we should

emphasise that the behaviours reported in Table 1 are at the broadest level of 'at least once a

week'. Fewer teachers met these behaviours more often, at the 'at least once a day' level. For

example, no teacher reported aggression on a daily basis, although fairly high percentages met

behaviours such as talking out of turn. (Table A7 for classroom behaviours met at least once a

day is given in the Technical Appendix.)

The majority of teachers found most behaviours manageable but there is an upward trend in

those reporting some behaviour difficult to deal with. We report this in more detail in section

3.3.

Secondary headteachers

For the secondary headteachers, the comparison available was between the 1990 and the 2004

reporting of what had been referred on to them from the classroom. This much longer time span

gives a seemingly more emphatic picture of negative change. Indeed all the increases are significant. Even if the change for headteachers has in reality been slower and less dramatic than the increased percentages in Table 1 show, the end result still suggests a rather striking picture of increases in the behaviours being referred to headteachers in 2004. We might also speculate that referral policies may have changed in the fourteen years between the two surveys.

The top three concerns for secondary headteachers in 1990 were: unpunctuality, pupils talking out of turn, and pupil to pupil verbal abuse. In 2004, the top three concerns were: pupil to pupil physical aggression, cheeky or impertinent remarks/responses, and pupil to pupil verbal abuse. The referral of a pupil or pupils for physical aggression towards staff, while a small percentage in comparison to other behaviours, represents an increase in real numbers from 7 headteachers reporting this in 1990 to 47 in 2004. Of course, the nature of this aggression was not described, therefore it should not be assumed that outright violence occurred.

Nevertheless, in general, headteacher data suggest that 2004 pupil behaviour is seemingly worse. The type of pupil behaviour referred seems more serious, and the percentages of headteachers dealing with the behaviours is much higher. This was of course pupil behaviour referred to the headteacher at least once a week. At the more frequent daily level, no headteacher reported physical aggression; about 1 in 4 people dealt daily with the more mundane but doubtless potentially disruptive pupil behaviours. (See Table A7, Technical Appendix.)

From the open response added by headteachers (60% of whom wrote further comment), the problem was often in the behaviour of a minority of pupils, in public perceptions of school and in the social context:

The high profile of education in the media has produced a picture of schools which demoralises staff, leading them to view even minor incidents as more serious than they are.

3.2   Changes around the school

Introduction

Schools are one of the few institutions where large numbers of young people gather together. Some writers have pointed out that this very fact provides ideal opportunities for young people to develop a sense of collective responsibility, to think of themselves using a wider frame of reference than the family and to begin to engage with ideas of active citizenship and to act accordingly (eg Barber 1997; Learning and Teaching Scotland 2002). The general public areas of the school are a setting for the living out of collective responsibility. They are also a setting for opportunistic pupil misbehaviour. Traditionally, this is the domain of the senior management team 'just walking about', as one head put it, although teachers and indeed other staff in a school will have experience of and an effect upon such behaviour. Table 2 presents the reporting of around school behaviours over time.

Table 2 Percentages of secondary teachers and headteachers reporting different pupil behaviours as occurring/referred around the school at least once a week in 1990, 1996 and 2004

	Type of Behaviour	% Secondary School Teachers			% Secondary Headteachers	
		1990 N= 883	**1996** N=561	**2004** N=528	**1990** N=386	**2004** N=275 †
1	Running in the corridors	87	91	91	45	74
2	Unruliness while waiting	84	88	93**	37	66
3	Showing lack of concern for others	90	93	95	33	82
4	Persistently infringing school rules	84	90	95**	32	91
5	Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	70	74	88**	15	74
6	Loitering in 'prohibited' areas	75	75	85**	34	71
7	Leaving school premises without permission	44	40	56**	31	58
8	General rowdiness, horseplay, mucking about	84	88	93**	40	85
9	Use of mobile phones/texting	-	-	72	-	47
10	Physical destructiveness	32	29	46**	12	43
11	Racist abuse towards other pupils	-	6	13**	-	8
12	Sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils	-	17	28**	-	19
13	General verbal abuse towards other pupils	75	77	82**	34	81
14	Racist abuse towards you	-	0.4	1	-	3
15	Sexist abuse or harassment towards you	-	1	3**	-	10
16	General verbal abuse towards you	15	24	42**	12	60
17	Physical aggression towards other pupils	67	69	74	41	82
18	Physical aggression towards you	15	2	6**	1	16

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level
† all items are statistically significant

Secondary teachers

Looking at pupil behaviours around the school, 13 of the relevant 17 had increased in a way that could not be attributed to chance. No pupil behaviour decreased since 1996. Again, this was different in the primary school (see section 4.2).

Over 9 in 10 secondary teachers in 2004 reported pupils' persistent infringement of rules, unruliness while waiting and general rowdiness, each of these having increased at a statistically significant level, as did another ten behaviours shown in Table 2. Of the other four possible pupil behaviours, three had increased in a non-significant way and one had stayed at the same level. Perhaps it is a little encouraging that the increases *not* statistically significant were in behaviours possibly more serious, that is: pupil to pupil physical aggression, showing a lack of concern for others, and racist abuse to the teachers, the last reported by a small number of people.

Taken in combination, the behaviours met around the school by the majority of the secondary teachers present a rather striking picture, although context will affect the impact of any specific behaviour. We do not know, for example, how many pupils were perceived as behaving in the ways described and as we shall see below there was reference to the difficult minority of pupils, rather than generalised misbehaviour.

Secondary headteachers

For the secondary school headteachers, we again have the wider time gap to take into account in making any comparisons. As Table 2 shows, percentages of headteachers reporting referrals of

pupil behaviour during the survey week have greatly increased, as might be anticipated over fourteen years of social change and of changes in school organisation. Nevertheless, there were similarities over the years. The three top referred behaviours in 1990 were: running in the corridors, pupil to pupil physical aggression, and general rowdiness. In 2004, the top three were: persistently infringing school rules, general rowdiness and lack of concern for others/pupil to pupil physical aggression.

Pupils running in the corridors, the top ranking referred behaviour in 1990, is at sixth equal place in 2004. Although referral of that particular behaviour has shifted, rowdiness and pupil to pupil aggression are still the issues most often referred to headteachers, although dealt with by far higher percentages of headteachers in 2004. General verbal abuse to staff has apparently increased, as has physical aggression to school staff. In real number terms, the latter is an increase from 4 headteachers who reported this in 1990 to 44 in 2004.

In section 3.3 we look at the teachers' and headteachers' views on the difficulty of dealing with pupil behaviours around the school.

3.3   Are pupil behaviours difficult to deal with?

Introduction

The prevalence of pupil behaviours does not mean that teachers find them problematic. It may be that the teachers have built up expertise and experience and see tackling these behaviours as part of the job. We therefore asked some questions of both teachers and headteachers about difficult behaviours in the classroom and around the school.

Secondary teachers

In the classroom, a higher proportion of the secondary school teachers in 2004 found some pupil behaviour difficult to deal with. In 1996, about 4 in 10 people reported this; in 2004 it was 5 in 10. In 1990 it had been midway between these figures. In 2004 the secondary school sample contained a high number of principal teachers. At least some of these people may have been dealing with other teachers' discipline problems, or with pupils less familiar to them, either of which could make the situation more difficult.

The range of behaviours considered difficult to deal with was as wide in this most recent survey as it had been in the earlier surveys. This is perhaps indicative of the importance of the context of pupil behaviour. Much depends on the history of relations between pupil and teacher and the particular situation in which behaviour occurs. Equally, 'dealing with' a behaviour did not necessarily eradicate this behaviour as the references to the wearying effect of constantly dealing with low level disruption made clear.

> *What I find most exhausting is the low level constant disruption caused by pupils who cannot concentrate on a task … at times I feel I accomplish very little, because so much of a lesson is wasted supplying pencils, chasing up homework, cajoling/nagging/giving punishment exercises etc to pupils who are perfectly pleasant but who cannot/will not take responsibility for their behaviour/education.*

Pupil behaviours reported as difficult to deal with in 1990, 1996 and 2004 were much the same, although in 2004 the percentages of teachers reporting one or more behaviours as difficult were higher. It was the very common behaviour of talking out of turn which was reported by most

secondary teachers to be difficult to deal with, that is by 3 in 10 of those who encountered this behaviour in 2004.

Similarly, 4 in 10 secondary school teachers found some behaviour around the school difficult to deal with. The actual behaviours varied, as they had in the classroom context, but the most commonly cited were persistent infringement of rules and cheeky responses from pupils.

Secondary headteachers

For the secondary headteachers, there was not surprisingly a greater difference between the two surveys. In 1990, 2 in 10 headteachers had found some difficulty in dealing with pupil behaviour, although no single behaviour was unanimously seen as difficult. In 2004, the figure increased to 4 in 10, both for behaviours in the classroom and around the school. Again, some headteachers ascribed this difficulty to social change and to conflict between home and school standards of behaviour:

> *School reflects what is happening in society at large.*
>
> *For many pupils, swearing and insulting language is normal and acceptable at home, but teachers have unreasonable expectations of pupil behaviour.*

However, there were also comments on the difficulty of applying consistent standards amongst staff, particularly where different expectations were held, just as there were comments from the secondary teachers on apparent inconsistencies within the Senior Management Team. For example, one headteacher commented:

> *A small number of teachers cause a disproportionate number of difficulties. They are small in number but a serious problem.*

And a teacher reflected:

> *The older the pupils became the more intervention seems to be relaxed, as if 'oh well, they've only got another year or few months' so nothing is done.*

3.4   Dealing with difficult pupils and/or classes

Introduction

The teachers and headteachers were asked a general question about dealing with difficult classes and/or pupils. This was presented in the form of a checklist of about 18 potential strategies and sanctions, ranging from verbal rebukes to punishment exercises, from using humour to defuse the situation to deliberately ignoring minor disruption. The lists differed slightly in that some sanctions were available only to either teachers or headteachers, not both.

The respondents were then asked to record the strategy or sanction they had found the most effective and the one they had found the most ineffective.

Secondary teachers

For secondary teachers, the most commonly used strategies to deal with difficult classes and/or pupils were: verbal rebukes or 'telling off' (given by almost all, 98%), using humour (96%) and reasoning with pupils (94%). Views on the effectiveness of the various strategies and sanctions were rather less unified. The teachers could only choose one strategy as most effective and the response was scattered across all of the 17 possibilities, with no major agreement on effectiveness.

Although the use of humour ranked first as an effective technique, in fact only about 19% of the teachers noted this as most effective. As for the most ineffective approach, again the response was scattered over the possibilities, with about a quarter of the respondents omitting this question in any case. Punishment exercises topped the ranking of ineffective strategies, however, at 16%. Looking back at the earlier surveys, verbal rebukes, humour and reasoning with the pupil were the most often used strategies in 1990 and in 1996. Views on the effectiveness and the ineffectiveness of the various strategies were also rather similar. The picture presented in earlier surveys and now is of a kind of carrot and stick approach with humour, use of praise and reasoning with pupils counterbalanced by telling off, withdrawal of privileges and other sanctions. It is interesting that then too, a substantial percentage of teachers chose not to answer the effectiveness questions. We might speculate that this was because effectiveness varies according to the situation or context and is therefore difficult to pin down categorically. Indeed, every strategy which was listed was seen as both effective and ineffective.

Besides asking the teachers to report on the strategies they used to deal with difficult classes and/or pupils, we also asked them to indicate how many of their classes they found difficult to deal with. The largest group, almost 60%, found one or two classes difficult, but 19% found none of their classes difficult. Small percentages found less than half (9%) and half (8%) or over half (4%) of the classes they taught difficult to deal with. This was a very general report from the teachers. We cannot tell just how difficult these classes were, nor whether a minority or majority of pupils in the class caused the difficulties. Although few secondary teachers appeared to find the majority of their classes difficult, even a relatively well-behaved class might contain

one or two difficult pupils. In a later section of the Report we look at how teachers characterised the difficult pupil (see section 3.6).

Secondary headteachers

For the secondary headteachers a similar picture emerged to teachers in terms of strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour, with verbal rebukes and humour reported most often (by 96% in each case), then reasoning with pupils (94%). As with teachers, views on the effectiveness of the various strategies did not show any major agreement, but were scattered across the various possible options. This was also similar to the views of headteachers in 1990. Overall, the same speculations might be made here as in relation to the secondary teachers. Headteachers do not see an obvious response to problematic pupil behaviour, beyond general strategies concerning school ethos, changing the curriculum and so on. A typical comment on improvement strategies is given below.

> *Changing the ethos of the school has helped us to improve behaviour and take in children who have been a serious problem elsewhere, and experienced no difficulty.*

The preceding sections of this report have moved from discussion of what teachers and headteachers reported about pupil behaviour in a specific, given week to what these same people thought generally about dealing with pupil behaviour.

In addition to commenting on how they dealt with pupil behaviours, the headteachers were asked what proportion of the pupils caused problems. The majority of headteachers felt that most of the pupils in their school were well-behaved. Very few pupils were categorised as causing

serious problems, and minor problems were reported by most heads as coming from well under half of the pupils. This accords with the headteachers' perception of the seriousness of the discipline problem, which we discuss in section 4.5.

We now move on to another general issue, that is the teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of the seriousness of the problem.

3.5   How serious is the problem?

Introduction

It is clear that larger numbers of teachers and headteachers than in previous surveys report encountering problematic pupil behaviour. Table 1 and Table 2 show marked and statistically significant changes for the secondary teachers in the percentages reporting pupil behaviours potentially inimical to teaching and learning. For the secondary headteachers, the long time span between administrations of the survey makes the change appear more dramatic, but nevertheless, there is a change for the worse. Although this is not a true longitudinal study, in that it is the same schools rather than the same individuals which have participated, there is a degree of commonality over the surveys which supports the idea of such change being reality rather than somehow shared perceptions.

There was also an increase in the number of teachers and headteachers finding some pupil behaviour difficult to deal with. The next question, therefore, is whether teachers and headteachers saw discipline as a serious problem.

Table 3 below shows the response of secondary teachers and headteachers over time to the question: 'Discipline problems vary from school to school in their seriousness. Looking at your own school as a whole, how serious is the problem of indiscipline in your opinion?'

Table 3 Historical comparison of secondary teachers'/headteachers' views on the seriousness of the discipline problem

How serious a problem?	% Secondary School Teachers			% Secondary School Heads	
	1990 N=883	**1996 N=561**	**2004 N=538**	**1990 N=379**	**2004 N=275**
Very serious	5	4	10	1	3
Serious	31	30	49	13	23
Not very serious	46	51	32	54	54
Minor	16	15	8	28	19
No problem at all	2	1	0.4	4	1

Secondary teachers

As Table 3 shows, the percentage of teachers who saw the situation as either serious or very serious changed over the years, from 36% in 1990 to 34% in 1996 to 59% in 2004. This is quite a marked rise, and has statistical significance.

A few male teachers had suggested in the open response that female colleagues might be finding pupils more challenging. As the secondary teachers were fairly evenly divided between male and female respondents (53% male and 47% female) we were able to compare their views statistically. We found that the men were more inclined to see the discipline situation as serious than were women. The difference was statistically significant.

In 1990, we had both a secondary teacher and secondary headteacher sample. In that study, we speculated as to why teachers were more pessimistic than headteachers (and indeed more

pessimistic than teachers in England and Wales, although the pupil behaviours appeared to be no different; see Johnstone and Munn, 1993). At the time, we wondered whether the teachers were more worried about a changing climate in schools, a situation where pupil obedience could not be taken for granted, by and large. Of course, pupil obedience might never be taken for granted, but the broader picture of what is and what is not acceptable public behaviour was seen to be changing and automatic respect for those in authority was seen as disappearing.

From the open response by the secondary teachers in 2004, this social change is now perceived to be in place. This might well explain the teachers' overall views on the seriousness of the situation in the school, a reflection of a widening gap between school values and those of society in general. There were several comments in the open response similar to the following in which deteriorating standards of behaviour in general are mentioned and regretted.

> *In my long experience in teaching I have seen an accelerating decline in the standards of respect of pupils for themselves, for other pupils and for teachers.*

Secondary headteachers

Secondary school headteachers appeared to be less concerned than teachers, but the 26% in 2004 who saw the position as either serious or very serious is an increase on the 14% who gave a similar view in 1990. However, given the markedly higher percentage of referrals dealt with by headteachers in 2004, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, the finding that about one in four people were seeing the situation as serious might be considered reassuring. We might also speculate that headteachers, then as now, could be more concerned to present a positive picture of the school.

A less speculative reason for the gap in perception between teachers and headteachers could simply be the sample structure. The secondary school heads were drawn from all the Scottish state schools, but the teachers came from a specific sub-sample of schools. It may be that within that sub-sample the situation was seen as more serious than in the generality of schools. The analysis presented so far has not sought to distinguish between national trends and local or school level trends.

One indicator of the seriousness of the problem could be the time spent on discipline. Another indicator would be the perception of violent behaviour in the school. We now turn to these two issues.

3.6   Time spent on discipline and views on violence

Introduction

Table 4 shows the views of teachers in 1996 and 2004, and of headteachers in 2004, in relation to the time spent on discipline, whether violence was a problem in the school, and if so the nature of pupil violence, ie pupil to pupil, pupil to teacher, verbal or physical abuse.

A note of caution is needed here. It would have been very difficult for teachers to record precisely the time spent on dealing with discipline in the survey week. Even if this had been asked, it would have considerably lengthened an already cumbersome questionnaire. What we report in Table 4 below is, therefore, the teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of whether they are spending more/the same/less time on discipline. The general question on time spent was not asked in 1990, therefore the headteacher data is from 2004 only.

Any specific incident of pupil violence encountered by the teachers and headteachers during the week would have been picked up, as Tables 1 and 2 show. The data in Table 4 below deal with perceptions and the overall view that people held of violence in their school. Again, this question was not asked in 1990; there we have comparative data for teachers only.

We should stress that in section c) of Table 4, the percentages show are percentages only of those teachers/headteachers who agreed that pupil violence was a problem in their school. We emphasise this as the percentages may appear spuriously high, if taken to be percentages of the total number of teachers/headteachers.

Table 4 Secondary teachers'/headteachers' further comments on discipline: time spent, violence

	Secondary school teachers in 1996 (N=561)	Secondary school teachers in 2004 (N=528)	Secondary Head teachers in 2004 (N=275)
	%	%	%
(a) time spent on discipline …			
has increased	51	69	53
stayed the same	34	25	35
decreased	15	6	12
(b) pupil violence in the school …			
is a problem	29	43	40
is not a problem	71	57	60
(c) pupil violence is …	**N=163**	**N=224**	**N=108**
verbal aggression between pupils	96	96	97
physical aggression between pupils	87	79*	87
verbal aggression to teachers	69	87**	79
physical aggression to teachers	14	18	6

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level

Time spent on discipline: secondary teachers' views

In 2004, more secondary school teachers felt that they were spending an increased time on discipline. The differences in percentages for the two groups of secondary teachers shown in section a) of Table 4 are all statistically significant. Almost 7 out of 10 teachers from the 2004 survey felt that the time they spent on discipline had increased, compared with 5 in 10 in 1996. Of course, more time spent on discipline could mean that any problem took longer than anticipated to move through the system, or be effectively dealt with, rather than imply more problems. As one teacher put it:

> *It's low level indiscipline (but) chasing up detentions etc is tiring and time consuming.*

Again we were able to compare the views of male and female teachers in relation to perceptions of time spent on discipline. Although both sexes felt that they were currently spending more time on discipline than before, more men reported this than did women. This was statistically significant. It also accorded with the male teachers' stronger perception of the seriousness of the problem.

Table 4b) and c) deals with a specific aspect of perceptions of increased indiscipline, that is pupil violence. In relation to this, we found no difference between the views of men and women.

Violence in the school; secondary teachers' views

As with the data on time spent on discipline, the percentages in Table 4b) show an increase for the teachers in 2004 in relation to perceptions of violence in the school. This increase is

statistically significant. Just over 4 in 10 teachers saw violence as a problem in 2004, as compared with just under 3 in 10 in 1996.

All of those who saw violence as a problem were asked to expand on this by noting what kinds of pupil violence existed in their school. Table 4c) sets out the response, and here the percentages are marked with an asterisk where there is a statistical difference over the 1996/2004 replies.

Almost all of the teachers who felt their school was violent saw pupils as verbally aggressive to each other. This was the case in 1996 and in 2004. In looking at all the teachers during their week's teaching, not just those who saw violence as a problem in their school, we found pupil to pupil verbal aggression had increased significantly in 2004, in both the classroom and around the school (see Tables 1 and 2). This was at a high level of around 80% for the whole group.

Interestingly, for teachers who saw their school as violent, physical aggression amongst pupils appeared to have declined and declined in a statistically significant way. In 1996, almost 9 in 10 teachers noted pupil to pupil physical aggression as a characteristic of violence in their school; in 2004 it was almost 8 in 10. In Table 1 and 2, for all secondary teachers, the percentages of pupil to pupil physical aggression had increased in 2004, not decreased. However, the increase had no statistical significance. One explanation for this apparent decline in pupil to pupil physical aggression in schools seen as violent may be that in these schools great effort has been put into tackling pupil to pupil physical aggression. Another explanation could lie in the context, that is the specific pupils in the school in 2004, but these are only speculations.

For those teachers who saw their school as violent, pupil to teacher verbal aggression was reported at a significantly higher level in 2004, with almost 9 in 10 people citing this as part of violence in the school. Looking at the more general response shown in Tables 1 and 2, although this pupil behaviour had increased significantly in 2004 for the teachers as a whole, this was reported by a far smaller proportion, just over 4 in 10 people.

Pupil to teacher aggression was the final form of violence which we explored with teachers who saw violence as a problem in their schools. In Table 4c) the percentages show an increase from 1996, but this is *not* statistically significant. Looking back at Tables 1 and 2, concerning responses from all schools, a different pattern appears. In each case the percentage of teachers reporting meeting physical violence from a pupil during the survey week had increased and the increase was statistically significant. We can only speculate as to why this might be. Do teachers in schools they see as violent have more stringent criteria of pupil to teacher physical violence? Do teachers in schools seen as less violent take highly aggressive pupil behaviour to them as physical violence?

Again, context may alter what is labelled violence, although this is not to detract from the stress caused by incidents of pupil to teacher violence, nor the ripple effect on other staff and pupils in the school.

Time spent on discipline and views on violence in the school: secondary headteachers

There is no comparative data for headteachers, but Table 4a) shows that just over half of the headteachers in 2004 replied that time spent on discipline had increased. Again, this could mean more time dealing with the same problems rather than more problems arising. Furthermore, for the headteachers, more time spent might be spent negotiating with the Education Authority or in the pursuit of outside professional assistance.

As for pupil violence in the school, 4 in 10 headteachers felt that this was a problem. In general, the headteachers' views on what constituted pupil violence were rather similar to the teachers' views. Pupil to pupil verbal aggression was most commonly noted, but physical aggression among pupils was cited rather more often than verbal aggression to teachers. This is not surprising, given that verbal aggression to the teacher might be dealt with by the teacher or the principal teacher. A smaller percentage of headteachers than of teachers reported physical aggression to teachers as a component of pupil violence in the school. Again, we should point out that the headteachers, even in this sub-set, came from a wider range of schools than did the teachers.

The difficult minority

It is important to emphasise that the data on pupil behaviours met during the survey week reported incidents of specific behaviour, not the number of pupils taking part. Thus the reported increase in aggressive pupil behaviours generally could be the result of small numbers of particularly troubled or troublesome pupils rather than a general deterioration in pupil behaviour.

Teachers and headteachers had been asked about pupils they found particularly difficult to deal with. Broadly speaking, as in the earlier surveys, respondents identified lower attaining boys in

S4. In the open comment section of the questionnaire, a small number of teachers and headteachers offered ideas to improve life at school for lower attaining pupils ranging from more extra-curricular activities to a more vocational curriculum. While teachers were less likely to identify girls as difficult, when they did so, girls tended to be middle rather than low in terms of attainment.

Both teachers and headteachers were asked about their view on exclusion. A number of statements about exclusion were offered and the respondents asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement on a five-point scale. The secondary teachers saw exclusion as a sanction which:

- Allowed other pupils to get on with their work (94%)

- Provided needed respite for teachers (87%)

- Sent a signal to all parents about pupil behaviour (75%)

- Had a good effect on the behaviour of other pupils (70%)

These responses do not relate to the effects on exclusion on the *excluded* pupil. The largest percentage of teachers (43%) gave a neutral response, seeing exclusion as neither good or bad in its effect. A further 39% of teachers felt that exclusion did not have a good effect on the excluded pupil. In other words, exclusion was viewed as unsuccessful, or at best neutral, for the pupil so sanctioned, but as effective in improving other aspects of school life.

These views were very close to the views on exclusion expressed by secondary school teachers in the 1996 sample.

The headteachers noted that:

- Exclusion was always the last resort (98%)

- Exclusion gave the teachers essential respite (87%)

- Exclusion sent a signal to all parents about pupil behaviour (76%).

As with the teachers, the largest percentage of heads (48%), were neutral on the effect of exclusion on the excluded pupil, seeing this sanction as neither good or bad in itself. A further 28% felt that exclusion did *not* have a good effect on the excluded pupil. The remaining 23% of headteachers considered exclusion to have a good effect on the excluded pupil, as opposed to 18% of teachers who took this view.

The inclusion or exclusion of the difficult minority was a point raised in the open response. The majority of secondary teachers and headteachers who wrote about this [approx how many? It's clearer in the primary section?] saw inclusion of the difficult minority as detrimental to good discipline in general:

> *Social inclusion doesn't work - what about the rights of the twenty-odd pupils in the class whose education is affected by one or two trouble makers.*

> *Social inclusion is having a severe effect on the notion of indiscipline with more serious, threatening and complicated incidents. This has a serious effect on other pupils.*

A minority of pupils may be difficult, and their behaviour particularly difficult to deal with, but persistent low-level incidents were also a problem. As one headteacher wrote:

The real, grinding problem is the higher incidence of routine, low-level interruptions.

The picture presented by secondary teachers and headteachers is therefore one of some particularly difficult pupils or classes, with social inclusion policy sometimes seen as a large part of the explanation for this state of affairs. Interestingly enough, however, pupils with a record of need did not feature strongly in teachers' descriptions of pupils they found difficult to deal with. However, about 1 in 3 of teachers identifying difficult pupils said that the particularly difficult pupil had special provision or support. It is also interesting that teachers' views on the priorities for improvement have tended to remain the same despite the changing policy context in general and social inclusion policy in particular. Data from Table 3 on the seriousness of the problem of indiscipline as well as the statistically significant increases in the behaviours encountered in Tables 1 and 2 suggest that there is also a generalised problem about pupil behaviour.

Teachers and headteachers gave us their views on priority actions to improve discipline and we report this in section 5. First though, we report the perceptions of primary teachers and headteachers.

4   Indiscipline in the Primary School

4.1   Has the classroom situation changed?

Introduction

As in secondary schools, the primary classroom is where pupils and teachers spend most of their time at school, and it is where formal learning and teaching mostly takes place. It is therefore important to gather teachers' perceptions of pupils' classroom behaviour (see section 3.1 for an earlier discussion of this).

The primary school classroom is different however, in many important respects from the classroom in secondary school. The primary school teacher has greater opportunities to get to know the pupils, she (and in this sample 95% of the primary teachers who replied were female) also has to be with them most of the day, every day. Primary school pupils span an age range in which there is expectation of growth and development in behaviour. Talking out of turn in a 5 or 6 year old is rather different from that of a 14 year old, as is a whole range of other behaviours. In short, the age and stage of pupils is an important variable in thinking about pupil behaviour.

The historical and current data from primary school teachers allow us to compare views of the classroom over 1996 and 2004 and to consider whether the situation has changed. In addition, we have in 2004 for the first time the views of primary school headteachers. Table 5 presents the classroom data.

Table 5 Percentages of primary teachers/headteachers reporting different pupil behaviours as occurring/being referred in the classroom at least once during a week, in 1996 and 2004

Type of Pupil Behaviour	%Primary teachers		% Primary headteachers
	1996 **N=825**	**2004** **N=699**	**2004** **N=276**
1 Talking out of turn	98	98	89
2 Making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise	84	86	66
3 Hindering other pupils	91	92	84
4 Getting out of seat without permission	79	79	65
5 Not being punctual	56	62**	58
6 Persistently infringing class rules	65	69 *	72
7 Eating/chewing in class	26	22	21
8 Calculated idleness or work avoidance	70	78**	67
9 Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	44	52**	64
10 General rowdiness, horseplay or mucking about	57	61	62
11 Use of mobile phones/texting	-	1	4
12 Physical destructiveness	15	13	20
13 Racist abuse towards other pupils	4	4	8
14 Sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils	7	12**	19
15 General verbal abuse towards other pupils	64	63	74
16 Racist abuse towards you or staff	0.1	-	1
17 Sexist abuse or harassment towards you or staff	0.2	-	3
18 General verbal abuse towards you or staff	8	12**	35
19 Physical aggression towards other pupils	69	63**	75
20 Physical aggression towards you or staff	1	2	12

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level

We will consider Table 5 under the separate heading of teachers and headteachers.

Primary teachers

For the primary school teachers, over the two samples, 10 behaviours out of 19 relevant behaviours (ie omitting the use of mobile phones, a new category) were encountered by more people in 2004. [The first aspect of the comparable secondary data mentioned earlier is the number of significant increases. To be consistent, could you focus on the 6 significant increases here, rather than the 10 behaviours, which may or may not be subject to chance] The most marked of these are the higher incidence of cheeky or impertinent remarks, of calculated idleness and of pupil to pupil sexist abuse or harassment. Although the latter is reported by a small percentage of teachers (7% in 1996 and 12% in 2004) the trend is worth noting. This might imply that teachers are more conscious of sexist abuse and bullying rather than that there is more of this behaviour, however.

Only one behaviour has *decreased* in occurrence in a significant way, but it is an important one: physical aggression towards other pupils. A high percentage of primary teachers reported this in 2004, but this was nevertheless a significantly lower percentage than in 1996.

Although the more extreme pupil behaviours were only reported by a small proportion of the teachers, the overall impression is that in 2004 the primary teachers were meeting more general disruption to their teaching than their colleagues in 1996. Perhaps the situation has changed for the worse in the primary school classroom overall, at least in respect of pupil attitude to the teacher, but of course these are different pupils and different teachers. Moreover the important behaviour of pupil/pupil aggression has decreased. It is also worth repeating that we are reporting the number of teachers encountering a particular behaviour, not the incidence of

behaviours. The increased numbers could reflect either a more general increase in the behaviours across all pupils or the behaviour of a small number of pupils.

Nevertheless, the primary school teachers in their open response wrote negatively of social change affecting the attitudes of pupils in general:

> *Many children have difficult home circumstances. School offers stability, but it is merely a plaster on a wound. How can children concentrate when there is so much going on in their lives?*
>
> *We have no wish to go back to the old days when children were afraid to talk to their teacher, but respect is a two way thing.*

Primary headteachers

For the primary school headteachers, no comparison over time is possible. In 2004, the top two pupil behaviours dealt with by most headteachers were pupils talking out of turn and pupils hindering other pupils' work. Both of these behaviours could be viewed as affecting the learning of others. The same two behaviours were those most often met by the primary teachers in both 2004 and 1996.

At the more serious end of the scale, about three-quarters of the headteachers noted that pupil to pupil verbal and physical aggression had been referred to them at least once a week. A small percentage of headteachers had dealt with pupil to teacher physical aggression (12% or 36 people). The percentage is higher than the percentage of teachers who reported such aggression (2% or 14 people). The primary school headteachers came from the same schools as did the primary teachers; unlike their secondary colleagues, the primary headteachers were not a

Scotland-wide sample. We assume that the difference is explained by the headteachers who personally met physical aggression from a pupil, or perhaps dealt with physical aggression directed to ancillary staff or that some teachers did not report physical aggression - or the fact that not all teachers were sampled in larger primaries. In short, primary headteachers have an overview of the school in a way that specific classroom teachers do not.

We do not know whether the 2004 referrals are worse than would have been found in 1996 or indeed better. However, we can say that they are not dissimilar to the teachers' reports of a week's pupil behaviour in the primary school classroom. The headteachers' views of society and parents were also similar to those expressed by the teachers:

> *As a headteacher of a school in an affluent area with little deprivation, I note the shift of expectations from strong parental attitudes of responsibility for children and their actions, to those who are totally indifferent to this.*
>
> *The difficulties schools are experiencing reflect deep-seated problems in society itself.*

4.2   Changes around the school

Introduction

The different organisation of the day in primary school will probably affect pupils' opportunities for misbehaviour. For example, the chance to run in the corridors may not come so often to the younger pupil. Age would also affect other behaviours, for example leaving the school premises without permission ought perhaps to be highly unlikely in the primary school. Nevertheless, the general public areas of the school provide a setting for potentially difficult behaviours. The importance of the school as a social institution already referred to in section 3.2 makes it important to collect data on pupil behaviour around the school.

Table 6 shows the behaviours encountered by the teachers and headteachers around the school, with comparative data for the teachers.

Table 6 Percentages of primary teachers/headteachers reporting different pupil behaviours as occurring/being referred around the school at least once during the week.

		%Primary teachers		% Primary headteachers
Type of Pupil Behaviour		1996 N=825	2004 N=699	2004 N=276
1	Running in the corridors	86	86	79
2	Unruliness while waiting	83	80	81
3	Showing lack of concern for others	88	84 *	83
4	Persistently infringing school rules	63	67	68
5	Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	52	55	61
6	Loitering in 'prohibited' areas	50	43 *	37
7	Leaving school premises without permission	10	10	15
8	General rowdiness, horseplay, mucking about	75	73	76
9	Use of mobile phones/texting	-	4	3
10	Physical destructiveness	16	15	20
11	Racist abuse towards other pupils	5	7	9
12	Sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils	5	9**	9
13	General verbal abuse towards other pupils	65	63	78
14	Racist abuse towards you or staff	0.8	-	2
15	Sexist abuse or harassment towards you or staff	0.6	1	2
16	General verbal abuse towards you or staff	7	9	33
17	Physical aggression towards other pupils	77	71**	86
18	Physical aggression towards you or staff	0.6	2 *	9

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level

Primary teachers

Around the school, the relative change over the years is not as negative as for the classroom, where 6 behaviours had increased and one decreased, although the decreased behaviour was however the important one of pupil to pupil aggression. Of the relevant behaviours around the school, 7 of the 17 were reported by more primary teachers in 2004 than in 1996 (omitting the use of mobile phones) and 8 by fewer teachers, but in fact the statistical picture was more varied. (Two behaviours stayed the same.)

The calculation of statistical significance showed that only two of the 7 increases were significant: these behaviours were sexist abuse or harassment of the other pupils, and physical aggression to the teacher. In each case these had been reported by a small number of teachers. It is interesting nevertheless that sexist abuse, perhaps bullying, has emerged here as it did inside the classroom. Again, we might speculate whether this is an increase or increased visibility.

The 3 of the 8 behaviours which had decreased in terms of statistical significance were: loitering in 'prohibited' areas; physical aggression among pupils and pupils showing a lack of concern for others. This might be a positive and encouraging sign, especially as pupil to pupil aggression in the classroom had also been met less often by primary teachers in 2004.

Primary headteachers

Although physical aggression among pupils was less often reported by the 2004 sample of teachers, this was the pupil behaviour around the school most often dealt with by the headteachers. Did this imply that teachers were not meeting pupil to pupil aggression simply because the headteacher dealt with it? Without knowing more about the individual schools we can only speculate. Perhaps headteachers met pupil to pupil aggression more often because of the headteacher's role in relation to play areas and the continuing struggle in primary schools over 'play fighting' or 'toy fighting'. Once again, however, it is worth stressing that primary headteachers have an overview of the school and that this is the most convincing reason for the difference between teacher and headteacher perceptions.

It is also interesting that 15% of the headteachers dealt with pupils leaving school premises without permission, given current concerns over the security of schools. We do not know the circumstances: this may have been a child retrieving a ball from the street, for example.

On the whole, the headteachers' reports were similar to those of the teachers, save for pupil to teacher verbal abuse. Small percentages of primary school teachers reported this in both 1996 (7%) and 2004 (9%), but a much higher percentage of headteachers (33%) dealt with this behaviour. Again we assume that headteachers are dealing not only with anything referred by teachers, but with the behaviour met by ancillary staff, dinner ladies, the janitor, and any other adult in the school, and indeed teachers who were not surveyed.

4.3   Are pupil behaviours difficult to deal with?

Introduction

For the primary school teachers this may have been a difficult question to answer fully in the questionnaire format. From the open response it seemed that dealing with pupil behaviours was to some extent divided between what might be called the everyday, low level but irritating or disruptive incidents, and coping with pupils who required a great deal of work. Those teachers who raised the latter point were less optimistic that the behaviour of these pupils might be effectively dealt with in the school context, at least without considerable extra resources.

> *I have a pupil with ADHD. His medicine has been changed three times this session. His behaviour is intolerable. Both of us need help!*

Secondary schools too will have such pupils but, in the smaller world of the primary school, a pupil who shows many behavioural problems may have a disproportionate effect on other pupils and on teacher morale. The questionnaire did not allow for detail of specific pupils, but focused on behaviours. The following sections outline the teachers' and headteachers' views on the difficulty of dealing with pupil behaviours.

Primary teachers

About 3 in 10 primary school teachers found some behaviour in the classroom difficult to deal with in 2004. This was much the same as in 1996. Almost 2 in 10 primary school teachers found some behaviour around the school difficult to deal with in 2004. This was a higher figure than in 1996, when just over 1 in 10 teachers gave a similar response. The actual behaviours noted as particularly difficult varied, as they had for the classroom. The teachers found physical and verbal aggression among pupils hardest to deal with, but because of the number of 'difficult'

behaviours available to choose from, the percentages in each case were small. In some cases the reason for behaviours being difficult to deal with was the lack of commitment to a school policy.

> *We do have a discipline policy but no-one follows it - teachers are left along with problems and just hope problems do not rear their heads.*

Primary headteachers

For the primary headteachers, about 4 in 10 found some pupil classroom behaviour difficult to deal with; this was the same ratio as their secondary colleagues. Behaviour around the school was found particularly difficult by 3 in 10 primary headteachers, fewer this time than their secondary colleagues, 4 in 10 of whom reported a particular difficulty.

The range of behaviours nominated as particularly difficult again varied, a feature of the context in which the behaviour was encountered no doubt, but for the primary school heads, pupil to pupil physical aggression was the most often noted as difficult. This was true both in the classroom and around the school. The highest figure here was from the 86% of primary headteachers who had dealt with pupil to pupil aggression around the school; 1 in 3 of these heads found this behaviour particularly difficult.

4.4   Dealing with difficult pupils and/or classes

Introduction

The teachers and headteachers were asked a general question about dealing with difficult classes and/or pupils. The was presented in the form of a checklist of about 18 potential strategies and sanctions, ranging from verbal rebukes to punishment exercises, from using humour to defuse

the situation to deliberately ignoring minor disruption. The lists differed slightly in that some

sanctions were available only to teachers or headteachers, but not to both.

The respondents were then asked to record the strategy or sanction they had found the most

effective and the one they had found the most ineffective.

Primary teachers

For primary teachers, the most commonly used strategies to deal with difficult classes and/or

pupils were: verbal rebukes or 'telling off' (given by almost all, 95%), reasoning with the pupil

(93%) and using humour (88%). Views on the effectiveness of the various strategies and

sanctions were less unified. The teachers could only choose one strategy as most effective and

the response was scattered across all of the 17 possibilities, with no major agreement.

Furthermore, as with the secondary teachers, about 1 teacher in 5 did not reply to this question

on effectiveness.

Negotiating with pupils (not the most commonly used strategy, but given by 83% of the teachers)

attracted the largest percentage of votes as most effective, with 24% opting for this.

As for the most ineffective approach, again the replies were scattered across the possibilities.

Furthermore, over 4 in 10 primary teachers did not answer this question, a proportion similar to

the secondary teachers in this respect. The strategy seen by the highest percentage of teachers

(21%) as least effective was actually a 'telling off', the strategy most often used (given by 95% of

the teachers). This seemingly contradictory response points up the difficulty for teachers of calling any strategy effective or ineffective in isolation from the context of pupil behaviour.

Looking back at the earlier primary teacher survey, in 1996, verbal rebukes, reasoning and humour were the most often used strategies. Views on the effectiveness of the strategies were also similar, with negotiation again emerging more often as effective, although the strategy viewed as least effective in 1996 was giving the pupils extra work.

It was also the case that in the earlier survey, similarly substantial percentages of primary teachers chose not to answer the effectiveness questions. About 1 person in 5 omitted 'most effective?' and about 4 in 10 omitted 'least effective?'. We speculated then that, as with the secondary teachers, the missing primary teachers may have felt that circumstances dictated effectiveness, or indeed that no single strategy could be called infallibly effective or ineffective.

The vast majority of the primary teachers had been applying their strategies to the class they taught every day; very few reported being unfamiliar with the class for some reason such as maternity cover. When the teachers were asked about the proportion of pupils they found particularly hard to deal with in that class, 58% said one or two pupils and 24% said none at all. Only 2% found quite a lot of pupils difficult, and 15% found several pupils difficult. These were broad categories of response, but nevertheless, the majority of teachers did not claim several pupils who were difficult. On the other hand, even one difficult pupil might be very hard to deal with effectively. We return to the difficult minority in section 4.6,

Primary headteachers

For the primary headteachers, a similar picture to the teachers' views emerged. Reasoning with pupils (95%), humour (89%) and verbal rebukes (89%) were the most commonly used strategies. As with the teachers, views on the effectiveness of the various strategies did not show any major agreement but were scattered across the various options. Reasoning with pupils was most often given as the most effective strategy, and least effective was giving extra work or a punishment exercise. Percentages noting this were not high, and about 1 in 10 (for 'most effective?') and almost 5 in 10 (for 'least effective?') headteachers did not reply here.

Again, the same suggestion might be made, that is headteachers do not see an obvious response to problematic pupil behaviour and there is no agreed recipe for success.

As with the secondary headteachers, the primary headteachers were asked what proportion of pupils in the school caused problems. The majority of headteachers felt that most of their pupils were well-behaved and caused no problem at all. Even minor problems were reported by the majority of heads as arising from only a few pupils.

The headteachers' view on the seriousness of the problem supported this (see section 4.5), although this does not mean that dealing with difficult behaviour from a minority of pupils was simple.

We have moved from discussion of the pupil behaviours met by teachers and headteachers in one specific week to more general views on dealing with pupil behaviour. We now move on to

another general issue, that is the primary school teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of the seriousness of the problem.

4.5   How serious is the problem?

Introduction

For the primary teachers, some pupil behaviours appear to be encountered less often in 2004, both in the classroom and around the school, as Table 5 and Table 6 show. Most notably, pupil to pupil physical aggression was not met as often in 2004 as in 1996. This could be encouraging, but what did the teachers think about the overall seriousness of the problem?

For the headteachers we have no comparison with an earlier cohort. Their views on the seriousness of the discipline problem can only be considered against the pupil behaviours they reported, as shown in Tables 5 and 6 or against the views of the teachers.

Table 7 below presents the response of primary teachers in 1996 and in 2004 and of primary headteachers in 2004 to the question: 'discipline problems vary from school to school in their seriousness. Looking at your own school as a whole, how serious is the problem of indiscipline in your opinion?'

Table 7 Primary teachers' and headteachers' views on the seriousness of the discipline problem

How serious a problem?	% Primary Teachers		Primary Headteachers 2004 N=276
	1996 N=825	2004 N=699	
Very serious	2	3	1
Serious	15	19	11
Not very serious	39	41	40
Minor	35	32	40
No problem at all	10	5	8

Primary teachers

As Table 7 shows, the percentage of teachers who saw the situation as either serious or very serious rose slightly over the years, from 17% in 1996 to 22% in 2004. This change had statistical significance. The change here was not by as a high a percentage as found in the secondary school (see Table 3), which seems to accord with the rather more optimistic picture of discipline in the primary school.

The question about the seriousness of the problem was an overview of the whole school by the teachers. In section 4.6 we look at whether they thought more time was spent on discipline and whether violence was a problem.

Primary headteachers

As in the secondary school, a lesser percentage of primary headteachers than teachers appeared to see discipline problems as serious or very serious (12%). We have already noted that the primary teachers and headteachers came from the same sample of schools, unlike the secondary school people. We might speculate that headteachers are perhaps able to take a broader view than the teachers. Or, of course, headteachers may prefer to give a more positive picture of the school for which they are responsible.

Again, an indicator of the seriousness of the problem might be the perception of time spent on discipline, or the perception of the school as violent. We now turn to these two issues.

4.6   Time spent on discipline and views on violence

Introduction

The questionnaires sent to teachers and headteachers were lengthy. It would have been an additional and very difficult task for them to record the time spent in the survey week in dealing with discipline. What we report in Table 8 below is therefore the teachers' and headteachers' perceptions of whether they are spending more/the same/less time on discipline.

Specific incidence of pupil violence during the week would have been recorded, as Tables 5 and 6 show. The data in Table 8 deals with general perceptions of the school as a whole, and for the teachers offers a comparison with teachers from 1996.

We should stress that in section c) of Table 8, the percentages shown are percentages only of those teachers/headteachers who agreed that violence was a problem in their school. We emphasise this as the percentages may appear spuriously high, if taken to be percentages of the total number of teachers/headteachers in the survey.

Table 8 Primary teachers'/headteachers' further comments on discipline: time spent, violence

	Primary school teachers in 1996 (N=825)	Primary school teachers in 2004 (N=699)	Primary Head teachers in 2004 (N=276)
	%	%	%
(a) time spent on discipline …			
has increased	45	46	40
stayed the same	39	38	39
decreased	16	16	21
(b) pupil violence in the school …			
is a problem	20	20	36
is not a problem	80	80	64
(c) pupil violence is …	**N=165**	**N=132**	**N=95**

verbal aggression between pupils	98	100	86
physical aggression between pupils	99	97	84
verbal aggression to teachers	43	69**	39
physical aggression to teachers	10	27**	21

* indicates significant at the 5% level
** indicates significant at the 1% level

Time spent on discipline: primary teachers' views

For the primary school samples, the percentages of teachers seeing themselves as spending more time on discipline stayed much the same over 1996 and 2004 at 45% and 46%. This differs from the view in secondary school, but it could imply that problems are more quickly dealt with in the smaller scale of the primary school, at least from the teacher viewpoint.

Violence in the school: primary teachers' views

Here again primary teachers present a more positive picture than secondary colleagues, in that the percentages in 2004 are exactly the same as the percentages in 1996. In both cases, 1 in 5 people saw their school as violent. While the figure is stable it is not particularly cheering in itself, as it implies a substantial number of schools where staff were experiencing difficulties.

Every one of the primary teachers in 2004 who saw their school as violent also gave pupil to pupil verbal aggression as a characteristic of the violence. In 1996 this percentage was almost as high (see Table 8c). Physical aggression among pupils was also given as a characteristic of schools where violence was a problem by almost all of the teachers in 1996 and 2004. Although there had been a very small drop in percentage in 2004, this had no statistical significance.

Looking back at the primary school teacher sample as a whole, pupil to pupil physical aggression significantly dropped in 2004. For those teachers who saw violence as a problem in their schools, this was not the case. We have no reason to suppose that these teachers are different in some way from their colleagues. The data, therefore, do not offer us an explanation of why this minority of teachers saw violence as a problem in their schools. More detailed investigation would be necessary to offer a convincing understanding of these teachers' views. It may be, for example, that for at least some of these schools, local conditions are such as to make the task of dealing with pupil behaviour very difficult, leading to an atmosphere of violence in the school.

Certainly, for the primary teachers who saw their school as violent, their personal experience of verbal and physical aggression from pupils was markedly higher in 2004 than in 1996, and at a statistically significant level. The percentages shown in Table 8c for these pupil behaviours are also far higher than the percentages in Table 5 and 6, which give the comparable data for *all* the primary teachers in 2004.

It also appeared that in these schools seen as violent, a higher percentage of primary teachers may have met physical aggression towards themselves than did their secondary colleagues. That is, 27% of primary teachers in these schools reported pupil to teacher violence; 18% of secondary teachers in schools seen as violent reported pupil to teacher violence. Of course, the teacher situations are not directly comparable, nor do we have any details of what this pupil physical aggression might be. We also need to remember that we are dealing with very small numbers, about 34 primary teachers and 40 secondary teachers in schools seen as violent who report pupil-teacher aggression.

Time spent on discipline and views on violence in the school: primary headteachers

There is no comparative data over time for primary headteachers, but Table 8a shows that less

than half of the sample, 4 in 10 people, felt that the time they spent on discipline had increased.

This was a smaller proportion than that of teachers. Moreover, the headteachers' views could

reflect time spent on negotiation with the education authority, or local services, or indeed with

staff in the school as much as an increase in challenging behaviour.

As for pupil violence in the school, 36% of the headteachers felt they had this problem, a higher

percentage than that of teachers. This reflects the data shown in Tables 5 and 6, where higher

percentages of headteachers in general reported dealing with the more extreme or aggressive

pupil behaviours.

The difficult minority

Generally the primary school teachers and headteachers in 2004 did not differ from the primary

school teachers in 1996 in seeing lower and middle attaining boys as particularly difficult. They

also did not identify particularly difficult pupils as having a Record of Need but a substantial

minority said that the particularly difficult pupil had special provision or support.

Both teachers and headteachers were asked about exclusion. The primary teachers in 2004 gave

a very similar response to primary teachers in 1996. Views on exclusion did not appear to have

changed to any extent. For each group of respondents, a list of statements about exclusion was

offered. The teachers/headteachers were asked to indicate agreement/disagreement on a five-point scale. The primary teachers, like their secondary colleagues, saw exclusion as:

- Allowing other pupils to get on with their work (90%)

- Providing essential respite for teachers (82%)

- Sending a signal to all parents about pupil behaviour (68%)

- Having a good effect on the behaviour of other pupils (53%).

For the last of these statements, the 53% of primary teachers who agreed was a smaller percentage than those agreeing at secondary level. Furthermore, for the primary teachers, 16% *disagreed* that exclusion had a good effect on the behaviour of other pupils. Only 9% of secondary teachers similarly disagreed.

As for the effect of exclusion on the excluded pupil, the largest percentage of primary teachers (52%) were neutral on this and a further 35% felt that exclusion did *not* have a good effect on the excluded pupil.

The headteachers noted that:

- Exclusion was always the last resort (98%)

- Exclusion gave the teachers essential respite (84%)

- Exclusion sent a signal to all parents about pupil behaviour (59%).

Unlike primary teachers and colleagues in secondary schools, however, the primary headteachers took a more negative view of the effect of exclusion on the excluded pupil. The largest

percentage of the primary headteacher group (51%) thought that exclusion did not have a good effect on the behaviour of the excluded pupil. A further 37% were neutral on this, leaving only 12% who felt that exclusion did have a good effect on the pupil excluded. As one headteacher put it:

> *Exclusion is not the answer, but it can, on occasion provide a salutary lesson for those concerned and send a firm message to pupils and parents.*

A third of the primary teachers and half of the primary headteachers gave additional open comment. As with the secondary teachers and headteachers, this ranged over a number of topics, from comments on the questions themselves to personal histories. Broadly speaking, however, there were two kinds of 'minority' pupil written about. There was the small minority of pupils causing persistent low level problems of behaviour and the few pupils exhibiting major personal problems being acted out in the school.

As far as the latter pupils were concerned, the primary school teachers and headteachers found inclusion difficult:

> *Those children are so demanding of time that they steal the other children's education.*
>
> *As an HT I am caught between my desire to do my best for the individual and concern to respect the need of others.*

This was particularly felt where an infant pupil had potentially seven years in the school, but we should add that teachers and headteachers did also write in favour of inclusion.

> *I am firmly against exclusion and much prefer to build upon the positive. [Specific child described where success achieved.]*

Nevertheless, dealing with the difficult minority could be frustrating. As one teacher wrote:

> *You* know *it will be like that!! It can be deflating and exhausting. Your well-planned lesson can be a disaster! It's such hard work!!*
>
> *Inclusion of all children in to mainstream is the rod which will break the back of our education system.*

We now turn to the views of teachers and headteachers from both sectors in relation to ideas or strategies aimed at improving school discipline.

5 Improving Discipline

5.1 Views in the Secondary School

As mentioned in the introduction, a number of policy developments have taken place in the time between the 1996 and the current surveys. It was therefore of particular interest to analyse the teachers' perceptions of the priority actions to improve school discipline. We did not ask this question in 1990 and so have the 1996 responses as the baseline. Let us first consider the response of secondary teachers.

Table 9 Secondary teachers' choice of priority actions to improve school discipline, 1996 and 2004

		1996 (N = 561)			2004 (N = 528)		
		Yes this is needed	**No, it is in place already**	**No, it is ineffective**	**Yes this is needed**	**No, it is in place already**	**No, it is ineffective**
		%	%	%	%	%	%
• offering more places in special units outside the school for pupils with behaviour difficulties	**	85	6	8	92	5	2
• establishing smaller classes	**	80	17	2	90	9	1
• establishing special units in the school for children displaying behavioural difficulties	**	68	22	10	58	36	6
• more guidance and support from colleagues for teachers facing problems of indiscipline		65	30	5	64	31	5
• more in-service training focusing on discipline problems	**	63	23	15	57	32	11

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and strategies							
• more guidance or support from the local authority for teachers facing problems with discipline	**	61	8	31	71	12	17
• more counselling for pupils whose behaviour is often difficult		60	32	8	54	37	9

[1] For those actions marked with an asterisk, the profile of opinion in 2004 was significantly different from that in 1996. One asterisk denotes significance at the 5% level, two at the 1% level.
[2] These are the suggested priority actions identified by 50% or more of the sample. There was a total of 21 actions.

As can be seen, seven priority actions were listed and the same top two priorities in 1996 and 2004 were identified. It is worth noting that there is a statistically significant reduction in the percentage of teachers in 2004 who believe that special units are ineffective. This might be the result of increased contact between special and mainstream schools and thus a better understanding of the services provided. It is also noteworthy that the establishment of special units in schools has moved from the third to the fifth priority, a reflection perhaps of the funding of such units as part of the Better Behaviour Better Learning recommendations. This speculation is supported by the statistically significant increase in the percentage of secondary teachers reporting that such units are already in place. The statistically significant percentages reporting the availability of in -service training in 2004 could be a further indication that the Better Behaviour Better Learning recommendations are being put into place. The need for more guidance and support from local authorities moves from sixth place in 1996 to third place in 2004 and there is a statistically significant reduction in the percentage of teachers seeing such guidance as ineffective. The need for more guidance and support from colleagues remains unchanged and this is perhaps surprising given the implementation of framework for intervention in some local authorities. This scheme focuses on working with colleagues to analyse behaviour problems in a particular classroom and developing strategies to tackle these.

The teachers were also given the opportunity to choose which of the suggested list of actions they perceived to be the most important. There was no single action deemed most important by a majority of the teachers; the response was spread over the options possible. The top three actions chosen were: firmer communication by senior staff to pupils about what they can and cannot do (21%), smaller classes (18%) and offering more places in special units outside the school for pupils with behavioural difficulties (10%).

The headteachers' perceptions of whether or not the actions offered in the questionnaire were needed/in place already/ineffective differed slightly from the views expressed by teachers. The majority of headteachers (77%) noted that a change in teaching styles would improve discipline in their specific school; 21% felt that they had this in place already and only 1% thought this an ineffective strategy. Other actions rated as needed/in place already/ineffective were broadly similar to those chosen by the teachers.

When asked to select only one option as the most important in improving school discipline, the headteachers reflected the concerns of the teachers, although with a difference again. The top three actions nominated by headteachers were: small classes (21%), more places in special units outside the school (18%) and changing teacher styles (10%). As we have noted before, the headteachers are a wider group than the teachers, who come from a sub-set of secondary schools. Nevertheless, it may be a little disturbing that an admittedly small proportion of teachers seem to want some change in managerial style, while headteachers would like teachers to change, a reflection of a gap in perception between some headteachers and their staff.

Looking back briefly to 1990 and 1996, smaller classes and special units featured as most important then too, for both teachers and headteachers.

Better Behaviour, Better Learning has been referred to in the Introduction; the survey is part of a larger project looking at the impact of some of the recommendations of that report. In the questionnaire we therefore included two direct questions relevant to *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*. Firstly, we asked how helpful the respondent found the recommendations; the response is shown in Table 10 below. Secondly, we asked whether additional staffing (eg home-school link worker, classroom assistant, teaching staff) had been made available as a result of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*.

Table 10 Views of secondary teachers and headteachers of Better Behaviour, Better Learning *recommendations*

	Found helpful	**Unhelpful**	**Unaware of BBBL**
Teachers (N=528)	52%	11%	37%
Headteachers (N=275)	93%	5%	2%

Perhaps it is not unexpected that headteachers were more aware than teachers of this strategic initiative, but the fact that over a third of the teachers claimed to be unaware of the recommendations of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* might suggest that in some schools, despite summary information being sent to every teacher, there is little knowledge of this important policy document. Alternatively, it may be the case that the ideas are debated or implemented, although the formal title of the initiative is less known.

The question of whether additional staffing had been made available was in the main answered 'don't know', as far as the teachers were concerned; 55% of the secondary teachers said this. Of course, it is possible that some of these teachers were simply unaware of how extra staff had been funded.

The remaining 45% of teachers was almost equally divided between agreeing and disagreeing that additional staffing had been made available as a result of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*.

It is interesting, that headteachers appeared much more positive about funds following from the recommendations: 60% of the headteachers replied that additional staff has been made available through *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*. Of the remaining 40%, almost all (36%) said no additional staffing had been employed, while a small percentage (4%) did not know whether this had been the case.

The perceptions of primary teachers and headteachers provide an interesting comparison.

5.2   Views in the Primary School

Table 11 Primary teachers' choice of priority actions to improve school discipline, 1996 and 2004

		1996 (N = 825)			2004 (N = 699)		
		Yes this is needed	**No, it is in place already**	**No, it is ineffective**	**Yes this is needed**	**No, it is in place already**	**No, it is ineffective**
		%	%	%	%	%	%
• establishing smaller classes	*	73	21	6	77	20	3
• offering more places in special units outside the school for pupils with behaviour difficulties		72	6	22	75	6	19
• establishing special units in the school for children displaying behavioural difficulties	**	66	6	28	71	8	21
• more counselling for pupils whose behaviour is often difficult		63	26	10	62	30	8
• more in-service training focusing on discipline problems and	*	61	24	14	61	28	11

strategies						
• more guidance or support from the local authority for teachers facing problems with discipline	60	17	23	63	18	19

[1] For those actions marked with an asterisk, the profile of opinion in 2004 was significantly different from that in 1996. One asterisk denotes significance at the 5% level, two at the 1% level.

[2] These are the suggested priority actions identified by 50% or more of the sample. There was a total of 20 actions.

The same three priorities, falling into the same rank order were cited by two-thirds and over of the primary teachers in 1996 and in 2004. This is interesting given the emphasis on schooling as a way of promoting social inclusion since the late 1990s. As priority actions, smaller classes and special provision dominated. It is noteworthy that while only 3% of primary teachers believe that establishing smaller classes is an ineffective response to behaviour problems, 21% believe special provision is ineffective. Nevertheless there seems to be a statistically significant move in the belief towards the effectiveness of special provision within the school, as with their secondary colleagues. Unlike the secondary teachers, however, there seems to have been little change for primary teachers in the provision of in-service training or in guidance and support from the local authority. While pupil counselling came seventh in the secondary teachers' list of priorities, it came fourth for primary teachers. Furthermore, perceptions of the effectiveness of this strategy did not appear to have changed. This may be a reflection of the greater optimism about the effectiveness of such intervention when pupils are younger.

As with their secondary colleagues, the primary teachers were asked to select only one action as the most important for them in improving school discipline. Again, the response was spread over the possible actions offered. The top three chosen were: smaller classes (29%), more classroom assistants (12%) and firmer communication by senior staff to pupils about what they can and cannot do (10%).

The primary headteachers' perceptions of whether the actions offered in the questionnaire were needed/in place already/ineffective were similar to those of the teachers, with a major exception. The highest percentage of headteachers (74%) noted that the provision of more classroom assistants would improve discipline in their particular school; 21% noted that they had this in place already and 5% considered this to be an ineffective action.

When asked to select only one option as the most important in improving school discipline, the headteachers from the primary sector gave a slightly different response from the teachers. The top three actions nominated by headteachers were: smaller classes (18%), special units inside the school for children displaying behavioural difficulties (14%) and more classroom assistants (10%). The primary school samples of teachers and headteachers came from the same schools, but although 10% of the teachers seemed to want a firmer managerial style, the headteachers were not looking for a change in teachers.

We are only able to look back for the primary teachers. In 1996 the primary school sample chose as most important to school discipline: smaller classes, special units in school and a more coherent policy from senior staff.

The primary teachers and headteachers were asked the same two direct questions about *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* as their secondary colleagues. In this case both teachers and headteachers were from the same sample of schools. Table 12 shows the response.

Table 12 Views of primary teachers and headteachers of Better Behaviour, Better Learning *recommendations*

	Found helpful	**Unhelpful**	**Unaware of BBBL**
Teachers (N=699)	48%	2%	50%
Headteachers (N=276)	92%	3%	5%

As with the secondary school response, headteachers were more aware of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* than were teachers. Almost all of the primary school headteachers (92%) were aware of the recommendations, with 5% unaware and 3% finding them unhelpful. This was very similar to the secondary headteacher response.

For the primary school sample, the teachers and headteachers came from the same schools, however. The teachers who were unaware of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* taught in schools where the headteachers were aware of the recommendations. It is surprising that such a high percentage of teachers appeared to be unaware of this policy development.

Indeed, the percentage of primary teachers unaware (50%) was higher than the percentage in secondary schools (37%). Given the relative teacher populations in primary and secondary schools, and the different opportunities for contact with the headteacher, this is worth noting. It also gives pause for thought about how to disseminate information about policy initiatives more effectively.

As for the extra staffing being made available, again a different picture emerged from the primary school response. A higher percentage of primary teachers (65%) than of secondary

teachers (55%) did not know whether or not extra staffing had been made available to their school through *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* recommendations.

Only 10% of primary teachers agreed that extra staffing had been provided, as opposed to 22% of secondary teachers. This leaves 26% of primary teachers (and 23% in secondary) who stated definitely that increased staffing had not happened.

We might repeat that in the case of the teachers, the source of funding for any extra staff might be unclear or unknown. Some of the 65% of primary teachers (and 55% of secondary teachers) who replied 'don't know' to the question on extra staffing funded through the *Better Behaviour, Better Learning* recommendations may have meant just that: they were not aware of how any funding was derived.

The primary school headteachers also differed in their views on increased staffing from secondary colleagues. The majority of the primary heads (61%) reported that increased staffing had *not* been funded, as against 36% of secondary heads who reported this. Only 20% of the primary heads agreed that extra staffing had been allocated, as against 60% of the secondary heads. The remaining 10% of primary headteachers replied 'don't know'.

These percentages from headteachers give the impression that the secondary school has perhaps been considered first in terms of strategic planning by at least some local authorities. Certainly there were a few headteachers from the primary sector who wrote in the open response that they felt ill-served by the local authority:

I am miserably disappointed by how resources to schools appear to have been hijacked by this particular authority. Is it any wonder morale continues to sink?

More generally, data from both primary and secondary teachers about levels of awareness of *Better Behaviour, Better Learning*, raise questions about how policy developments might be communicated more effectively.

5.3   Overall priorities

In summary, both primary and secondary teachers identify the provision of more places in special units outside school and the establishment of smaller classes as priorities although primary teachers are more sceptical than their secondary colleagues about the effectiveness of special units. Both believe in the efficacy of smaller classes but we do not know the particular size of class preferred. Special units within schools seem more prevalent in secondary than primary and this is hardly surprising given the smaller size of many primary schools. The emphasis on special provision outside the mainstream gives pause for thought about how difficult teachers are finding the presumption of mainstream education for all children, a key feature of current national policy. While more guidance and support from local authorities featured as priorities there was a perception amongst relatively high percentages of both primary and secondary teachers that this was ineffective. This could reflect the shortage of educational psychologists, changing patterns of staffing in local authorities in terms of advisory services, or teachers' unrealistic expectations of what the local authority can do.

6   Conclusion

6.1   Secondary School

This report has concentrated on the kinds of behaviours encountered by teachers and

headteachers, whether these are difficult to deal with and whether there have been changes over

time. The most striking findings are the increasing number of secondary teachers reporting a

wide range of potentially disruptive behaviours in the classroom and around the school. Tests of

statistical significance show that the increase in the number of teachers reporting most of the

behaviours could not be attributed to chance.

The picture presented by secondary headteachers is less pessimistic than that of their staff. It

must be remembered that *all* headteachers were surveyed not just those in the schools sample for

the secondary teachers. The response rate here was also highest of all samples at 72%.

Relatively small percentages of headteachers reported meeting disaffection on a daily basis but

the weekly picture presented is more troubling. Over 80% report dealing with pupil to pupil

physical aggression and over 70% report dealing with pupil to pupil verbal aggression. Relations

among pupils therefore seem a cause for concern given the important socialising role which

schools play. Relations between staff and some pupils are also concerning given that 67% of

secondary headteachers report dealing with general verbal abuse to them or their staff on a

weekly basis.

6.2   Primary School

For the primary teachers the picture was more positive. Although the overall impression is that

more primary teachers were meeting disruption to their classroom teaching, the picture around

the school is not as pessimistic. It is particularly interesting that reports of pupil to pupil

aggression around the school have decreased significantly, perhaps as a consequence of a range

of playground projects, playground supervisors and/or work on stopping bullying. The

perceptions of primary teachers were neither as negative as those of their secondary colleagues,

nor as changed between 1996 and 2004.

Primary headteachers reported a broadly similar picture to their secondary colleagues, difference

being attributable to different contexts in which they are working and in particular to the younger

ages of their pupils.

6.3 General Points

Throughout this report we have highlighted the following important caveats in interpreting the

data:

- What counts as indiscipline is highly context dependent.
- There have been concerns about standards of pupil behaviour for as long as there have been
  schools.
- The causes of and therefore 'cures' for indiscipline are many and various so that any single
  intervention is unlikely to produce dramatic results. A multi-faceted approach using a variety
  of strategies is more likely to pay dividends.
- The data provide information about the incidence of behaviours not about the number of
  pupils behaving in particular ways. Nevertheless, the changes over time in the numbers of
  teachers encountering behaviours are worrying.

We have provided a great deal of statistical information and don't want to repeat this here. Nor do we wish to go beyond the data in this report to provide a more discursive and analytic account, locating the data in world-wide concerns about the behaviour of young people in schools (Debarbieux 2003). Rather we wish to highlight three additional themes which may be easily submerged in the mass of information contained in this report. These are:

- Schools are doing a great deal to promote good discipline and take their role in this work extremely seriously.
- Boys in both primary and secondary schools are seen as particularly difficult and challenging.
- Teachers and headteachers in these surveys are aware of the Executive's commitment to schooling as a way of combating social exclusion. They see smaller class sizes as a way of helping to integrate troubled and troublesome young people into mainstream. They are also wanted greater provision of off site units. This raises questions about the ability of mainstream comprehensive as currently funded, organised and staffed to meet the challenge of inclusion.

It will, of course, take time for all the recommendations in Better Behaviour, Better Learning to have an impact. The picture presented here suggests that it is right to focus on behaviour as a priority area for national, local and school policy and practice. It also suggests that much more needs to be done to raise awareness of the national and local policy and of the new funding associated with it.

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Technical Appendix

Samples

In 1990, 112 secondary schools were contacted by the Scottish Office and asked to pass on to designated but randomly selected teachers the sealed envelope with the questionnaire. A total of 1011 teachers was contacted and some 883 replied, a response rate of 87%. We attributed this extremely high return rate to a real concern being expressed by teachers in Scotland in the wake of the Elton Report (DES 1989) from which the questionnaire was taken, and the identification of specific named teachers to complete the survey.

Some 8 months after the teacher survey, a similar questionnaire was sent to all secondary school headteachers in the state sector. The return rate was 90%; 386 out of 431 headteachers replied. From the schools selected for the teacher survey, 100 out of 112 headteacher replies were received.

The teacher names from the 1990 survey were erased to preserve anonymity.

No primary school staff were approached in this first survey.

The 1996 survey

The 1996 survey was funded by the Educational Institute of Scotland. The 1996 sample of teachers was a new randomly selected group, although from the same schools as in the 1990 survey. By 1996, the attrition of closure and amalgamation reduced the overall number of schools to 101. A further two schools declined to participate. We contacted ten teachers in each

school, selected by post rather than name and covering a range of teaching subjects; for the smaller schools, fewer teachers were approached. This gave 909 teachers, of whom 561 replied, giving a response rate of 62%, substantially lower than in 1990. Of these 561, only 7% were certain that they had participated in the earlier survey; 21% were unsure and the remaining 72% were certain that they had not participated earlier.

In the 1996 survey, primary schools were contacted for the first time. A revised version of the questionnaire was created for this new sample. The primary schools approached were those sending substantial numbers of pupils to the secondary schools already identified. The total number of schools contacted was 426, of which 323 participated. The target sample was 1560 teachers, as we hoped to elicit replies from four staff members in all but the smallest of the schools, that is from teachers of P1, P3, P5 and P7. In the primary sector, only 15 schools replied declining to take part, yet no response was returned from a further 73 schools. In the event, 825 teachers responded, a return rate of 53%.

The response rate for 1996, for both secondary teachers and for the new sample of primary school teachers was lower than anticipated.

The 1996 survey, at both secondary and primary level, was directed to teachers via the headteacher. It may be that in some schools, the headteacher did not distribute the questionnaire. This would imply that the response rate was higher than it appears, but as we have no way of knowing why people did not reply, this can only be speculation.

The 2004 Survey

In the latest 2004 survey, we again contacted as many of the original sample schools as still existed. Some changes were found, from new buildings and a change of name to amalgamation or closure. This was most marked in one specific inner city area, where 7 secondary schools were 'lost'. Rather than leave this geographic area under-represented, we selected a replacement school where possible. This was either the new, amalgamated school or the school now attended by pupils from the catchment area of the closed school. This gave us a list of 104 schools, each to be sent 10 questionnaires to teachers designated by post (to give a distribution of teaching subjects). Taking into account a few particularly small secondary schools in remote areas, the overall number of questionnaires sent to the secondary schools was 1000. We received 528 replies, a response rate of 53%.

At the same time, questionnaires were sent to primary schools for distribution to 4 teachers on the same basis as in 1996. Again, a small number of schools had closed or amalgamated. We were able to replace all of these with a similar school sending pupils to that specific secondary school. Some 427 primary schools were contacted and 1400 questionnaires posted out. Replies were received from some 278 of the primary schools, from 699 primary teachers. This gives a return rate of 49% if all the questionnaires sent are taking into account.

We have no idea of why the return from the primary sector was so low. We cannot assume that teachers in the missing schools did not see the questionnaire. We have to assume they decided not to participate, for whatever reason.

In this 2004 survey, in addition to the two samples of teachers, we also sent the headteacher questionnaire from 1990 to all secondary schools in the state sector. We had a return rate of 71%. A revised version specific to primary schools was sent to the headteachers of 427 primary schools forming the source of the teacher sample. We had a return rate of 67%.

These return rates are lower than hoped for, but not too far from the 1996 administration of the survey.

Table A1 to A6 show the characteristics of the 2004 sample. A point of importance is that the sample in 2004 tended to be older. For the secondary teachers, there is a high percentage of people in promoted posts, but in 1990 and in 1996 this was also the case.

We should also stress that the technical detail of the samples' structure, taken together with the size of the samples, mean that they were broadly representative of primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

The questionnaire

The original questionnaire used in 1990 was taken from a version used in a major survey of teachers in England and Wales. This questionnaire was derived from teacher statements about the behaviours they encountered in the classroom and around the school, and what they considered to be problematic (Elton Report, 1989). In the various administrations in Scotland, some new items were added to the pupil behaviour lists, largely reflecting change over the years. For example, racist and sexist abuse to pupil(s) or teacher(s) were new categories in 1996, and

the use of mobile phones was added in 2004. Direct questions on pupil violence were added in 1996, as a reflection of growing concern within the profession.

For the 2004 survey there were four separate questionnaires, with some degree of overlap between them. Each version utilised largely closed choice questions with a 1 to 5 scale of possible response, or multiple choice questions. Some open questions were included.

There was opportunity for an open response on any issue of concern at the end of each version of the questionnaire; the replies received were from 40% of secondary teachers, 60% of secondary headteachers, 33% of primary teachers and 52% of primary headteachers.

The data

With four different sub-samples in 2004, and the possibility of comparison against samples in 1996 and 1990, there was a great deal of data to be organised in the Report. Inevitably, some data had to be omitted from the main text in its table form, although referred to briefly. Table A7 shows for 2004 the percentages of respondents meeting the various pupil behaviours at the level of at least once a day in the survey week, in the classroom.

The open response question provided the illustrative quotes used throughout the text.

Statistical Tests

Even if the views of teachers had not changed over the course of time, we would not expect the percentages in various years to be *exactly* the same. There would be small changes due to random fluctuations in the data. Therefore, two tests were used to investigate whether changes over time were greater than could be explained by random or chance variations. Where the

variables in question were dichotomous (eg an event occurred at least once a week/did not occur at least once a week), the aim is to look at differences in the proportions of responses and the test used was the chi-square contingency test of statistical association. Where the variables in question were ordinal (eg indiscipline is very serious/serious/not very serious/minor/no problem at all), the aim is to look for variations in the distributions of responses over the five categories. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov two sample test was used as it compares two sample distributions to see how likely it is that they were taken from the same population distribution.

The level of significance is the likelihood that a difference as great as, or greater than, that observed could occur if there is no change in opinion and the differences are due wholly to chance variations. Significance levels used were of 5% and 1% (meaning there are only five chances or one chance in 100 that teachers' opinions have not changed).

2004 Sample Details

[can you add in a footnote explaining why %s don't add up to 100%]

Table A1 Sex

	%Primary	% Secondary	% PHT	%SHT
Male	5	53	21	80
Female	95	47	78	20

Table A2 Full or Part Time

	%Primary	% Secondary	% PHT	%SHT
Full time post	86	90	91	96
Part time post	7	5	1	-

Table A3 Age, Teachers

	% Primary Teachers N= 699	% Secondary Teachers N= 528
<25	5	1
25-34	20	14
35-44	19	23
45-54	42	46
55>	15	16

Table A4 Age, headteachers

	% Primary HTs N= 276	% Secondary HTs N= 275
<34	1	-
35-44	10	6
45-54	65	64
55>	24	30

Table A5 Teachers in Promoted Post

	% Primary Teachers N=699	% Secondary Teachers N= 528
Promoted	12	61
Not Promoted	86	38

Table A6 Headteacher Years in Post

	% Primary HTs N= 276	% Secondary HTs N= 275
10 years and under	62	68
11-15 years	18	17
16 years and over	10	9

Table A7 Percentages of teachers/headteachers reporting different pupil behaviours as occurring/being referred at least daily in the classroom in a given week.

	Type of Pupil Behaviour	%* Primary teachers N=699	% Secondary teachers N=528	% Primary headteachers N=276	% Secondary headteachers N=275
1	Talking out of turn	71	79	34	20
2	Making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise	43	50	23	14
3	Hindering other pupils	47	61	26	22
4	Getting out of seat without permission	36	37	19	11
5	Not being punctual	13	44	14	17
6	Persistently infringing class rules	23	44	17	19
7	Eating/chewing in class	3	64	2	8
8	Calculated idleness or work avoidance	25	62	11	16
9	Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	13	41	16	23
10	General rowdiness, horseplay or mucking about	15	34	9	20
11	Use of mobile phones/texting	-	17	-	7
12	Physical destructiveness	1	4	-	2
13	Racist abuse towards other pupils	-	-	-	-
14	Sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils	1	3	-	2
15	General verbal abuse towards other pupils	8	19	7	12
16	Racist abuse towards you	-	-	-	-
17	Sexist abuse or harassment towards you	-	-	-	1
18	General verbal abuse towards you	2	5	3	8
19	Physical aggression towards other pupils	9	10	11	13
20	Physical aggression towards you	-	-	-	-