

# Department for children families



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The article outlines the nature and development of the debate about deviance and violence in schools in England. It explains disciplinary differences in the use of terminology. The focus is on summarising the most recent evidence about the nature and extent of these issues. Policy and practice developments targeted at reducing problem behaviour in and around schools are discussed.

The article concludes that there is a great deal of survey and monitoring data in England but a relative lack of in-depth and ethnographic research.

**KEYWORDS** England, deviance and violence, schools The focus is on England, rather than Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) or the United Kingdom (which includes Northern Ireland). Although the four countries have the same government there is a degree of devolution of power that means that there are important differences in the way that the education systems are run, as well as differences in legal governance.

The central government Department for Children Families and Schools (DCSF) covers England and Wales only. A few references include evidence from Wales, as well as England; there is one reference to an important longitudinal survey carried out in Scotland. 1 International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 8 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION FOCUS AND APPROACH OF THE REVIEW This review is focused on England and on the most recent research and developments, referring to older research and reports only when they are considered to be landmark or seminal studies.

As shorthand this paper will at times refer to ‘problem behaviour’ when not specifically referring to criminal behaviour (that is behaviour that breaks the criminal law) or specific types of behaviour that are clearly defined in research, as in the concept of bullying. The approach taken in this review is inter-disciplinary, but it is most centrally informed by criminology, social policy and education research. The move to Children’s Departments in England in recent years has meant that a more inter-disciplinary approach is increasingly appropriate and particularly in relation to the focus of this review.

It is acknowledged that there are mental health issues that may relate to the behaviour of young people in schools (Cowie et al, 2004) but this is not the main focus of this review. There is a great deal of research (Gillborn, 2008) as well as government monitoring data on ethnicity and schools (see for example, DfES, 2006). Monitoring gender and special educational need is an aspect of various annual national reports on schools and the educational system (see the [www. dcsf. gov.](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

[uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk) for a range of relevant reports). Research on gender (Osler et al, 2001) and special educational need (Visser et al, 2001) is also plentiful. These are all highly complex issues that cannot be covered adequately in a single review. The review was undertaken by updating existing reviews and collections (see for example Debarbieux and Blaya, 2001) on the subject of violence and various forms of ‘behaviour’ problems in schools in England (see relevant concepts and terminology in Figure 1).

The social science bibliographic database ‘ Assia’ was searched in order to locate the most up-to-date published research. Research commissioned and published by the relevant government departments was located through their websites; as was that commissioned by the largest teaching unions.

TERMINOLOGY The terminology used in England is quite complex and inevitably influenced by disciplinary, professional and political perspectives. ‘ Deviance’ as a concept is strongly associated with criminology but is also recognised as including non-criminal infringements of social norms.

‘ Deviance’ as a concept, in both popular and academic discourse in England, has been replaced to a large extent by the concept of ‘ anti-social behaviour’ (Home Deviance and violence in schools 9 Office, 2004; Rutter et al, 1998).

The use of the word ‘ violence’ generally refers to physically aggressive or threatening behaviour in England (Wright and Keetley, 2003). Figure 1 gives an overview of the concepts and terminology used in this review. Teachers and schools focus most on various pupil ‘ behaviours’.

Most often they refer to ‘ disruptive’, ‘ disaffected’ and ‘ bullying’ behaviours, or sometimes behaviour is said to be ‘ challenging. ’ These terms are associated with the particular focus of the behavioural description: for example, ‘ disruptive’ refers to the interruption of the work of the teacher and other pupils, or even the smooth working of the school; ‘ disaffected’ relates to a range of behaviours that imply a lack of affection for school and may include disruptive behaviour and non-attendance.

‘ Challenging’ or ‘ inappropriate’ behaviour are other terms used by teachers in relation to how a behaviour impacts on them, or the school context. ‘

Bullying' behaviour is a strong and specific focus of research and campaigns in relation to pupil behaviour. Bullying is usually seen as a particular subset of aggressive and violent behaviours. The very serious nature of some bullying has led Hall and Hayden (2007) to debate whether some forms of bullying could be conceptualised as ' hate crime. ' International Journal of Violence and School - 9 - September 2009 10

This review will cover the key evidence about the various problematic behaviours (shown in Figure 1) that together make up the available research on ' deviance' and ' violence' in English schools. It should be borne in mind whilst reading this review that the boundaries between behaviours that break with social norms or rules and those that break the criminal law have become increasingly blurred in recent years in England. This has happened partly as a result of the focus on ' crime prevention' (and the criminalisation of social policy, Rodger, 2008) and, partly because there is in any case the possibility for interpreting actions in more than one way. For example, when does a playground ' fight' become ' assault'?

CONTEXT – DEVELOPMENT OF CONCERNS

Although there is evidence of some concern about the behaviour of young people in school wherever there are historical records (see Tubbs, 1996). A more specific concern began to grow in England following the raising of the school leaving age in 1973. At the time this concern focussed on ' disruptive' behaviour and ' discipline' problems and led to a government enquiry, known as The Elton Report (DES/WO, 1989).

The specific problem of bullying in schools was increasingly recognized during the 1990s and has been a focus of school based research and

interventions ever since. In recent years there has been a national annual Anti-Bullying Week. The Education Reform Act 1988 is often seen as a watershed in relation to how schools are evaluated and what teachers can do to motivate all pupils. Prior to this Act, teachers had more freedom in what they taught and could devise courses for young people who did not respond well to traditional academic study.

The Act led to the imposition of a National Curriculum on schools, this resulted in direct comparisons of test results between schools and the creation of ‘league tables’ of school test and examination results. The lack of flexibility in curriculum design and the pressure to achieve test and exam results is associated with increased evidence of ‘disaffection’ in schools and a rising rate of exclusion from school. The publication of the first national data on exclusion from school in 1992 and subsequent annual data is one measure of the limits of teacher tolerance of young people’s behaviour.

Since the mid 1990s there have been broader concerns about safety in and around schools, following very varied and high profile events. For example, the fatal stabbing at the school gates of head teacher Philip Lawrence, by a teenager from another school, whilst trying to defend one of his pupils in 1995; ‘the Dunblane massacre’ (16 primary age children killed by an adult intruder in 1996); the fatal stabbing of Luke Walmsley, by another pupil, in a school corridor, in a rural secondary school in 2003; the abduction and murder of two schoolgirls by their school caretaker in 2002 (‘the Soham

Deviance and violence in schools 11

murders’). More recently there has been a variety of high profile examples of children attacked by other children in and around schools (Lewis, 2005; Wainwright, 2005). Crime prevention and reducing social exclusion have been key themes applied to various areas of social policy, since the election of a ‘ New Labour’ government in 1997. From 1997 to date, work with schools and young people is a mix of crime prevention and attempts to open up opportunity through education.

The increased focus on crime prevention through education and schools could be seen as part of the wider debate about the criminalisation of social policy (Rodger, 2008). UNDERSTANDING PUPIL BEHAVIOUR: CHANGING EMPHASIS IN GOVERNMENT POLICY Official explanations of problematic behaviour within schools have evolved rapidly in recent years. One of the last Conservative administrations saw the issue as Pupils with Problems (DfEE, 1994) – illustrating a belief in the individual nature and location of ‘ the problem’.

The first New Labour administration changed the focus to Social Inclusion: Pupil Support (DfEE, 1999) – in keeping with the strong policy emphasis on combating social exclusion (see for example SEU, 1998). More recent reviews and guidance emphasise the quality of the teaching and learning environment, raising levels of school attendance and expectations (Steer, 2005) – highlighting the role of teachers and schools.

The Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCSF2) website illustrates this latter perspective, referring to the behaviour and attendance strand of the Key Stage 3 strategy<sup>3</sup>: This programme will help schools

promote positive behaviour and tackle the issue of low-level disruption. The aims are to ensure that all schools have the skills and support that they need to maintain creative and positive learning environments for all children to give support in developing positive behaviour throughout the school and to help schools to develop pro-active policies (DCSF, 2008a, para 1, my emphasis).

There have been several changes in the name of this government Department in the last twenty years: DES/WO (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office); DfEE, (Department for Education and Employment); DfES (Department for Education and Skills). At the time of writing DCSF refers to the department that covers child and family welfare, as well as education in schools. ? 470 million was made available from 2003, to support the development of this strategy. Key Stage 3, refers to the educational stage for 11-14 year olds.

There is some resistance to this emphasis on teaching and learning as the key to countering disruptive and violent behaviour in schools, from teaching unions, for example: Teachers cannot teach and pupils cannot learn in an environment where there is disruption and violence and where such behaviour occurs it cannot be explained away simply by attributing it to teachers' ability to plan and deliver lessons appropriately (NAS/UWT, 2007, para 1).

In the last few years, there is an increasing awareness of the need to have strategies in place to address the more extreme issues of weapons carrying and youth gangs in schools (see for example guidance to schools, DCSF,



2007a, 2008b; research sponsored by a teaching union, Broadhurst, Duffin and Taylor, 2008; and, academic research Hayden, 2008). **METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE** There is a wide variety of evidence that can inform this review.

Some of the research is undertaken by independent academic researchers, some is undertaken for (and by) government departments, charitable organisations, as well as statutory agencies. Surveys of school pupils are common. Research into bullying behaviour has a long history with the annual ‘Anti-Bullying Week’ adding an additional impetus to all kinds of monitoring and research activities. Surveys have also been conducted within schools in relation to criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Some national surveys have been repeated a number of times in recent years, allowing the accumulation of trend data on offending and victimisation: such as the cross-sectional survey for the Youth Justice Board, carried out six times between 1999-2008, see summary, MORI (2006) and most recent reports at the time of writing (MORI 2008a, 2008b). The MORI survey includes a mainstream pupil sample (11-16 year olds) and a sample of young people attending Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and similar facilities for excluded pupils.

There is also an ongoing annual survey of 10-25 year olds, undertaken by the Home Office, since 2003 (see for example Roe and Ashe, 2008). The Home Office survey includes a panel sample and a fresh sample each year, weighted to ensure that it is representative. Other research is longitudinal and tracks a cohort of over 4, 000 secondary school children in one city

(Edinburgh, Scotland), with a focus on youth transitions and crime (Smith and McVie, 2003).

Key government-led enquiries about pupil behaviour that involve consultations with experts and practitioners have been undertaken at intervals: as in the Elton Report (DES/WO, 1989) and ongoing Steer Committee (see for example Steer, 2005). Interviews with teachers, pupils and parents are also relatively common (Hayden, 1997; Parsons, 1999; Hayden and Dunne, 2001). These Deviance and violence in schools 13 studies explore experience and perspective and provide insights into causes and potential solutions to problem behaviour.

There has been a range of government-led programmes and interventions, as well as initiatives led by individual institutions and organisations, aimed at preventing or responding to problem behaviour in and around schools in the last decade alongside a great deal of evaluative research. Such research is often multi-method and includes analysis of secondary (organisational) data, as well as primary data from questionnaire surveys, interviews and observations. Some of this research has been funded by government departments, sometimes by agencies and organisations running the programmes.

There has been increasing pressure since the late 1990s in England to adopt a more rigorous approach to evaluation, within what has often been referred to as the 'What Works' debate (Davies et al, 2000). Organisational and monitoring data is very plentiful in England, with a whole range of data being available as annual statistical reports: for example, data on exclusion from

school is reported by special educational need and ethnicity; data on vulnerable groups such as children in care is also monitored and compared with the general school population in annual reports (see [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk) for a wide range of national statistical reports, as well as funded research reports). A great deal of data is available both at the local authority level and at that of the individual school. For example, inspection reports for individual schools are available on the internet – such reports include observations and information about pupil behaviour.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE SCALE AND NATURE OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

There are various ways in which we might try to estimate how big an issue ‘deviant and violent’ behaviour is in schools, some of this behaviour could be viewed as criminal, some could be seen as anti-social whilst other behaviour may be simply part of the growing up process and ‘testing the boundaries’ with adults. It should also be emphasised that some of the behaviour that is viewed as problematic or ‘deviant’ in a school (such as ‘disruptive’ behaviour) may not be viewed in quite the same way in other settings.

This section will review the evidence and indicators about a number of problem behaviours. Differences in opinion are evident, between parents and teachers, about the extent to which a particular behaviour constitutes a problem severe enough (or deviant enough) to warrant school exclusion (Hayden and Dunne, 2001). Low-level disruption to lessons and harassment of teachers are a major feature of surveys focussing on pupil behaviour from the perspective of International Journal of Violence and School – 9 –

September 2009 14

teachers; but it is evident that pupils are reported to be the most frequent victims of the more severe events – physical violence, bullying and harassment in schools (DES/WO, 1989; Gill and Hearnshaw, 1997; Neill 2002; Wright and Keetley, 2003; Neill, 2008). Neill (2002, 2008) has conducted a national survey of NUT (National Union of Teachers) members twice in recent years. Interestingly, in terms of his use of terminology, the first survey referred to ‘ unacceptable behaviour’, the second survey refers to ‘ disruptive behaviour’.

Neill (2008) concluded that the overall pattern of behaviour was similar. Some serious behaviours did show an increase though: such as, pushing and touching teachers; teachers witnessing a pupil in possession of a weapon in school. Furthermore the tendency was for experiences of these sorts of behaviours to have polarised between 2001 and 2008, with some teachers experiencing more severe problems in 2008. Table 1 shows that disruption to lessons and offensive language are frequent experiences for teachers, with over 60% of teachers experiencing this form of behaviour weekly.

On the other hand pushing, touching and other unwanted physical contact was not experienced by two-thirds of teachers, within a year; although 11.6% (in 2008) experienced this weekly. Deviance and violence in schools 15 Research into personal safety and ‘ violence’ in schools (Gill and Hearnshaw, 1997) provides a picture of what a random sample of 3, 986 schools experienced in one school year. This latter study was undertaken by criminologists and is one of the earliest examples of using the word ‘ violence’ in relation to the behaviour of school pupils.

Selected findings from this research are presented in Table 2. Martin et al (2008) found that over two-thirds (68.3%) of teachers in a small scale survey had suffered some form of ‘physical assault’ at some point during their career. These ‘assaults’ included: being bitten, pushed, having chairs thrown at them, having doors slammed in their faces. Tables 1 and 2 (and the work of Martin et al, 2008) are examples of perceptions of the prevalence of certain deviant and violent behaviours from the teacher perspective.

Pupil-based self-report surveys present another perspective. Blaya (2002) reports an overall victimisation rate of 55% of pupils in a year, in a sample of English schools (within a comparative study of French and English schools in socially deprived areas). Recent MORI (2008 a, 2008b) surveys show similarly high rates of victimisations of school age pupils in their nationally representative samples: 51% of mainstream pupils and 61% of excluded pupils in PRUs had been a victim of a crime in the last twelve months.

Again there are problems of definition and comparability across such surveys. For example, ‘physical violence, pupil to pupil’ (as referred to in Table 2) may be one-off acts of aggression; they may on the other hand be more sustained and may then be seen as ‘bullying’. Research on bullying is highly pertinent to this review. Such research is very well established and defined in England. According to Smith (2002, 11718) and based on the pioneering work of Olweus (1993) ‘bullying is a subset of aggressive behaviours, characterised by repetition and power imbalance’.

Bullying takes various forms – physical, verbal, social exclusion and indirect forms such as spreading rumours. Technology is helping to increase the forms International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 16 bullying might take: for example ‘ cyber- bullying’, where young people use text messages from mobile phones and the internet to bully others (DCSF, 2007b). Attacks on young people are sometimes filmed, again using mobile phones; these events may then be posted on the internet (these events are known as ‘ happy slapping’).

The MORI (2008a, 2008b) surveys show the high prevalence of threatening messages sent by voicemail or text (22%) and ‘ happy slapping’ (16%) by mainstream pupils. Table 3 illustrates how bullying surveys still produce fairly wide ranging estimates of prevalence, depending on the way questions are asked and the timescale involved. Although, overall, Smith and Myron-Wilson (1998, p. 406) estimate that: ‘ around 1 in 5 children are involved in bully-victim problems’ in the UK, with similar incidences reported in other countries.

Furniss (2000) discusses whether some forms of bullying should be considered to be a crime, rather than as a school disciplinary matter. Furniss considers the issue both from the standpoint of existing legal provisions as well as from the point of view of the level of protection afforded to children. She points out that assaults on teachers (though less frequent than pupil to pupil assaults) are often reported to the police; whereas in pupil to pupil cases, parents are expected to make the decision about whether or not to involve the police.

Official data and research on exclusion from school tells us more about teacher and official responses to pupil behaviour. There has been a massive Deviance and violence in schools 17 amount of research on exclusion from school since the early 1990s, when government monitoring data became available (see for example Hayden, 1997; Parsons, 1999). When permanent exclusion figures are compared with surveys of teacher experience like the ones already noted, one might be surprised by the relatively small proportion of children who are permanently excluded, according to official statistics.

Official data shows a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from schools from the mid 1990s, to date. Although the official figures for permanent exclusion represent a very small proportion of the school population (the rate of permanent exclusion was 12 per 10, 000 school population in England or 0. 12% in 2006-2007) there were many more fixed period exclusions. Fixed period exclusions (a matter of days usually) are now monitored annually and are much more numerous, as Table 4 illustrates. Existing evidence shows an increase in fixed period exclusions in the last few years.

The most common single reason given for both permanent and fixed period exclusions is ‘ persistent disruptive behaviour’ (31% of all permanent and 23% of fixed period exclusions). Physical assault against an adult accounted for 11. 3% of permanent and 4. 4% of fixed period exclusions. Physical assault against a pupil accounted for 15. 6% of permanent and 18. 6% of fixed period exclusions (DCSF, 2008c). The MORI (2006) surveys show that excluded children tend to have committed more criminal offences (and more serious offences) than children who have not been excluded from school.

Official records of non-attendance involve a much bigger proportion of the school population. Some form of non-attendance represent a form of ‘ deviance’ others may be a response to ‘ violence. ’ The reasons for nonattendance are varied, but in some cases at least they represent disaffection or disinterest in schooling and in others avoidance of work pressures or bullying. Schools record ‘ non-attendance’ which covers authorised absence (for example through sickness) and unauthorised absence (which may include a range of situations including truancy and being a young carer).

‘ Truancy’ suggests an active choice not to go to school and is thus a particular form of absence. Official data shows some improvement in ‘ authorised’ absence (that is where parents/carers provide a written explanation for the absence). There is a worsening of the situation in relation to ‘ unauthorised’ absence International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 18 (where no explanation is provided) since the mid 1990s, despite the massive investment of resources in following up pupil absence in recent years.

The most commonly quoted figure in government announcements is 50, 000 school children truanting from school on any school day. Further, around 100, 000 pupils were found to ‘ disappear’ from the school roll between years 10 and 11 (between ages 15 and 16) in a one-year period of monitoring (Ofsted, 2003). That is these young people did not go back to school at some point between the ages of 14 and 16 years. There is a complex set of circumstances and reasons to explain why children are not in school or not benefiting from school.



They all have their behavioural manifestations, although it tends to be the ‘acting out’ child that causes most consternation amongst teachers and parents because such behaviour demands attention. Criminologists have a slightly different focus and many of the surveys conducted are more explicitly looking at the prevalence of offending behaviour and victimisation of young people of school age. The connection between disruptive behaviour in schools and crime was highlighted in a seminal study by Graham (1988).

In more recent years self-report surveys conducted with school pupils, have provided us with a picture of young people’s overall involvement in criminal activity (as in the Youth Justice Board, MORI, 2006, and Home Office surveys, such as Roe and Ashe, 2008, noted earlier). However, there is very little research explicitly focussing specifically on criminal acts committed on the school site, presumably because of the extreme sensitivity of such data and the difficulties of gaining access to undertake the research.

One self-report study of a sample of pupils from 20 state secondary schools (3, 103 respondents) in Cardiff (South Wales) found that a fifth (20. 3%) of all pupils reported involvement in one of five categories of offence on the school site in a one year period (Boxford, 2006). Deviance and violence in schools

19 Table 6 illustrates the differences in prevalence of offending behaviours between boys and girls.

Interestingly, this study reports varying levels of impact on offending behaviour in relation to individual and lifestyle factors, with school context exercising a different level of relative protection in relation to these factors. The study confirms the importance of school climate (defined as

encompassing school ethos, respect for authority and parental school interest) and adds to current understanding in the finding that pupil relations (defined as based on pupils' social capital and school disorder) also have significant associations with pupils' involvement in crime in schools.

This sort of study is important in a number of ways: it illustrates the high level of offending that may be occurring in schools; it adds to the debate about the extent to which schools (in combination with other agencies) can address these issues and it reminds us that some of the acts dealt with as a within-school disciplinary issue could be treated as a criminal offence.

Weapons-carrying and gang related behaviour has been a major feature of newspaper headlines in England in recent years.

Table 7 illustrates the varying estimates obtained from research. Often surveys (such as CtC, 2005; MORI, 2006; Roe and Ashe, 2008) do not specify where the weapons-carrying has taken place. Both the MORI and International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 20 Home Office surveys, referred to earlier, include questions on weapons carrying, but do not ask where. Research focusing on the school site has measured prevalence in different ways: by school, by teacher experience and by pupil self-report.

In a range of ways schools are also a place where adults, parents and former pupils may vent their anger and frustration. There are various ways that we can estimate the scale of this sort of problem. Sometimes people want to gain access to the school site for the purpose of vandalism, arson or theft of school property. Further, schools may also act as a site for ' professional

perpetrators' to gain access to children (Sullivan and Beech 2002). Sullivan and Beech (2002) quote an estimate that about 400 teachers in the UK were suspended each year, following allegations of abusing pupils.

The need for better security for schools, as well as screening of school staff, has been highlighted in the public imagination by the events referred to earlier in this article; such as 'the Dunblane massacre', 'the Soham murders' and other deaths and woundings. More common security problems for schools include the destruction or theft of property. These issues raise very different security problems for schools. Security firms offer schemes such as 'School Watch' over the summer holiday period.

These firms tend to focus very much on property and damage from arson, vandalism and graffiti, rather than harm to people (see [www.chubb.co.uk](http://www.chubb.co.uk)). The risk of arson and Deviance and violence in schools 21 vandalism is known to be higher in deprived urban areas, than elsewhere. However, whilst arson attacks against schools declined from over 1, 100 in 1994 to just under 800 in 2000 there was an increase in the proportion of arson attacks occurring in school time. Around 250 of the 800 arson attacks in 2000 were during the school day when pupils are present (Arson Prevention Bureau, 2002).

More generally schools in England now have tighter systems of control for people coming on to the school site and greater awareness of the need for careful background and police checks on adults in contact with children. The use of CCTV is commonplace as are keypad entry systems to buildings.

**POLICY AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT** It is clear from the previous sections in

this review that there is plenty of evidence about a range of problem behaviours presented on the school site. Current policy development for children in England emphasises schools as

central to addressing broader issues of wellbeing and safety, as well as academic and vocational education. The key overarching framework for all of this is referred to as Every Child Matters. GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD WELFARE In 2001 a National Service Framework was announced for children's services, to set in place standards against which all services would be inspected. Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) sets the overall agenda for what agencies working with children are aiming to do. Within this framework schools are centre stage as the main institution in touch with all children.

This framework exemplifies the themes that are central to social policy under New Labour: reducing poverty and social exclusion, developing the role of schools, inter-agency co-operation, early intervention and a strong emphasis on supporting the role of parents and carers. Five key outcomes for all children are listed at the beginning of Every Child Matters, these are: ? Being healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle. ? Staying safe – being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to look after themselves.

? Enjoying and achieving – getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood. ? Making a positive contribution – to the community and to society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.

International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 22 ?

Economic well-being – overcoming socio-economic disadvantages to achieve

their full potential in life (Para 1. 3). The rest of the document focuses mainly on children most at risk, within a framework of universal services and the rights and responsibilities agenda.

The thrust of the approach is around multi-disciplinary teams carrying out assessments under a common framework co-located around schools, Sure Start centres and primary care (community based health services). Schools are the focus as universal support centres and education is the organizing principle around which children's services are organised. The Children Act 2004 provides the legislative spine for the wider strategy for improving children's lives. The Act sets out to be enabling rather than prescriptive, so that local authorities have a considerable amount of flexibility in the way they implement its provisions.

The overall aim is to encourage integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services as well as improve multidisciplinary working, remove duplication, increase accountability and improve the coordination of individual and joint inspections in local authorities. Whilst the specifics of this vision are more complex, these ideals make sense at the strategic level.

**BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS** Behaviour within schools is now largely seen as primarily related to the quality and appropriateness of teaching and learning, for the great majority of children.

The Steer Committee (2005) also recognises that certain problematic aspects of pupil behaviour in schools are new: such as the general availability of technology like mobile phones, which are used by pupils in new forms of bullying and to record assaults and humiliations or to summon

angry parents into the school at the behest of a pupil who has been disciplined. Furthermore the uncertainty about the meaning and application of *in loco parentis*<sup>4</sup> is highlighted for contemporary teachers.

It is noted by Steer (2005), as well as by the Elton Committee in 1989, that the legal judgements supporting this concept are very old and that the principle is based on an ancient doctrine of common law. This is seen as problematic in a context in which ‘ the trend for parents to challenge schools at law, noted in the Elton Report, has continued and intensified’(Steer, 2005, p. 80). At the school level, ‘ school ethos’ was first recognised as an important influence on pupil behaviour and particularly delinquency in the seminal study by Rutter et al (1979).

Although much of the focus is about ‘ managing’ *In loco parentis*: this concept gives teachers the same authority over their pupils as parents have over their own children 4 Deviance and violence in schools 23 or ‘ improving’ pupil behaviour, most of the strategies and training packages developed for schools require adults and institutions to include how they ‘ manage’ or ‘ improve’ behaviour, in essence how they build relationships and relate to pupils and colleagues.

In short the issue of the ‘ whole school climate’ and more specifically ‘ school ethos’ is recognised as central to managing or improving behaviour in schools. At the same time, it is well recognised that issues may be complex at the level of the individual pupil: behaviour interpreted as disaffection may relate to a number of issues including child abuse and poor parenting; disrupted and stressful living circumstances; the disruptions associated with

being ‘ looked after’(being ‘ in care’); relative poverty; special educational needs (or learning needs not met) and so on.

However, disaffection, whatever the various causes is only one explanation for not attending school or behaving in a problematic way. Furthermore common issues relating to non-attendance are varied: such as, academic pressure and fear of failure; bullying; young carers; travelling families. Figure 2 illustrates that there is a wide range of responses to problem behaviour in schools in England. Whole school approaches recognise that school ethos and climate is crucial in promoting positive behaviour.

The whole school approach is apparent in a raft of policies, agreements and strategies that are expected in all schools in England: such as behaviour management, anti-bullying, anti-harassment and equal opportunities policies; home-school agreements and particular strategies or approaches to realising these policies and agreements. The use of the curriculum to promote prosocial values, for example through citizenship education, and through teaching and learning strategies are yet another part of what all schools are expected to do.

Individual pupils have ‘ targets’ they are trying to achieve in relation to their behaviour (as well as academic learning) and some have individual plans for behavioural and social reasons. In school and more intensive support is provided for individual pupils based on an assessment of their educational and social needs. Other provision is partly or wholly provided off the

mainstream school site: these provisions focus on the most problematic or vulnerable children.

We might conceptualise support for pupils in four tiers, with ‘ Out of School provision’ being at the apex and ‘ Whole School’ being at the base of a pyramid (in Figure 2). These provisions are in place with varying degrees of efficacy nationally. ‘ In-school and more intensive support’; as well as ‘ Combination and Re-integration Programmes’ are not readily available in some schools. In general, cities and the poorer areas of England have gained most additional resources under New Labour, albeit with strings attached.

Deviance and violence in schools 25

Thus vulnerable children in more affluent areas have fewer options between being in and out of school. This raises important issues of equity in educational provision and support for all vulnerable children. SCHOOLS, SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION Schools are expected to consider risk and safety in a number of different ways: in terms of access to the school site from intruders, through vetting the suitability of their staff and in their everyday relations with children and adults who attend, work or visit the school. Schools were awarded ?

10 million in 2002-2003 to increase security measures through the Capital Modernisation Fund. Research intended to inform the development of policy and practice in this field was undertaken at the same time (Lloyd and Ching, 2003). Interestingly, this latter research identified external threats such as intruders, arson and burglary as greater concerns than internal threats from within the school community. The dynamic nature of school security is



highlighted by this research, with pupil behaviour issues only emerging after the external threats already noted. Safer Schools programmes have developed since 2002.

These programmes involve the police and other agencies working with schools, initially in high crime area. Safer Schools has now become a national programme, but varies a great deal in how it is run in individual schools. More recent concern about weapons carrying and gang culture entering the school environment has led to both legislative changes and new guidance to schools (DCSF, 2007a). The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 introduced the power for members of school staff to search pupils for weapons if they have ‘reasonable grounds’ for suspecting that a pupil is carrying a weapon (with effect from October 1st 2007).

Staff have the power to use ‘such force as is reasonable in the circumstances for exercising that power.’ It should be emphasised that school staff have a power, not a duty in these respects. The police have grounds for searching a school for weapons if they ‘suspect’ that they may find weapons, prior to this Act they had to ‘believe’ this to be the case. Commenting on the guidance issued to schools on gangs, a spokesperson for the National Union of Teachers (NUT) said: ‘The Government’s guidance on gangs is a compilation of good sense and practical advice.

Our evidence shows that there are a minority of schools which face increasing difficulties from weapons brought on to school premises. These schools need all the support they can get’ (NUT, 2008, para 1). Parents are also an important focus in government policy in relation to youth crime

prevention. More coercive measures are being used towards International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 26 parents in a number of ways. The first parent was jailed in 2002 for failing to ensure that her teenage daughters attended school.

In relation to behaviour in school as well as attendance, parenting contracts have been available to schools in England and Wales since early 2004 through the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003. The Steer report (2005) adds support to the use of parenting contracts as well as parenting orders in highlighting the need for a ‘ more immediate and consistent response to schools dealing with violent or abusive parents’ (p. 95). Schools have been able to apply directly to the courts for parenting orders since 2007.

#### EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO PROBLEM BEHAVIOUR

Certain basic principles and indicators of effective ways of responding to children who present problem behaviour are well known, if highly debated, in terms of how these principles are put into practice. For example, it is well established that early behavioural problems in pre-school children are indicative of the likelihood of developing more problematic and entrenched difficulties later in life. The costs of intervening early are known to outweigh those of responding later (Sutton et al, 2004). These are the kinds of principles that have informed the development of Sure Start and now Children’s Centres.

At the same time it is recognised that there can be dangers in intervening in children’s lives too early. For example, DSRU (2004) cautions against ‘ net-widening’, or drawing families into services when they could sort things out

for themselves. Evidence about the kinds of programme that produce positive effects on children's behaviour are well known by policy makers in England: for example, early education programmes in the United States such as High/Scope and Head Start have been well evaluated and demonstrate clear gains for disadvantaged children.

Structured parenting programmes, such as that developed by Webster-Stratton, have also been found to be effective in improving parenting skills and in turn children's behaviour. Cognitive behavioural methods have generally been shown to be effective in a wide range of circumstances (Falshaw et al, 2003). Overall, these programmes have been influential in England (Hayden, 2007). However, most evaluations of interventions for children presenting problem behaviour in England are relatively small scale and do not meet the scientific criteria required by 'what works' enthusiasts<sup>5</sup>.

Most are too shortterm to follow through the longer-term impact (if any) of an intervention. It See for example, Wilson and Lipsey's (2006) meta-analysis of 219 school-based violence prevention programs which shows that universal programmes were generally effective in reducing the more common types of pupil behaviours, and especially in relation to 'high risk' pupils. <sup>5</sup> Deviance and violence in schools <sup>27</sup> is impossible to conclude in some instances whether or not any improvements

indicated may simply be due to more resources and attention paid to an issue. Nevertheless, there are some useful advisory materials, produced for decision-makers, that provide a gateway to the very numerous sources of

expertise and different approaches to combating violence and aggression in schools (see for example Gittins, 2005). Many new initiatives working with schools are based on the principle of sustainability.

That is, it is assumed that after a period of funding an initiative the lessons learned can become part of mainstream professional practice. The expectation is that mainstream practice can either change or accommodate the work (vis-a-vis other pressures and that the new ways of working are compatible with performance management targets – the latter being a very strong feature of the public sector in England). Furthermore it is assumed that staff are willing and able to change their practice.

This may well be the case in behaviour management and parenting programmes (as a particular way of doing something that a practitioner already has to do); but some initiatives set out to add value to existing services through the provision of more individual or small group opportunities for children. Furthermore, projects aimed at the prevention end of the continuum may well uncover more (unmet) need for services (DSRU, 2004, p. 26). The possibility that some ‘preventative’ services might actually uncover unmet need is a particularly pertinent issue to consider in relation to the focus of this review.

‘Behaviour problems’, ‘special educational need’ and ‘mental health issues’ can each be seen as on a continuum and at least one in five children will experience one or more of these problems in the course of growing up.

Behaviours may present as ‘deviant’ or ‘violent’ but the underlying causes may be any one (or a combination) of these latter issues. However, levels of

need are very unevenly spread in communities, with higher levels of need being apparent in poorer areas.

The potential scale of the need for more help, particularly in poorer areas, alongside the widespread level of anxiety and concern, from parents, politicians and the media, means that additional support for schools makes sense as a response to broader concerns about anti-social and criminal behaviour from young people. There is now much wider recognition of the need to advise and support parents in general on how to respond to and manage their children's behaviour. Indeed there have been a number of television series focussed on the issue in recent years.

Media images of out of control and anti-social 'youths' and stories about very disruptive and aggressive behaviour in schools can be influential in constructing popular perceptions and explanations of the issues to be addressed. It is common for various organisations, interest groups and the media to call for some issue to do with children's behaviour to International Journal of Violence and School – 9 – September 2009 28 be addressed by 'parenting programmes' and initiatives in schools.

Yet the behavioural expectations that are presented as the norm are at odds with subcultural differences and realities; this means that some schools may be at odds with the dominant norms of the communities they serve. Schools in England are now viewed as the universal service for all children and as a key service around which other children's services might be colocated and planned. It is a vision with a great deal to commend it; although it is a vision

that may take time to realise. Some key areas of instability are apparent in this vision.

Quite apart from workload concerns, there are other practical problems such as space, particularly in some inner city primary schools. Further, the availability of appropriately trained and skilled personnel varies by area – specifically the evidence of teachers leaving the profession and of the drift of those who move jobs from the schools in the most adverse circumstances, to those that are easier places to work (Smithers and Robinson, 2005). Simply, schools that need staff most have difficulties in recruitment. Inclusive schools are self evidently better for individual children, as well as the communities they serve.

However, it is plain that the ability of schools to be inclusive varies. Indeed the ongoing concern about behaviour in schools is evidence of the problems of coping with the ‘core business’ that already exist (Hayden, 2007).

**CONCLUSIONS** Research evidence and monitoring data on the nature and prevalence of ‘deviance’ and ‘violence’ in schools is plentiful in England. In particular there are a plethora of self-report surveys from school pupils. Overall the evidence suggests that some forms of behaviour are very common, particularly disruptive behaviour, offensive language, bullying and other forms of aggression.

Behaviour that would warrant the label ‘violent’ in England is less common, but there are indications of an increase in the more extreme behaviours and particularly in individual schools, many of which are in poorer socio-economic circumstances. A great deal of additional resources have gone into schools

since New Labour came into power in 1997 and there has been a reduction in official records of permanent exclusion, as well as authorised absence, more training opportunities and support in behaviour management for teachers and so on.

However, a major task remains; a task that is most strongly focused in inner cities and areas of social housing. The increasing socio-economic disparities in England during this same time period, as well as increasing parental choice over access to state schools has left some schools behind. In such schools the connection between problem behaviour and an environment in which it is difficult for teachers to teach and pupils to learn is all too apparent. Deviance and violence in schools 29

A key gap in contemporary school-based research in England is in the more time-consuming and in-depth ethnographic studies that focus on the dynamics of problem behaviour in schools in the most difficult circumstances. We need a more realistic assessment of how to educate the most problematic young people in a way that gives them the best opportunity for a positive future, alongside addressing the needs of the other young people with whom they share their schooling.