



CASE STUDY 4

Improving Attendance, Behaviour and Inclusion

Introduction

This is one of six case studies that have been written as 'finger-tip' guides to inform and enrich your support for students with SEND. Each offers an accessible, evidence-informed summary of advice. This support is both immediately actionable and can be used to enrich further discussions. All the case studies are aimed at supporting busy professional colleagues so that they can further develop their inclusive educational practices. Other case studies in the series include:

- Case Study 1: Supporting students with SEND at a time of a national emergency
- Case Study 2: Supporting students with social, emotional and mental health needs
- Case Study 3: Appreciating the role of the SENCO
- Case Study 5: Supporting vulnerable groups of pupils in our schools
- Case Study 6: Supporting the identification and assessment of needs

Each case study follows the same format. They are divided into six short sections, the first being a summary as to why this particular study might be relevant to you. The next section shares selected professional knowledge that could help to inform your context. The third section offers a summary of key motivations for change. Section four offers some ways to address these. The final two sections build on this by highlighting how professional support can be further developed, including identifying selected further sources of support.

We very much hope that you will find these guides to be both informative and actionable. We wish you well in your endeavours and thank you for all that you do for your learners.

1. Why this Case Study might be relevant to you.

Schools are working hard to put in place impactful support for students with SEND in order to improve behaviour and/or learning in the classroom. The simple and obvious fact remains that students need to be in school in order to access this support and to benefit from it. Not only does a student need to be present, but also they need to be engaged in lessons, and behave appropriately for learning. Many schools take the view that good behaviour is a prerequisite for learning, and that disruptive behaviour also distracts other students and negatively impacts on their learning. This Case Study offers a focus on ensuring that attendance levels for students with SEND are as high as possible and that exclusions are as low as possible. To do so, we draw in particular on the Education Endowment Foundation's Guidance Report and materials in relation to improving behaviour and attendance in schools. More can be found at <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/school-themes/pupil-engagement-behaviour/>

2. Accessing Professional Knowledge

To help to inform our responses, we accessed both materials created by the EEF and the Timpson Review on Exclusions, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/edward-timpson-publishes-landmark-exclusions-review>. This review found that there were variations in the way schools use exclusions and made recommendations aimed at minimising such inconsistencies. It is important for us to be mindful that vulnerable groups of children are more likely to be excluded, with 78% of permanent exclusions issued to children who had special educational needs (SEN), or classified as in need or eligible for free school meals. Certain ethnic groups, including Bangladeshi and Indian pupils, have lower rates of exclusion than White British pupils, with the analysis also finding some ethnic groups, such as Black Caribbean and Mixed White and Black Caribbean pupils, experiencing higher rates, after controlling for other factors. The Timpson review also found evidence that good behaviour cultures are vital in maintaining orderly environments that support all children. In order to achieve this, teachers need consistent guidance and tools to deal effectively with poor and disruptive behaviour. The EEF guidance report is designed to do just this by supporting colleagues in making better-informed decisions about their behaviour strategies. The report includes a number of practical examples of programmes and approaches that should be helpful in schools and classrooms where behaviour is generally good or where there are problems. Three broad categories of behaviour interventions can be identified:

1. Universal programmes which seek to improve engagement and behaviour, and generally take place in the classroom;
2. More specialised programmes which are targeted at students with either behavioural issues or behaviour and academic problems;
3. School-level approaches to developing a positive school ethos or improving discipline which also aim to support greater engagement in learning.

The EEF Guide to Improving Behaviour in schools <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/improving-behaviour-in-schools/> refers to the following 6 principles as being key to improving behaviour in schools –

1. Know and understand your pupils and their influences.
2. Teach learning behaviours alongside managing misbehaviour.
3. Use classroom management strategies to support good classroom behaviour.
4. Use simple approaches as part of your regular routine.
5. Use targeted approaches to meet the needs of individuals in your school.
6. Consistency is key.

3. Key Motivations for Change

As professionals, we are always ambitious to do more for our young people. In order to do this we found that it can often be helpful to clarify both our motivations for change and to identify some of the dilemmas that we face. By making these explicit, we can then prioritise strategies that might help us to address such concerns. We hope that you may find the lists below helpful. There could be both some drivers and dilemmas noted here that you also recognise. As you consider these insights, you may find yourself thinking of others, which are not recorded here. Please share them in your own teams and see if any of the strategies shared in section four might be helpful.

Drivers

We identified that we were ambitious to:

- Routinely and systematically analyse as a separate data set, the attendance of students of SEND in comparison with whole cohort attendance information
- Enable consistency in relation to the in-school processes to support behaviour for learning. Whilst there is a need to drive for consistency, there also needs to be recognition that reasonable adjustments that should also be applied.
- Increase staff awareness regarding the link between SEND/SEMH issues and behaviour. Some staff are clear on how issues linked to SEND/SEMH manifest themselves in the behaviour and/or learning of students, we were ambitious that this appreciation should be more widespread.

Dilemmas

We identified that we were concerned by:

- Attendance - there was an issue with the attendance of parents of students with SEND at meetings arranged to discuss the range of measures that schools can put in place to improve attendance and behaviour in school. Non-attendance at these meetings was an impediment to how schools could pro-actively support students with SEND whose gaps in knowledge were deepening due to not being present.
- The national and local issue where there are high levels of fixed term and permanent exclusions for students with SEND/SEMH and that these exclusions reach a peak at the end of key stage 3.

4. Putting professional knowledge and understanding to work.

By drawing on both the EEF materials and the Timpson Review, in relation to the drivers and dilemmas listed above, we then considered the evidence informed ways in which we could develop and improve our professional practices. The list is indicative, rather than

exhaustive. We have tried to highlight how each action created the time and space for us to be more effective.

- Attendance needs to be analysed for the SEND cohort at the whole school and year group level. They also need to be a priority group for attendance support and intervention due to the heightened impact that any absence from school will have on their learning.
- Parents could be given the flexible option of attending meetings either online or in-person. This will enable information to be communicated in a timely way, and hopefully reduce the amount of time lost due to non-attendance at meetings which lead to further delays to the Graduated Response Assess, Plan, Do, Review process.
- There are a wide range of tests such as WRAT, BPVS, CTOPP2 and BERI which can be used to separate the behavioural and academic SEND issues a student may have. The results of these tests should be communicated to staff regularly, which will lead to the consistent implementation of well-planned interventions to be put in place.
- Reasonable adjustments could be communicated to staff regularly. With regards to behaviour, staff can be told what type of behaviours are acceptable due to the nature of the SEND and which are not acceptable and subject to the application of the school's behaviour policy. Details of these reasonable adjustments should be added to seating plans/ marksheets etc so that staff are regularly engaging with the specific adjustments for each student.
- Specific information regarding how the nature of the SEND affects learning could be communicated to staff. Staff knowing what the nature a SEND means that a student can do, and what they cannot do will help in the planning of lessons so that appropriate timings, differentiation and scaffolding can be incorporated. Again, details of these reasonable adjustments should be added to seating plans/marksheets and the like so that staff are regularly engaging with the specific adjustments for each student.
- Teacher allocation to classes. When less experienced teachers are allocated to classes containing students with complex SEND needs, they will need to have high levels of support. It is worth considering allocating more experienced teachers to these classes to better enable the consistent application of interventions.
- Incorporate professional learning for teaching students with SEND into the regular teaching and learning professional development offer in schools.
- Ensure that the school's behaviour lead and/or SENCO conduct regular quality assurance on how behaviour management strategies are being applied in the classroom for students with SEND.
- Continue to develop the awareness of all staff around issues linked to SEMH, such as anxiety and attachment disorder.

5. Contributing to collective professional knowledge

The strategies prioritised in section 4 will often be enacted by individual members of our school teams, supported by our whole school ethos. In our reviews we also found it particularly helpful to highlight strategies that will depend on our collective and collaborative endeavours. Here we share some approaches that could usefully inform local area dialogues.

- Ongoing and regular professional learning and development opportunities are provided to continually build teacher expertise in the application of strategies designed to improve the behaviour and the learning of students with SEND. For example, the most effective intervention for students with SEND is high quality teaching, but teachers will need to understand the impact that, for example, challenges around processing speed and working memory affect the learning of students with SEND.
- Headteacher briefings focus on embedding the full cycle of APDR. This will ensure that all students with SEND receive appropriate assessment and evaluation of their difficulties and differences, so that any additional needs and interventions are identified.
- Professional learning is provided to support schools in how to communicate more effectively with parents and carers about the APDR cycle and the impact that the interventions have had.

6. Sources of further information:

Timpson Review <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/edward-timpson-publishes-landmark-exclusions-review>

Education Endowment Foundation Report on - [Improving Behaviour in Schools | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)

Education Endowment Foundation Report on - [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)

Education Endowment Foundation Report on - [Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants | Education Endowment Foundation | EEF](#)