

CASE IN POINT

Students who have behaviour problems disrupt not only their own education but that of their fellow pupils and, where attendance at school shows a pattern of disruption, achievement is likely to be blighted. A number of strategies have come from Government to try to reduce the impact of these problems on pupil attainment. Daniela Sommefeldt looks in depth at one of the most successful approaches, which has been to identify specialists in behaviour and attendance who can lead a whole-school approach to promoting positive behaviour and full attendance and identify and plan action to overcome the barriers to achieving this. Carolyn Waterstone gives us a case study of one school where the National Programme for Specialist Leaders of Behaviour and Attendance was piloted. Staff at the school report a 'sea change' in ethos.

Better behaviour: lead professionals point way to whole-school improvements

Daniela Sommefeldt tells how a national programme for specialist leaders of behaviour and attendance is empowering those who attend it and inspiring them to move forward to bring about whole-school improvements in their own school context

Among the most potent reasons for pupils and schools underperforming is misbehaviour in and out of classrooms. Pupils cannot achieve their potential if there is an atmosphere that is not conducive to learning. Just as students' behaviour can affect their learning, those whose attendance at school is disrupted by a high level of absence are likely to underachieve.

Senior management and staff are finding approaches to address this in ways that will encourage students to develop positive behaviour and full attendance. The Government has developed a national behaviour and attendance strategy to help tackle this problem – see the box right. The Behaviour and Improvement Programme (BIP) is the name used for a number of initiatives – see the box below right.

One of the most successful approaches is to identify specialists in behaviour and attendance to take the lead in promoting and informing the development and implementation of whole-school strategies. These specialists can enable other staff to implement policies and actions that promote positive behaviour and full attendance. The National Programme for Specialist Leaders of Behaviour and Attendance (NPSLBA), which started in 2004, was initiated by the DfES and is now situated within the national strategies. It is designed to equip specialist leaders with the knowledge and skills to undertake this key role, through developing their leadership potential within the context of behaviour and attendance.

Specialist leaders

Most lead behaviour professionals (LBPs) have other responsibilities in the schools they work in and some schools use alternative titles to describe the role. The main functions of the

National behaviour and attendance strategy

The DfES is very conscious of the impact of pupil behaviour and poor attendance on teaching and learning. Through the Behaviour and Attendance Strategy that was introduced into the Secondary Strategy in 2003, it aims to 'improve pupil behaviour and attendance, supporting practitioners through developing a consistent approach building on the best current practice' (see: www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance).

The main thrust of the strategy is to:

- reduce behavioural problems, both serious and low level
- reduce exclusions
- provide high-quality alternative provision for those who are excluded, at risk of exclusion or at risk of dropping out of the system
- reduce truancy, tackle the root causes and improve attendance levels
- ensure effective mechanisms are in place for identifying and re-engaging students who go missing from school
- improve perceptions of behaviour and attendance among school staff, parents and the community at large
- close the gap between behaviour problems shown by different groups of pupils

A related DfES website, Behaviour in Schools, gives official policy news and carries case studies – see: www.dfes.gov.uk/ibis/index.cfm

Behaviour improvement programme

The Behaviour Improvement Programme was the targeted element of the national DfES programme for improving behaviour and attendance in schools. From its launch in 2002 to the end of 2006, around 450 secondary and more than 1,700 primary schools benefited from BIP. More information on BIP is available on the DfES website – see: www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourimprovement

Recognising the importance of developing social, emotional and behavioural skills (SEBS) has been part of the National Strategy for School Improvement since September 2004. Materials to develop social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) have been available to primary schools since May 2005.

Senior leadership of SEAL and SEBS is fundamentally important to their success. Organising secondary school senior leadership roles is essential for implementing the behaviour and attendance programme of the national strategy. The LBP role is employed in many secondary schools for this purpose.

Everything that applies to the senior leadership of behaviour applies to the senior leadership of attendance. This is particularly true if senior leaders take on the role of organising the way that the school addresses the causes of non-attendance.

LBP role

As a member of the school's senior management team (SMT), the LBP oversees the school's behaviour, attendance and anti-bullying policy. The LBP supports all staff to ensure high standards of behaviour and attendance in school at all times, to achieve the best possible standards of teaching and learning.

role are outlined in the box above.

The role of the LBP differs between phases and between schools. However, there is a common core of activity, drawn from good practice, which all schools should include in their organisation for behaviour and attendance improvement. These tasks should form the basis of the LBP role in any school and are outlined in the box top left on page 6.

Education Improvement Partnerships were launched in 2005, to give unity to collaboration in the education service. In this context they are intended to lead to behaviour improvement and alternative educational provision. They will add to the need for all schools to have an LBP. Lead

Case examples: benefits

Anybody working in behaviour and attendance would benefit from taking part in this programme at whatever level they choose. The knowledge you gain from it is quite considerable and the way you use that knowledge in a practical way in relation to your job can only benefit the people you are working for, the pupils you work with and yourself in being able to make your role more effective. (FM – high school)

Much of the work is analysing processes that are going on in the school, evaluating them, and looking for improvements for them, so it has taken the school forward. (JN – Catholic secondary)

[Regarding the biggest secondary school in the LA] All sorts of changes have come about that are related to the NPSLBA and some developments have had significant impact. Four years ago, it was the highest excluding school, and we got more referrals to central services from that school than any other. We have had no referrals in the last term at all. (JT – local authority link)

Case examples: developing leadership

[By leading a group session] It highlighted that, if I am going to lead, I need to plan, I need to be organised. I need to show people the way forward. I cannot do that if I am flying by the seat of my pants. Enthusiasm will take you so far but people who are going to follow you need to have confidence in you. That comes from knowledge, skills, planning, and organisation. (LL – secondary school)

Taking part in the programme has enabled me to realise that I can take things forward with people. It is about leading people, and helping them, rather than doing things for them. It is about increasing my own knowledge, so I feel that I can do that and speak with authority. (JN – Catholic secondary school)

I am now able to put together a programme, take it to the senior leadership team and talk it through with them. Then I can take it out to my colleagues and the pupils can get support from all of them, they can see the vision, they can see where we are going. We all benefit from that. (FM – high school)

behaviour professionals can work together in partner schools, as a management group for the collaboration, to achieve consistent approaches, reduce exclusions and improve behaviour and attendance by sharing expertise, training opportunities and so on.

How does NPSLBA work?

In preparation for the design, writing and delivery of the NPSLBA programme, research was commissioned from the Centre for Education Research at Sheffield Hallam University. Research revealed a situation that was fragmented and lacking in coherence, with many staff working in the field of behaviour and attendance feeling isolated and undervalued. There was high support for a specialist leader training programme and qualification structure. The research report was completed in August 2004 and the first cluster groups began the NPSLBA programme in October and November of the same year. The NPSLBA aims are outlined in the box bottom right on page 6.

Participants continued to join throughout the pilot year, with the final pilot cluster groups beginning in autumn 2005, having been recruited and inducted in the previous July. The pilot programme was fully funded by the DfES, including accreditation costs, but the costs to rollout participants remain low because the learning model relies on self-directed cluster groups using freely available study materials.

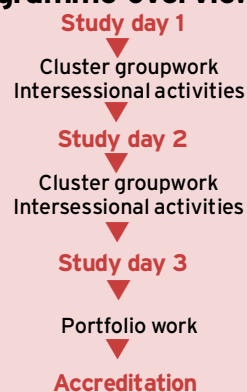
The model of leadership being promoted to further these aims is a distributive model that recognises the need to identify and encourage leadership in all areas of school and service activity (for more details on distributed leadership, see the Case in Point in CMU September 2006 issue 68). This is fully compatible with the latest Ofsted (2005) inspection framework, where inspectors are required to review

leadership, as well as management, at all levels within the school. The model also reinforces and supports the Children Act (2005), the Steer Report (2006) and the Schools White Paper (2005).

From the start of the pilot, participants consistently spoke highly of the programme and their experience of it. The cluster group structure was valued and the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues in different roles and from different backgrounds was described as positive and enjoyable. Many reported a growth in confidence, leading to personal and professional development. Local authorities (LAs) have seen the programme as a way to support existing plans and experience has shown how the programme may be used strategically to meet targets for reducing levels of poor behaviour and attendance.

As well as working closely with LAs to plan the delivery of the programme at local level, the nine regional coordinators have established links with other partners. For example, the programme complements and builds on professional development opportunities provided by the behaviour

Programme overview



CASE IN POINT

LBP tasks

The LBP ensures high standards of behaviour and attendance by:

- creating shared values, expressed as expectations and standards of behaviour and modelled through the consistent way all staff manage behaviour and attendance
- implementing a coherent whole-school policy, improvement plan and monitoring arrangements for behaviour and attendance
- supporting all staff to improve learning and teaching through improved confidence and skills in behaviour and attendance management
- organising a programme of continued professional development (CPD) for all members of the school community
- managing collaborative partnerships with other local schools, the local community, parents, agencies and other providers of support for improving pupil behaviour and attendance
- facilitating the learning and teaching of SEAL, through a whole-school SEBS programme, with additional provision for pupils who need it
- establishing and maintaining a school climate that is inclusive, safe, secure and where positive behaviour and regular attendance are learned and taught by all.

and attendance programme of the primary and secondary national strategies. Through liaison with regional staff from the strategy, it extends the work of behaviour and attendance consultants by offering professional recognition of skills and expertise. Similarly, regional coordinators increasingly work to support other partners in addressing the Every Child Matters agenda.

Central to the NPSLBA are small, self-tutored cluster groups of about eight to 10 participants. These select their own

Case example: flexibility

The range of study materials and intersessional activities make it a very flexible programme. You can mix and match from different study materials to put together sessions that are interesting and useful. (RD – secondary school)

personalised learning path, depending on participants' prior experience and current roles. Members take turns to facilitate the self-directed study sessions. The year-long programme is punctuated by three study days, when all the cluster groups in a region or LA come together. The focus of these days is leadership and reflective practice but they also provide an opportunity to meet and share ideas and good practice. Groups also meet for 10 2.5-hour twilight sessions over the year. On-the-job application of learning and reflection on professional practice are key features of the programme.

More than 30 sets of learning materials have been commissioned. These are made available via the Teachernet website at www.teachernet.gov.uk/npslba so participants must have access to internet facilities and possess basic IT skills. Study topics are chosen by each group, according to interest, relevance and learning needs. One set of these study materials will form the basis for each of the cluster group sessions and participants are also free to use the materials for personal study or with colleagues. The learning materials are grouped into broad themes (see the box bottom left on page 7), each containing a number of study topics.

Intersessional activities linked to each study topic are designed to support and develop participants' current work and thinking in their place of work. The tasks are not designed to be demanding in terms of write-up, but productive in facilitating change or development (either in thinking or in practice) at work. A choice of intersessional tasks for each set of learning materials can be adapted to suit each participant's specific context. Participants undertake a minimum of three intersessional activities over the year.

Case example: intersessional activities

The intersessional activities forced you, in a way, to look outside the box. What can I do? What can I do better? How can I develop this? It really gave us a bit of a free rein to do that. It allowed me to get knowledge, skills, and practice. (LL – secondary school)

Case examples: study materials

The study materials were fantastic. They covered all the topics you needed to address the particular issues in school. The background information was concise but incredibly useful and allowed you to target your understanding by doing further reading, which led to me having a much greater understanding. (FD – high school)

In the session we did on the law, virtually all our group found that, although we thought we knew what we were talking about, we did not. So the study materials have been useful. (RW – secondary school)

Assessment and accreditation

Assessment is by portfolio, with an additional assessment task for City and Guilds accreditation and a 5,000 word assignment for the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCert), validated by the University of the West of England. Evidence against learning outcomes may be gathered from current, recent and relevant experience, from evidence gathered during inter-

Case example: cluster groups

The cluster group I was part of was a fantastic group of people. They were all very encouraging and supportive of each other. I really felt that their back up and their support was there, and they made you feel that you were able to go out and do the things that you were trying to do because they were going to try and do it as well. (FM – high school)

NPSLBA aims

The programme aims to:

- raise the professional status of staff with specialist skills in behaviour and attendance
- identify career paths and encourage more staff to follow a career in behaviour and attendance
- extend the leadership skills of all these staff
- develop high-level training programmes with progression between levels
- establish national occupational standards and a sequence of qualifications
- create and maintain a national network for these specialist leaders
- promote the LBP and similar leadership roles.

Training model

- Acquisition of knowledge through study sessions and study materials
- Modelling of good practice through cluster group activities, leading sessions
- Practice application through intersessional activities in the workplace
- Feedback and reflection through feedback from cluster group and work colleagues and by keeping a reflective log
- Embedding the experience through ongoing development of related initiatives in the workplace

sessional tasks or through working with the learning materials themselves. All participants are expected to submit an evidence file to the regional coordinator in order to gain their DfES certificate of completion.

Accreditation is available at national qualification Levels 3 and 4 (City and Guilds), or at Master's level (PGCert).

Using programme materials

The programme is designed to be flexible and responsive to individual needs. Participants are able to modify and add to activities to create a best fit with their own situation and interests. They are also encouraged to use the learning materials and activities with colleagues in their own workplace, outside of the programme.

Over the course of the programme, cluster groups choose eight topics to study, based on mutual interest and need. Everyone is advised to study the NPSLBA topics 'The child and the law' and 'Creating an ethos for social inclusion', since these are applicable to all settings. Each participant takes responsibility for leading a study session, alone or with a partner from the group. The guidance for session leaders helps them to prepare and deliver the topic. Materials, including PowerPoint slides, handouts, video clips, background reading

Case examples: peer support in a secondary school

LL developed a system that built on an existing peer mentor scheme used with Year 7. She led colleagues in considering peer supporters, rather than peer mentors and created a team of pupils that works with all year groups, trained by school staff, Childline, and the Children's Society to deal with anti-bullying issues:

We carried out an audit, decided what we wanted to do and the resources we would need. We carried it through and evaluated it at the end of the year. The NPSLBA programme has given me the skills, motivation and opportunity to do it.

and suggested activities, are provided online for downloading. Participants often comment that this develops their skills and confidence in leading CPD activities.

Included in the study materials is a list of suggested intersessional activities that may be undertaken in the workplace. These are often specific to a particular setting, thus enabling the participant to meet an identified need or address an issue that has arisen. An example of a work-based intersessional activity is shown in the box at the top of page 8.

A summary of the published study topics can be found on the NPSLBA website www.teachernet.gov.uk/npslba by following the link to study materials. There are additional titles, currently in draft form, that will be appearing online as they reach completion.

Theory into practice

The NPSLBA is based on a model of effective training that follows five stages. These are listed in the box above left.

A key feature of the programme is the emphasis on relating theory to practice. Intersessional activities are designed to facilitate this aspect of the learning.

Career benefits

In addition to the many benefits that have been reported for individual schools and for pupils, there are also career benefits from participating in the NPSLBA.

A growing number of participants report that taking part in the programme has substantially enhanced their career

prospects, either because their job has changed in nature or because they have achieved promotion.

Information about the programme is at www.teachernet.gov.uk/npslba – follow the contact link to find your regional coordinator who will be able to tell you what is happening in your locality and answer any questions you may have.

Daniela Sommefeldt, Regional Coordinator, NPSLBA/National Behaviour and Attendance Exchange (NBAE), East Midlands

Daniela is contracted out from the East Midlands Leadership Centre in Northampton, where she has worked on various National College for School Leadership (NCSL) programmes and with local authorities in the East Midlands

Case example: working with parents

Having taken part in the programme, I forge a more positive relationship with parents. I always recognised that they were important before, but I do not think I really realised their true worth. I now have an excellent relationship with most of the parents I work with. I phone them to speak about positive behaviour reports, as well as negative, so the relationship they have with the school is more positive. If I need to get hold of them because their child has made a mistake, they are accessible now, where they would not necessarily have been so before and that is definitely practice that has come about [as a result of NPSLBA].

The effect of that on the pupils is that they have a more positive relationship with the school as well. Pupils can go home and be praised by their parents or carers for good work that they have done, so they now feel a lot more positive about what is going on at the school as well. (JN –Catholic secondary school)

Case examples: staff training

RW has now been asked to take on responsibility for training all categories of staff in behaviour management across the school and has developed a training package linked to the study topic 'The child and the law':

Another of the intersessional activities I have done has been around training other staff. Through that, we have now got a training programme where I do training sessions with established teachers and, at the start of each year, with newly qualified teachers. I always do some training with any students coming into school, and I am doing sessions with our office staff about the way that they meet and greet parents and students. Also, I do training with faculty support assistants. All this has all come out of planning a programme for intersessional activities.

CASE IN POINT

Example of intersessional activity: analysing incidents

Purpose

To analyse the way a typical incident is managed in schools and to explore how restorative approaches could be incorporated.

Process

- Agree protocols for this work with an appropriate senior member of staff.
- Describe the incident, what led up to it and what the consequences have been.
- Identify the range of possible restorative approaches appropriate to the incident.
- Select the type of approach that is most appropriate to the incident. For example: victim-offender mediation; peer mediation; classic conflict resolution methods; formal restorative conferencing (scripted and non-scripted), such as family group conferencing; community conferencing and school personnel conferencing.
- For each different approach, carry out a criteria test. For example, how serious is the incident? How many people have been affected? What are the available resources, including time? Who is available to facilitate? Are those involved willing participants?
- Create a grid (see example below) and work with colleagues to mark the grid with a tick or a cross. This should help you to identify the approaches that are available and to select those that are most appropriate.

Victim/offender mediation	Peer mediation	Formal conferencing	No-blame approach	Conflict resolution
Seriousness of incident				
People affected				
Available resources				
Availability of facilitator				
Willingness to participate				
Time available				

If an incident is identified where a restorative approach is suitable, produce a case study:

- Outline the incident and work through what approaches might be taken (you could use the table above to help you work with staff on this process). Incorporate in your case study the likely positive and negative outcomes of using a restorative approach (this will help staff to be better informed before proceeding with a particular approach).
- Share your work with another member of the cluster group to test out mutual understanding of the restorative approach and its effectiveness.
- Draw together a brief set of conclusions about how the restorative approach might work, using the prompts, by looking at the nature of the incident, investigative routines, involvement of other people and the likely outcomes.

Now use this incident to map out how a restorative approach could work by looking at:

- investigative routine
- involving other people
- preparing for the restorative approach
- managing the restorative approach

Give your predicted outcomes and your conclusions.

One of the outcomes of this activity would be to produce an analysis of the incident and present your conclusions to the appropriate member of staff, with recommendations for action.

Study material themes

- Vision, values and beliefs
- Leadership
- Conceptual frameworks and underlying causes
- Organisation, systems and strategies
- Self-review, monitoring and evaluation
- Parents, carers and community
- Violence reduction
- Behaviour, emotional, social difficulties (BESD)

Case examples: career enhancement

My job is going to change quite radically in September because of this programme. I will be going in to classroom situations to observe and help other people solve problems. I will be looking at things that are going on, helping staff design things they can do within their classroom situation, giving them any training that they might need. (Learning support unit manager – secondary school)

The programme helped me become a lot more confident in my role as a leader across the school and gave me the confidence to apply for a job as assistant head in another school and I got it. (Former LSU manager – high school)

Case study

Using NPSLBA to transform behaviour and raise attendance

Carolyn Waterstone, South-west Regional Coordinator of the NPSLBA, with information provided by Sandrina Gay, Director of Lower School, and Russ Hewkins, Head of B4LC at The Ridings High School, Bristol

South Gloucestershire local authority (LA) was interested in piloting the National Programme for Specialist Leaders of Behaviour and Attendance (NPSLBA) as it could see its potential to develop staff knowledge and skills and therefore bring about improvements in behaviour and attendance. It decided to set up two pilot groups — one contained a mixture of staff from various local schools and support services and the other comprised staff who all came from one secondary school. It was hoped that this approach would help to inform the best way to incorporate the NPSLBA into its behaviour and attendance strategy in the future.

South Gloucestershire LA was aware that, although behaviour and attendance were good at The Ridings High School, it was a school open to new ideas and constantly looking for ways to improve. It would therefore be an ideal place to pilot this new staff development programme.

Existing approach

Prior to joining the programme, the school had a hierarchical approach to behaviour and attendance issues. There were two heads of school at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, who took overall responsibility for all aspects of pupils' learning. Heads of year were responsible for their year group and took them through from Years 7 to 11; they were the members of staff that dealt with day-to-day discipline and attendance issues. The school had a sanctions grid that was

administered by heads of years, each in their own way with their own style, so there was a different interpretation, style and image in each year.

When the school was approached to take part in the pilot, the pastoral team saw it as an opportunity to work together to develop a more consistent approach and it agreed to form a cluster group to pilot the programme. A group of 11 people started on the programme but, during the year, as the group became established and its worth recognised around the school, the team expanded. By the end of the year, it had grown to 14, including the director of the lower school, heads and deputy heads of year, the learning support unit (LSU) manager and two teaching assistants.

The cluster group met monthly in twilight sessions to work together on the NPSLBA study materials. A member of the senior management team (SMT) or a head of department was invited to each session so that the whole school became aware of the programme and the ethos, procedures and practices that were being developed by the group.

Actions arising

Actions that arose out of the programme involved changes in the areas of staff training, the school behaviour policy, how the school meets individual pupil's needs and study skills. The school also decided to set up a learning support unit.

Staff training

Members of the group have delivered a whole-school inservice training session, based on 'The child and the law' study materials from the NPSLBA. The learning support unit manager now delivers training sessions for newly-qualified teachers (NQT) and graduate trainees on positive behaviour management, using activities from the programme materials.

The inservice training sessions for staff that have been led by members of the team have been positively evaluated by those taking part.

Revising behaviour policy

The school's behaviour policy has now been revised to incorporate more positive approaches to managing behaviour. The interventions that are used by the school are now based on meeting pupils' needs. The message to all members of staff is to catch students being good and to focus on this. The ethos of the school is changing as staff push the merit system, as they develop an understanding of pupil behaviour and as the range of strategies available to deal with poor behaviour increases.

The school forms have been changed to include indications of positive as well as negative behaviour. The school sanction grid is also under review, as is the detention system.

School context

The Ridings High School is a community comprehensive school that is located in Winterbourne, a semi-rural area to the north of the Bristol conurbation. With a mixed 11 to 18 intake of 1,904, it is much bigger than average. The school has held specialist status, with a technology focus, since 1998. Having technology college status has enabled it to develop and build on the links with local primary schools and also those with local and national businesses. It has also enhanced facilities to the benefit of all curriculum areas

The school's pupils are drawn mainly from white UK backgrounds; 3% are from non-white heritage and the free school meals (FSM) eligibility is 5%. The proportion of pupils that has been identified as having special educational needs (SEN) is average at 10%. There are 206 students at the School Action stage, 59 at School Action Plus and 21 with an SEN statement.

The standards of the pupils at entry are above average, with no marked differences overall between boys and girls. The 2003 Ofsted report found that, 'Pupils and students show good achievement because of good teaching across the school; although they enter the school with above average standards, they continue to improve.' For example, the school attained 75% A*-C GCSE grades in 2004, 80% A*-C grades in 2005, and 80% A*-C grades in 2006.

The school obtained international school status in 2005 and is introducing the International Baccalaureate from September 2006.

Meeting individual needs

The pastoral team meet frequently to discuss selected pupils who are at risk of exclusion. The meeting focuses on positive behaviour strategies and identifying the needs of the student that the behaviour is serving. Finding alternative methods of meeting those needs is discussed and strategies are built into the student's individual education plan (IEP).

Lunchtime case conferences are held with all the staff who are involved in teaching these pupils. At these conferences, staff discuss how to implement the strategies agreed and ensure a common and consistent approach.

Setting up a learning support unit

There was no learning support unit at The Ridings High School before the beginning of the NPSLBA training course. However, through work on the programme, the school identified that a learning support unit would be a valuable resource and would:

- help to reduce exclusions
- help meet the needs of the most challenging pupils
- support staff development.

The Behaviour for Learning Centre (B4LC) was set up in September 2005. An existing head of year was promoted to the post of head of centre. This member of staff had been very much the driving force behind initiating the NPSLBA programme in the school. The centre's aim was to change pupils' behaviour through introducing positive strategies, rather than it being a 'sin bin' where pupils were sent as a penalty for poor behaviour.

The centre was driven and guided by the principles on which NPSLBA is based. The B4LC teaching assistant (who was one of the cluster group members) now goes into lessons to observe pupils who have been referred to the learning support unit.

Taking part in the programme gave her the confidence, skills and knowledge to do this. Her observations and recommendations have been welcomed by teaching staff.

Mainstream staff who teach in the centre are supported to develop positive behaviour management strategies.

Study skills

Before the NPSLBA programme was introduced into the school, the head of year for Year 11 had put on a study skills day for all Year 11 pupils each year. Following the

Key changes

- Whole-school staff INSET with training sessions for newly qualified teachers and graduate trainees
- Revision of behaviour policy to incorporate more positive approaches. Also revision of sanctions and detentions system
- Attempts to understand problem behaviour and find strategies to meet the student's needs
- Focusing on positive behaviour strategies
- Setting up a learning support unit, the Behaviour for Learning Centre
- Teaching study skills to all years
- Ensuring behaviour and attendance policies are consistent throughout the whole school, rather than different for each year group or key stage

NPSLBA group's study of the programme's materials on learning styles, this has now been extended to all year groups, to give them the skills necessary to get the most out of learning.

Benefits

The programme benefited the school in three main areas. It improved the role of the pastoral team, it improved behaviour in the school and brought about a change in the school ethos that has affected the atmosphere in school.

Improved role of pastoral team

The strength and commitment of the pastoral team has grown considerably as a result of working on the programme together. The biggest change has been the workforce agreement that established the team as core in terms of school improvement. As a result, deputy head of year posts have been enhanced and heads of year have had their salaries increased, within the new workforce agreement; they now enjoy greater status within the school.

There is now a dedicated head of Year 7, plus a dedicated team of Year 7 tutors, who work together to set the ethos and behaviour pattern that the school wants to establish.

Heads of year now have regular meetings together across both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, rather than having separate meetings for each key stage. This has helped to bring about consistency of approaches across key stages throughout the school. The cluster group continues to meet to study the

remaining NPSLBA materials, with a view to enhancing their knowledge and skills.

Improved behaviour

Following the introduction of the programme, there has been a substantial increase in pupils who have achieved 40 merits in the last two years (40 merits achieves a gold certificate under the awards system, when recipients also receive a £5 book voucher for their achievement). Fixed-term exclusions have reduced by 25%. There has also been a 20% reduction in pupils who have been placed on the 'stages to exclusion' ladder.

Change in ethos

The director for the lower school describes the differences as 'a sea change'. She says that it has made a difference to the way staff interact with students. Pupils report that staff now listen to them more and that they now feel they have a voice.

We are currently concentrating on access to the curriculum because we have found that every pupil referred to the learning support unit has difficulties with accessing the curriculum.

Key advice

It is useful to have a core group of people from one school working together to bring about change. Working together on the NPSLBA in this way has given The Ridings High School a united approach to school discipline. The heads of year and heads of school now behave as a whole-school team rather than as separate year groups. The whole school has developed a shared vision and we all speak the same language.

The NPSLBA programme materials are excellent for staff development and give a clear focus for each meeting.

Future plans

South Gloucestershire LA has recognised how working on NPSLBA in this way has had a positive effect on the school and is using it as a model for its roll-out plans for improving behaviour and attendance in all schools.

An area for future development is to include partners from other agencies within cluster groups to support the Every Child Matters agenda and bring in a more diverse perspective.

Carolyn Waterstone, South-west Regional Coordinator of the NPSLBA, with information provided by Sandrina Gay, Director of Lower School, and Russ Hewkins, Head of B4LC at The Ridings High School