

## Quick Fixes won't cure bad behaviour

The recent "quick start" money for Support Units must make this ( one of the recommendations from the Pack Report of 1977 ) the longest trailed initiative ever. The lack of any persistent funding has kept this idea on the back burner for 25 years and it still lacks clarity of purpose. Is it meant to be a sanction or a support? Indeed this issue highlights the continuing ideological confusion right at the heart of schools' pupil management policies and practice. The perceived dichotomy between support and discipline has yet to be resolved. Ambivalence re support (units) is also rooted in the control ethos - still the natural preference of some teachers. It is therefore fitting that schools are at the same time being encouraged to review their policies.

The support initiatives since Pack funded by short-term budgets have provided a welcome extension of schools' options. The trouble is however many of these initiatives deal with the surface symptoms without ever tackling the root causes of the problems they are charged with addressing. It is like building new roads to solve traffic problems without an holistic overview or coherent analysis of the transport structure. And so despite many positive developments we still are reported to be in crisis.

Projects have been developed with much enthusiasm but sometimes suffer from conceptual woolliness and scant resources. Ambiguity about how they should fit into and add value to the school structures is common. Much time and energy is used clarifying what they are trying to achieve. Support works best in schools with an overarching inclusive approach to pupil welfare and management. Better Behaviour Better Learning gives further impetus to the emerging consensus on the need for coordinated supports and proposes that the management of pupil care, discipline and learning be integrated within an overall support structure. Less successful projects are those that are cosmetic 'bolt on' additions to the school system and rely upon the commitment of energetic staff. If they leave, any momentum tends to be lost. Any initiative has to be an integral part of an articulated system into which it fits. Projects that are 'set up' ( in more ways than one) as "quick fixes" (that word again), will remain marginal to or incompatible with the school system. These issues need to be considered within the current discussions about school management structures and the future of guidance and should figure in SQH training and senior management interviews.

Everyone agrees that support projects aim to improve behaviour but there has to be a shared agreement on how this will be achieved. Most teachers attracted to this work tend to have a personal ideology that takes them down a child advocacy road, a road that sometimes goes in the opposite direction to the dominant culture. Like the naive member of staff who is talked into going in goal for the staff football team they will be scapegoated if the side loses.

Schools need an integrated structure and collective responsibility for greater impact. Joined up working should be a goal for schools as well

as local authorities. School values need to be talked about, shaped and shared by staff to create a unity of purpose and counter cynicism. What children need, who is going to provide these needs and who is going to orchestrate the system must be clearly articulated within a discipline framework. No teacher would think about lesson planning without clear outcomes in mind; behavioural intervention should be no different. The emerging use of PSD target setting will help sharpen practice.

Schools need to both support and control pupils but to these we need to add prevention - to divert pupils moving up the discipline chain. We know from research (Munn, Lloyd2000) that support works best in schools where management see the school's responsibility as developing the social and academic achievement of all pupils rather than focusing on the academic progress of conforming pupils. They have a more flexible curriculum, more staff support, involve in-house and outside support in joint problem solving and build non-judgmental relations with parents. It is well established that the effectiveness of such schools lies in their preventive approaches that are rooted in their ideology rather than any particular features of their support systems.

Punishment needs to be considered in three ways. Firstly signalling the unacceptability of misbehaviour to help pupils understand it is inappropriate and discourage others. Secondly punishment should incorporate aims of resolution - to help children make reparation, teach them what to do, make them accountable for their misbehaviour, face up to the consequences, encourage self-examination and challenge pupil's ideas. Logical consequences that are related to the misbehaviour, respectful of the child and revealed in advance encourage recovery by recognising misbehaviour as a wrong choice. The third element of punishment is removal -to give teachers and pupils respite and interrupt the unwanted behaviour by providing time-out from positive activities or a cooling off period.

Support will aim to rehabilitate -to tune into the child's perspective, to empathise with and meet the emotional needs of children in a short or long term crisis through accepting relationships. Such strategies should give the pupils space to help them reflect and increase self-awareness, reduce demands, set clear individualised targets and so offer greater structure as well as support. Support interventions should have a sharp focus on pupils' specific difficulties, keeping their school life as normal as possible. Children need both support and sanctions and these can't really be separated. Different pupils need different approaches and this requires thoughtful assessment. I've seen the tension between support and sanctions gradually fade as more and more teachers have come to see the resolution of disruption as part of their job and behaviour management as a function of everything every teacher does. BBBL has given the guiding vision. Continual funding for support from the Executive, authority and school budgets would allow long term planning and take most of our schools into the holistic practice which the best examples are now achieving.

