

Case Study 8: Positive Inclusion Partnership

City of Glasgow

This case study describes the local authority's initiative to promote inclusion and support for vulnerable pupils with behavioural problems.

In November 1996, Glasgow education department sought and obtained SOEID funding to develop some creative programmes for fostering greater inclusion and support for vulnerable pupils. This reflected growing concern amongst pupils, parents and teachers over disruptive classroom behaviour and exclusion. Pilot work involved five primary schools in the Possilpark area of the city. Initially the programme was focused on P6 and P7 pupils, with three objectives.

- To provide support for mainstream inclusion of difficult pupils.
- To provide materials and resources for staff development and support.
- To devise practical support for parents with a view to engaging them as full partners in their children's development.

Staff in the pilot schools were consulted on what they thought would make a difference in the behaviour and attitudes of all children. 96 per cent of staff wanted parental involvement to try and alter pupil behaviours. Over 80 per cent of staff wanted strategies to improve individual or group behaviour and almost as great a percentage wanted support for themselves in tackling this vexing issue.

HMI and Glasgow Education Department monitored the project and the day-to-day running of the work was undertaken by a steering group of the five headteachers of the schools involved. Two staff were seconded from the special educational needs sector to help devise a programme for pupils that could be delivered in classrooms as well as in the project's base within one of the schools.

We were all agreed that behaviour was a set of skills to be mastered by all children. It made sense to start early. Real inclusion is about more than giving young people a place to be – it is about a high-quality educational experience. You only get that by helping them to self-responsibility and personal goals.

Maureen Fairgrieve, Project Coordinator

The project was entitled Possilpark Inclusion Project or PIP and operated within an ethos that involved moving away from the traditional view that the adult changes the child's behaviour towards one where children were empowered to develop more self-esteem and self-discipline. The emphasis was on skills to be learned rather than on behaviour to be eliminated. This challenged the view that behaviour was somehow distinct from learning, detached from the curriculum and beyond the teacher's influence and responsibility. It emphasised the need for cooperative teaching and staff development rather than the extraction or exclusion of pupils. The project

aimed to:

- provide a more relevant focus on underlying causes of poor behaviour that can be addressed by trying to make each classroom an 'inclusion zone' and on providing training on skills for life for children
- supply more useful information about the child's strengths and weaknesses with a perspective concerned to address what the child needed rather than a history of past misdeeds
- engender positive feelings and outcomes for all involved – parents, pupils and staff – because all were developing new skills
- improve and make more effective links with home since parents were being motivated to make a difference
- engage children in more personal decision making and self-assessment with real motivation to improve behaviour by helping their children to develop key skills.

The main curricular components identified for working on with children were:

- self awareness – recognition of personal feelings and self-observation; learning that feelings change constantly; building a vocabulary for feelings; knowing the relationship between thoughts, feelings and reactions
- personal decision making – examining personal actions and knowing their consequences; knowing if thought or feeling is ruling a decision; applying these insights to issues such as drug addiction, racism and personal goal setting
- managing feelings – monitoring 'self-talk' to catch negative messages such as internal put-downs; realising what is behind a feeling (hurt that underpins anger) and finding ways to handle fears, anxieties, anger and sadness
- handling stress – learning the value of exercise, guided imagery, relaxation methods
- empathy – understanding the feelings of other and being able to look from their perspective; appreciating that people feel differently about things
- communications – talking about feelings effectively; becoming a good listener and question-asker; distinguishing between what a person says or does and your own reactions or judgements about it; sending 'I' messages instead of blaming other people
- self-disclosure – valuing openness and building trust in a relationship; knowing when it is safe to talk about private feelings and to whom it is safe to disclose personal information
- insight – identifying patterns in personal emotional life and reactions and recognising similar patterns in others
- self acceptance – seeing yourself in a positive light; recognising your own strengths and weaknesses and being able to laugh at yourself
- personal responsibility – taking responsibility; recognising the consequences of your decisions and actions, accepting your own feelings and moods, following through on commitments (e.g. to study)
- assertiveness – stating your concerns and feelings without anger or passivity
- group dynamics – cooperation; knowing when to lead and when to follow
- conflict resolution – how to fight fair with other children, with parents and

other adults; using a win/win model to negotiate a compromise.

To help teachers work with children to cover these curriculum components the project team have devised a vast array of teaching support resources, often arranged in support packs for particular curricular aspects and geared for different stages. The materials are very practical in character and attractively presented, often making use of ICT replication to allow for customisation by individual teachers and schools.

*Worthwhile, enjoyable, thought-provoking, informative, full of interesting ideas and **real** materials to use with the children.*

From teacher evaluations

Work was also undertaken to produce materials for working with parents and children in groups or individual workshops and strategies were devised, often to support particular cases or schools. For many parents this experience was the first time that issues had been addressed with a view to real action in partnership with schools and other agencies. Parents found that the skill-building strategies that they developed were useful not only with the child who was the original reason for their involvement but also with other siblings in the family.

Points from parents

Relationships

I have more understanding of why things go wrong. I am more confident in asking the school for help and I feel PIP will help the teachers too.

*K is more honest now which is a big relief for us both as it had created a lot of stress for us both. Now I can say that **we** are much calmer.*

Whether the programme made a difference

I have more understanding of children's feelings; better communications in my whole family and better strategies when approaching the difficult times.

I like being involved with F's work and it shows me his capability and I help him.

I communicate better with my children now.

Comments on the PIP circle time for parents and children

The group was small and that worked better. We all know each other now and give each other support.

The timing was good. The children did not miss out on a lot of

schoolwork.

I enjoyed talking to other people whose children have behaviour problems. I can support them and they do the same for me.

I didn't notice the changes ... then I realised people had stopped coming to my door to complain about him.

What parents said about their skills

I am able to find other ways of dealing with things now. It was good to see other parents dealing with issues like my own and to talk together.

I hope I gave support to the other parents and their families too. PIP has been great for my family – helping me to take control and to change.

Over the life of the project in the pilot schools generally fewer pupils were excluded and the children generally began to improve performance and attainment. There was a growing realisation that the approaches and strategies employed were working and required further development as the lessons emerging from the work were showing that:

- every child needs emotional literacy or self-discipline skills
- most referrals were boys, and programmes clearly needed to target the components of emotional literacy to support raising the achievements of all male pupils
- the children involved demonstrated changed behaviours and so clearly had learned new skills and concepts, which implies that these can be taught and modelled
- the earlier the start to such work with children will result in higher levels of motivation and self-efficacy
- there are clear implications for the in-service and pre-service training of teachers
- parents are crucial to the process of change with clear benefits to the wider family from their involvement.

The bad behaviour of a five-year-old – unaddressed – develops into tomorrow's learned behaviour.

Maureen Fairgrieve, Project Coordinator

At the end of the pilot phase the lead headteacher was seconded to develop a menu of staff development for the primary sector and to assess the needs of the city in terms of devising a programme to tackle the issues involved. The project has been renamed Positive Inclusion Partnership and the principle of making best behaviour everyone's responsibility has been followed through.

PIP sets very specific targets for pupils receiving enhanced support. These targets were reviewed on a weekly basis. There was an emphasis on targets in SMART format and in as few words as possible. Desktop reminders were provided for children to help them to

focus on achieving their targets. It provided flexible, preventative support through the designing and delivery of individual support for pupils.

HMI Alternatives to Exclusion, 2001

This challenges the myth that behaviour management is a low-profile task that is the responsibility of someone else. It recognises that everyone needs behaviour skills. Whilst primary schools exclude relatively small numbers of children, staff require support to deal with the small, though growing, number of children who are in danger of being excluded.

We need partnership without 'put-downs'. We can create successful systems by the establishment of living policy frameworks engendering collective responsibility.

Maureen Fairgrieve, Project Coordinator

Glasgow has recognised that early intervention strategies in literacy and numeracy have led to improvements in pupils' attainments. The PIP project has shown that if young children are supported to manage strong feelings that this emotional literacy combined with other developments can equip children to deal more effectively with their lives and so gain an advantage in being able to participate in the education process more fully.

In devising these approaches and support materials Glasgow has made an important contribution to helping pupils with and without behaviour problems to cope and be part of a rewarding learning and teaching experience. Without these strategies the capacity to unlock the educational and creative potential of primary age pupils will be constrained and the tremendous potential of some children with behavioural problems will remain untapped for positive purposes.

Glasgow City Council is now looking at ways of running PIP programmes in primary/secondary cluster groups and learning communities as staff development programmes to harmonise approaches to a common issue. Some of the ideas involve developing P7/S1 link programmes and enhancing approaches to strategies such as 'circle time'. Training is also being offered to classroom assistants as 'behaviour partners' to assist teachers in classroom activity and in modifying playground behaviour. Similar training is also being offered to SEN auxiliaries working in mainstream primaries. For mainstream staff and parents involved the training has been a success and the growth of interest across Scotland is now marked.

I learned a great deal; it brought a balance back which I needed in my teaching. It made me face up to hurts from my own past. This is something we can all take forward.

A whole school approach via Positive Inclusion Partnership will make a difference. I liked the style of presentation, anecdotal but relevant, good practical ideas – all adaptable for Pre-5 which is not always the case. A real chance to reflect on my own practice. I was really

energised. This training is essential for all classroom teachers and indeed all who are involved in the education and care of children.

I can listen more carefully now to my son S. I can see things from his point of view. PIP is doing a great job of helping children and their families.

Staff and parent evaluations

The PIP initiative is a good example of highly creative work at an authority level. It addresses an issue of tremendous significance not only for the pupils and families of children posing behavioural challenge but also for the classroom climate necessary for all children to gain real advantage from the educational and social opportunities offered by the school.

A number of features common to contexts where creativity in learning and teaching flourish are worth identifying.

- Developments are geared to developing higher order skills in pupils as well as basic techniques that will help them to capitalise on learning opportunities.
- Pupils are motivated and persevere better when supported and challenged using the approaches devised by the project.
- The work with pupils encourages them to explore a range of ideas and to consider their quality and apply them to personal and group solutions.
- The initiative helps to foster renewed enthusiasm and pleasure in learning for teachers, parents and pupils.
- Positive and non-threatening teaching approaches are developed although these are balanced with measured challenge to pupils' positions.
- Regular feedback and dialogue are promoted.
- Authority managers and senior management in schools are demonstrating commitment and support of staff in undertaking this challenging work, including the funding of the project and developments in schools.
- A measured risk has been taken in developing strategies other than exclusion and schools are taking similar steps to maximise the opportunity for the pupils involved.

While we will never totally eradicate unacceptable behaviour early intervention makes sound sense. Starting early to encourage recognition of feelings and encouraging purposeful expression of these feelings we will have a more consistent approach for the benefit of young people into the future.

Maureen Fairgrieve, Project Coordinator