

**BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TASK AND FINISH REVIEW**

**3rd March, 2006**

**PRESENT** – Councillors Armstrong, Copeland, Francis and Long; Julian Kenshole, Head of Performance and Development, Children’s Services and Christine Bates, Democratic Services.

The following issues were discussed.

- The investigations carried out by the Group to date.
- The results of the School Survey 2005 carried out by the Audit Commission in relation to the support given by the Darlington LEA to schools with comparative data of all participating authorities in England. Two survey questions were particularly relevant to the Task and Finish i.e.

“Your local authority’s management of the procedures for re-admission of excluded pupils”. The results indicated that schools considered that the support given by Darlington LEA was between poor and satisfactory and it fell within the lowest Quartile nationally.

“The effectiveness of behaviour support.” The results of this questions also was between poor and satisfactory and the lowest quartile nationally.

Caution was urged in interpreting the results of the survey, as it was consider that LEAs were sometimes blamed for the services provided by others. Schools were sometimes not clear of who provides support. There was only a 50% response rate to the survey. The LEA’s performance had gone down from the last Survey, but it was a done at a time of flux in the Education Service.

- The need to ensure that schools knew what support was available.
- An audit carried out by the Behaviour Support Section to assess whether pupils who had been permanently excluded from school had previously been know to the Section. This revealed that this was often not the case and sometimes there had been no previous indication of problems in school.
- The need to consider management behaviour systems in schools and also whether schools were asking the LEA for support on behavioural matters. It was considered the establishment of the Children’s Services Department would enhance the awareness of the services available.
- The thresholds at which Schools permanently exclude pupils from school. It was considered that in the past Schools had just considered exclusions from an educational point of view and not holistically.
- The need for teachers to be aware of any pupil’s personal problems that could have an impact upon their behaviour at school.

- Proposals in the Local Area Agreement for multi-agency co-located teams in Cluster Schools to try to provide a conferencing facility involving a group of professionals that would enable a bespoke package to be drawn up to support individual pupils, that could be delivered in school. Concern was expressed that some parents may find it difficult participating in discussions with a group of professionals.
- The use of Parenting Classes as a way of assisting with pupil's behavioural problems.
- The issue of advocacy was considered very important – sometimes parents/social workers did not turn up to exclusion hearings which meant that there was no advocate for the child. The child should be represented at hearings.
- The question of whether pastoral and teaching staff see it a failure if they have to contact the LEA for assistance.
- A Member of the Group stated that from experience assistance from the LEA was sometimes not easy to obtain, particularly in relation to the long wait, in certain cases, for the services of an Educational Psychologist.
- The significant number of referrals for behaviour support services, which was higher than the national average. The question of whether is was the way the services are provided, or whether schools 'pass the buck' and refer to the behavioural support team to deal with. It would be desirable if the number of referrals to the Behaviour Support Team could be reduced by the use of multi-disciplinary teams attached to Schools. The Behavioural Support Team would only accept the most difficult cases.
- Knowledge needed to becomplied from birth and strategies developed to deal with any problems from the start.
- The work being carried out at Eastbourne School by a mentor who takes pupils on fishing trips/adventure weekends etc. which had proved very successful.
- Proposals to increase Special Education Needs funding to schools and for the LEA only to be responsible for those pupils who required specialist education elsewhere.
- A Member reported that from experience it appeared that recently trained teachers seemed more able to cope with pupils' behavioural problems.
- The work that is being carried out at Hummersknott School to develop a Post to lead on early intervention with pupils at risk of exclusion.
- It was considered that sometimes pupils had shown behavioural problems at primary school, but they had often been contained and these only accelerated in Secondary School. These problems could have been more manageable or have even been sorted out with earlier intervention.
- The use of extended curriculum as a way of engaging some pupils i.e. emphasis on vocational learning rather than academic. The links that Eastbourne School has with the Darlington College of Technology was an example of this.

**IT WAS AGREED** - That Mr. Howarth, Head Teacher at Hummersknott School, be approached to ask if he would be prepared to talk to the Task and Finish Review Group on the early intervention work being carried out at the School.