

three to
remember:
strategies for

DISAFFECTED
pupils

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**THREE TO REMEMBER
STRATEGIES FOR DISAFFECTED PUPILS**

by

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE	
PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES OF DISAFFECTION (TRUANCY AND DISRUPTION)	5
PART TWO	
STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES - A FIRST AUDIT	21
CONCLUSION	
THREE TO REMEMBER	34
REFERENCES	36
APPENDIX	37

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Through its plans to make the tackling of truancy a priority for the 1990s, the government White paper *Choice and Diversity* (DFE, 1992) acknowledged the serious problem of disaffection in schools. This commitment to combating truancy and disaffection has resulted in a large number of LEAs successfully applying for GEST 20 funding, which has in turn allowed a flourishing of innovative work at school level. There have been examples of new roles for the Educational Welfare Service (EWS), Behavioural Support Service (BSS) and seconded staff in schools; new approaches to registration; increased parental liaison; enhanced links between primary and secondary stages of schooling; and so on.

As further evidence of this Government commitment, the recent HMI report *Access, Achievement and Attendance* (1995) was in part requested by the Secretary of State *to make sure that truancy and its recording are taken seriously* (p. 1). Its sister report 'The Challenge for Educational Welfare' also refers to *the high level of interest in attendance and truancy issues in recent years*. HMI have suggested, in their main findings, that schools are giving *insufficient attention to the matching of curricular provision to pupils' needs as a means of encouraging good attendance*. O'Keeffe and Stoll's (1993) work suggesting curriculum as a cause of truancy may also signal the importance of this area.

The key issue of curriculum appropriateness will be raised in the following paper.

THE PROJECT

NFER is undertaking a two year project with a brief to look at, among other things, innovative practices in the area of non-attendance, reducing exclusion and providing alternative education. The first phase of the research programme has focused on the viewpoints of senior managers, heads of year and form tutors in some 30 schools and special units in 14 LEAs. In addition, the perspectives of

senior LEA staff, EWS personnel and those working in specialist off-site provision were sought. Each of the institutions was approached on the recommendation of its LEA, who had been asked to suggest examples of interesting and significant school-based initiatives to deal with the issues of attendance and/or disruption. Most, but not all of these initiatives were funded through GEST 20.

The first phase of interviewing sought to collect:

- the perspectives of a wide spectrum of educational professionals on some of the main causes of attendance and behaviour difficulties
- an overview of the school sample's range of strategies to deal with attendance and disruption issues
- perceived key successes and challenges associated with these various strategies.

Further complementary fieldwork phases have been planned.

Phase Two is already under way and consists of an interview programme with over 150 pupils from selected schools in the sample. All these young people have had first-hand experience of the initiatives under way in their school, usually because they have a history of some sort of behaviour or attendance problems within their school career. A report on this phase is in preparation.

A third phase intends to collect perspectives of parents, as well as undertake in-depth case-study work with a small number of young people.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The following paper attempts to provide a short digest of some of the main issues emerging from Phase One of the project. It includes an audit of the initiatives under way in the thirty schools, categorised to provide a quick overview of the range of strategies adopted. It also relays views on the causes of disaffection. It should be noted that the paper does not seek to critically appraise specific strategies or viewpoints, rather its function is to report some of the current

thinking and practice in schools. As such, it is intended to be an aide to schools and LEAs, and to stimulate discussion about positive measures for tackling disaffection in our schools.

TRUANCY AND DISRUPTION: is there a link?

One of the aims of the project, and perhaps one of its more ambitious and novel aspects, was to *investigate the inter-relationship between Truancy, Disruption and Exclusion*.

It is intended that later stages of the projects reporting, using data from schools, pupils and parents, will deal more comprehensively with this issue. However, in the preliminary consultative phase of the project, the question of linkage was posed directly to senior LEA staff who had first-hand involvement with these aspects of pupil disaffection, such as Education Officers, GEST 20 project coordinators, EWS and Special Needs Advisory staff, and those from Behaviour Support Services.

From these interviews, a number of viewpoints emerged. Some interviewees felt there was no linkage, as very different types of child exhibited the two types of disaffected behaviour. Equally, however, views suggesting significant overlap began to emerge in the first phase of the project's data collection and links and inter-relationships were highlighted in a number of ways.

First, there were those who suggested that truancy and disruption were variations in reaction (summarised neatly as *flight or fight*), which nevertheless were underpinned by the same causes of disaffection and alienation from school, such as an irrelevant curriculum or poor classroom management.

Second, there were a number of interviewees who highlighted the overlap in the characteristics or pathologies of non-attenders and disruptive pupils (such as lack of self-esteem), or that the majority of cases of both behavioural traits most usually emerged from the same section of the school population (*the bottom 15 per cent*).

Third was the viewpoint that the triptych of Truancy, Disruption and Exclusion had some kind of inexorable sequence. Variations on the sequence included:

exclusions and the application of severe sanctions can exacerbate disaffection and may lead to non-attendance; inadequate handling of re-entry after non-attendance problems may encourage disruptive behaviour; and truancy and exclusions may result in failing to keep abreast of course work (and/or affect peer and friendship groupings), which in turn encourages further alienation and disaffected behaviours.

In Phase One of the project, it became evident that schools were operating many of the same strategies of support to deal with individuals exhibiting either school-refusal or disruptive behaviour.

For all these reasons, by the end of Phase One of the project, a linkage between truancy and disruption seemed a possible proposition. Because of this, it was felt justified to explore causality and solutions (in the form of school-based initiatives) under the more general heading of 'disaffection'.

PART ONE

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CAUSES OF DISAFFECTION (TRUANCY AND DISRUPTION)

The project wanted to obtain an overview of the views held by a wide range of school and LEA staff on the causes of disaffection, as manifested by non-attendance or non-acceptable behaviour within school. It was felt that, as committed professionals who interacted daily with pupils in these categories, their views represented a vitally important perspective on the whole issue. Beyond that, given the kinds of initiatives implied in GEST 20 activities and DFE circulars to combat disaffection, it was seen to be a useful comparison of how far these official government recommendations and strategies to be implemented by schools and LEAs actually matched the profession's views on causality. Indeed if a significant mismatch emerged, it was felt that this may signal the kinds of areas which policy-makers, schools and services might further consider.

The reasons why pupils fail to attend school has been a continuing focus for research and analytic comment for more than a century. Three main arenas are consistently highlighted:

- individual pathologies or personality traits;
- family circumstances or values and/or social factors within the non-attenders' communities; and
- school factors, often located in either the curriculum or the ethos and relationships encountered there by pupils.

The sample of educational professionals raised all three of these arenas. Significantly, respondents' answers invariably incorporated more than one, suggesting their appreciation of disaffection as a highly complex and multi-faceted problem, as the verbatim quotes accompanying the text show. Moreover, close reading of these accounts also demonstrates that causes of disaffected behaviours have, in fact, included **stimuli** (such as pupil friendship problems), **external exacerbation** (such as current curriculum imperatives), **correlation** (such as social class issues), **characteristics** (such as low self-esteem), and **inducements** (such as parentally condoned absence, peer culture). As such, it is

worth pointing out that the degree to which individual schools or LEAs can resolve or reverse such an array of causes clearly will vary. Finally, whatever their interpretation of factors associated with non-attendance and disruption, many interviewees did point out that each case of disaffection involved a unique combination of factors. Equally, the tenor of their responses invariably defined pupils with disaffection as troubled rather than merely troublesome, and in need of support rather than only censure.

(i) Individual factors

Where **individual characteristics** were cited, these were largely viewed in terms of some kind of deficit in emotional or social health, such as lack of self-esteem, lack of social skills, lack of confidence or poor peer relationships. As one senior education welfare officer put it, *truancy and disruption are both expressions of unhappy youngsters.*

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Lack of self-esteem	<p><i>The biggest cause [of disaffection] would have to be children with no self-esteem, no self-respect. because of families striving to live in very tight circumstances</i> (Head Teacher)</p> <p><i>... a lot of the pupils I work with are anxious, have very low self-esteem. don't relate to each other well and don't relate to adults very well ... children with behavioural problems usually feel very bad about themselves</i> (Behaviour Support Teacher)</p> <p><i>I'm sure children's self-esteem about their ability has a lot to do with it and their poor feelings about themselves may be enhanced by parents not feeling they have the right skills to support their children or knowing how to deal with them at home</i> (Primary Teacher)</p>
Lack of social skills	<p><i>... often they're of below average ability and have significant needs in terms of social skills</i> (Education Officer)</p> <p><i>[There are] pupils operating as 'feral children' with no structure in their lives</i> (PRU Development Officer)</p>

Lack of confidence	<p><i>... some children are very impressionable or don't make friends easily and they see [truancy] as the way to do it - those who don't have confidence in their own self-worth and think they have to prove it</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>A lot of disaffected behaviour is a lack of belonging, an insecurity, a lack of consistency in the way they've been dealt with</i> (Behavioural Support Team Member)</p>
Poor peer relations	<p><i>Most regular non-attenders tend to be isolates, they usually have a history of problems going back to primary school ... there are issues of anxiety</i> (Attendance Project Team Member)</p>

Alternatively, the deficit was cited in terms of disadvantaged learning capabilities, such as lack of academic ability, special learning needs, lack of concentration or lack of self-management skills (e.g. failing to have the correct school equipment; difficulty in finding school locations). Others made clear causal links between low self-esteem and academic failure which then resulted in some form of disaffected behaviour. Sometimes such characteristics or behaviours, if evident in primary school pupils, were seen as indicators of future disaffection.

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Lack of academic ability	<p><i>Simply by not being very bright (or bunking off, missing school through exclusion), may explain their behaviour problems ... because they're not very clever they 'do' school badly, they wind people up</i> (Behavioural Support Team Member)</p>
Special needs	<p><i>Special needs should be added in to the causes of disaffection - children with special literacy provision in primary schools need to be made aware of the importance of attendance, they may disrupt because of their special needs</i> (EWO)</p> <p><i>... there's a direct link between special needs and truancy</i> (Special Needs Director)</p> <p><i>Children with special needs must find high school very, very stressful - the curriculum isn't always adapted to their needs, but there is such a lot of pressure for children to achieve in the curriculum.</i> (Form Tutor)</p>

Lack of concentration	<i>Certain patterns of behaviour (especially in primary schools) may be of later significance for truancy such as lack of concentration, poor peer relations or difficult behaviour</i> (GEST Coordinator - LEA)
Lack of self-management skills	<p><i>There's a very simple connective route from poor self-management, being disorganised to truancy and malingering - for instance, coming to school without equipment, a child can get caught up in the discipline system with staff, and faced with punishments, might say 'I'm not going to school today'</i> (Behavioural Support Team Member)</p> <p><i>Attendance problems are always linked to other things - e.g.[we found] some school refusers hadn't managed their time for their coursework properly - perhaps at 15 years old that's not surprising</i> (Attendance Project Team Member)</p> <p><i>... the problem of disaffection is compounded by some children being unable to manage secondary school, having nine [to cope with] or ten teachers with different regimes</i> (Behavioural Support Team Member)</p>

This emphasis on individual problems clearly indicates why some schools' attendance and behaviour initiatives included strategies and programmes designed to remediate poor self-esteem and self-image, support self-management of learning, build positive peer relationships and so on. Moreover, the vulnerability of some pupils with these characteristics was seen as particularly crucial at key points in their school career, such as primary/secondary transfer, or after option specialism (Year 10-11), and again there were examples of attendance initiatives focusing on providing particular support at these important school career points.

(ii) Family and community

A second arena of influence cited was that of **family and community factors**. Within this category, a major problem was seen as parentally condoned absence. The lack of appreciation on the part of parents about appropriate reasons for absenting a child was often quoted (examples of condoned absence ranged from a hairdressing appointment or buying shoes and keeping otherwise unattended houses occupied in high-crime areas to undertaking a caring role in connection with parents or younger siblings).

<i>FAMILY FACTORS</i>	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Parentally condoned absence	<p><i>... the ethos of home often conflicts with the ethos of the school and it isn't seen as a bad thing to have a day off to go shopping</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>... there is an apathetic attitude to education in the local community, it's not important to parents and hence not to pupils - almost anything takes priority to school - haircuts, holidays</i> (Deputy Head)</p> <p><i>Here the main problem is a lack of understanding by parents about why children should go to school and the reasons they can keep them at home - it is unauthorised absence rather than truancy</i> (Head - Primary)</p> <p><i>The parents of less good attenders were quite surprised that the school kicked up a fuss if they took the child off because it was his birthday - they couldn't understand the school's displeasure, they were surprised that school expected 100 per cent attendance</i> (GEST Project Teacher)</p>

Alongside that, parents not valuing education, significant domestic problems within the home, and inadequate parenting skills were all seen to be linked with disaffected behaviours at school. Lack of congruence between the social norms and behaviours expected in the home and school environment was also raised.

FAMILY FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Not valuing education	<p><i>Many pupils in this area come from a culture that doesn't value secondary school - there's a cycle of ethnic communities initially proud of their access to education gradually turning to a sense of disenfranchisement from opportunities, then disruption and non-attendance creeps in</i> (Pupil Support Service Member)</p> <p><i>The problem of most non-attenders are not psychological but social, such as parents' attitude to school and the value they place on it. Many parents round here had very unfortunate experiences of school themselves, often felt failures within the system - they still feel powerless and lacking in self-esteem regarding schools</i> (Educational Psychologist)</p> <p><i>... it's a whole attitude to education and what it can do for you - [we found there was] lower attendance from children of those parents whose attitude was 'well it doesn't do much for anyone does it?' - it's a different cultural value</i> (GEST Project Teacher)</p>
Significant domestic problems	<p><i>... a lot of pupils with attendance problems have difficult home backgrounds, the families find it hard to function themselves</i> (Behavioural Support Teacher)</p> <p><i>... virtually every student having problems at school is having problems at home</i> (Deputy Head)</p> <p><i>A number of [disaffected] pupils bring huge social problems into school, they're mainly from one-parent families where carers have multiple social problems of their own, including debt, drug-taking and unemployment.</i> (PRU Development Officer)</p>
Inadequate/inconsistent parenting	<p><i>... often it's a result of lack of firm parenting, the child is confused</i> (Pupil Support Service Member)</p> <p><i>... there are parents [of disaffected pupils] who have lost sight of or who never actually had the skills of good parenting</i> (Pupil Support Service Member)</p> <p><i>... inappropriate parenting - not having sufficient parenting skills at a young age, and so things have been allowed to deteriorate</i> (Pupil Support Service Member)</p>

<p>Differing social behaviour expectations</p>	<p><i>There's an upsurge in children who are unable to 'play the game' of school, and don't always understand the sort of behaviour expected of them</i> (Pupil Support Service Member)</p> <p><i>One common factor is the discrepancy between expectations of behaviour at home and expectations at school, and from that whether youngsters can develop pro-socially in school</i> (Behaviour Support Teacher)</p>
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Sometimes, the community itself was cited as having, in effect, a deficit pathology affecting attendance and behaviour: examples included lack of self-esteem due to major issues such as unemployment and economic deprivation; a sense of resignation about future prospects; and not valuing anything which was part of their own community, including the education on offer there.

COMMUNITY FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
<p>Unemployment/economic deprivation</p>	<p><i>We are now seeing a third generation [of pupils], whose parents have not worked and gained nothing from the education system, back on the school doorstep with the same low levels of aspiration</i> (LEA Advisor)</p> <p><i>The area suffers from high unemployment, so promoting exam success as a means of getting a job doesn't work, there is no guarantee of work. There are children in school who've never known their parents work, which is bound to affect how these parents view what the school is doing: once parents don't value education there are all sorts of knock-on effects</i> (Head Teacher)</p> <p><i>... the economic situation out there has had an effect in that many kids are saying 'what's the point?'</i> (Deputy Head)</p>
<p>Sense of resignation/a community lack of self-esteem</p>	<p><i>The catchment area generates a sense of low self-esteem, there are certain traps people find themselves in and frustrations that's bound to cause a feeling of despair. Our school population is imbued with a sense of low self-esteem, whether that is due to poverty or unemployment - my gut and experience tells me that's the case.</i> (Head Teacher)</p> <p><i>There is a poor ethos [on the estate], the self-esteem in the community is low, the parents have little trust in anything within their own community, but it is hard to get people to look beyond its bounds and access outside</i> (Deputy Head)</p>

There was a range of school initiatives to address some of these social factors, such as encouraging and extending home-school-community links, informing parents of their responsibilities with regard to attendance through policies and dissemination, and instituting specific support-networks for parents. In some initiatives, the need for sensitive and skilled liaison was very evident. However, the prevalence of parentally condoned absence might suggest there is insufficient central support provided to schools and LEAs in their role of informing parents about responsibilities with regard to attendance.

(iii) School factors

The final major cause of disaffected behaviours cited was that directly associated with **the school** itself. Here again a range of factors were raised.

On a simple level, the ease of exit from school building and location were mentioned in some cases: split-site, open schools and those centrally located within estates or near commercial centres often had concern for the possibility of post-registration truancy in particular. Strategies such as rescheduling the school day to limit lengthy lunchtimes, pupil pass systems, maximising the surveillance potential of IT systems (such as producing a print-out of absences to all staff by break, IT used in subject lesson registration), and Truancy Watch schemes may all support the maintenance and monitoring of pupils' attendance in school. However, resource implications were particularly significant here: using IT systems to their maximum potential had considerable costs both financially and in teachers' and office staff's time. Moreover, it was often pointed out that these approaches patently do not address any of the more profound factors and pathologies associated with non-attendance. Nevertheless, effective monitoring was seen to allow the nature and scale of a school's non-attendance problems to be accurately identified and thus help to define where to target intervention and support.

Another area of school life frequently mentioned was **relationships**: both peer and pupil-teacher interactions. Problems experienced by pupils here were often seen as a major cause or, at least, stimulus for non-attendance and disruption.

SCHOOL: RELATIONSHIP FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Relationships with teachers	<p><i>I've come across situations of youngsters getting into trouble in some classes that needn't have happened at all, it's a blunder that the teacher's made with that youngster. I've seen youngsters needlessly wound up to the point of conflict by being handled badly: it's a staff training issue</i> (Behaviour Support Team Member)</p> <p><i>A lot of our kids don't have an easy life out of school. I don't think all staff realise that, and not all staff treat children with respect, which they should - you can't expect them to respect you if you don't give it first</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>There are personality clashes between pupils and one or more teachers - teachers are only human, and if clashes happen the teacher can't hide and take days off, but the youngster can</i> (Behaviour Support Team Member)</p>
Relationships with peers	<p><i>Bullying will come up [as a reason for non-attendance] with school phobics and school refusers - but often what they perceive to be happening actually isn't</i> (Behaviour Support Team Member)</p> <p><i>Sometimes children skip lessons to be with friends, meeting up with children from other schools or friends from different classes - if your friends aren't in the same class as you, school is a misery</i> (Form Tutor)</p> <p><i>... one cause is peer pressure - a lot of the children don't truant alone, some of it is to show-off, it's a dare, it's macho and risky</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>There can be pupils who are the best of friends one day and something trivial happens so they don't like each other, and if one takes a group of friends with them that other person suddenly feels alone and insecure - the easiest solution is to run away ... there is also a spiral if you take time out of school - you get comments from your peers and get embarrassed and humiliated - allegiances change so much among teenage kids in that time. Suddenly you're not wanted any more among your group of friends and can feel very alone in a big school</i> (Teacher in off-site provision)</p>

Whole-school initiatives such as behaviour policy development or behaviour management INSET, and those focusing on anti-bullying, clearly link to this area of ensuring positive interrelationships within the school. More specialised support for pupils with difficulties in peer relations or in conforming to classroom behaviour norms and expectations was also evident. Withdrawal units, specially

appointed staff - with a behaviour support/modification brief for targeted pupils or a more responsive befriending/counselling role - and the use of older pupils as mentors also addressed these non-curriculum aspects of disaffection.

Lastly, problems of attendance and disruption were often related to the **curriculum** on offer, and here particularly the effects of the key stage 4 National Curriculum and assessment imperatives were noted as a major source or exacerbation of disaffection. This causal link was made especially by those who dealt with what was acknowledged to be the most disaffected school age-group (Year 10-11), i.e. secondary senior staff, heads of upper school, teachers with a key stage 4 focus, or external agents such as educational psychologists and welfare staff. However, it should be noted that there were respondents who did not agree with this causality: primary staff and those with a mainly key stage 3 teaching commitment particularly. Equally, the view that the National Curriculum represented the 'entitlement' of all children was voiced.

Notwithstanding this, several aspects of National Curriculum as a source of disaffection emerged. The National Curriculum's prescribed and academically oriented content (at key stage 4 in particular), was frequently described as 'boring and inappropriate' for many pupils. The *disenfranchisement* of non-academic pupils was suggested: often it was stated that the National Curriculum was modelled on an academic or traditional grammar school curriculum and hence was 'irrelevant' to the needs of many pupils. Increasingly perceived as such by pupils themselves, disengagement ensued, in the form of non-attendance or disruption. Moreover, it was pointed out that statutory requirements did not allow teachers the flexibility to select course materials and focuses which were more likely to suit their pupils' needs and interest.

SCHOOL: CURRICULUM FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)
Irrelevance of school	<p><i>At the older level, in Years 10 and 11, it's dissatisfaction with school [that is the main cause of truancy]. They feel they have outgrown it. They want to be out doing other things. They are bored with what's going on here. Life seems better outside</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>It differs between upper and lower school children. With upper school children it's likely that they are just losing interest in school. Things aren't going their way and perhaps they don't see a future. They feel, perhaps, that they are just waiting to leave.</i> (Form Tutor)</p>

More than that, the reforms of the late 1980s and early '90s were sometimes seen as terminating key curriculum and assessment initiatives which schools had developed to meet the particular and often more vocational needs of lower-attaining pupils in the last two years of compulsory schooling. There was regret at the loss of expertise, enthusiasm and experience of devising relevant courses and modules which had characterised such curriculum development and design, for example the Lower Attaining Pupil Project (LAPP). In this view, the National Curriculum, while still viewed positively, had nevertheless meant an over-hasty casting aside of much that was perceived to be good about these earlier curricula.

SCHOOL: CURRICULUM FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
<p>The prescribed academic orientation of National Curriculum content</p>	<p><i>I don't think schools are flexible enough ... with the rules that they've got under the National Curriculum. The education system seems to think that all children want to be brain surgeons, solicitors or barristers. There are children around who have never been to [nearby city] never mind Paris - now they're not interested in a foreign language. We've got to get them doing something that they want to do, not something that we're boring them with</i> (EWO)</p> <p><i>Speaking to the truants that we were dealing with on the sweeps, one of the main things really was, with the National Curriculum, there is a tremendous amount of pressure on young people to do subjects which perhaps they haven't really got any interest in. There is no escape for them now and they're channelled into doing subjects they wouldn't normally want to do</i> (Police Officer I/C Youth Liaison)</p> <p><i>(I think that relates to some, not all, but) some truancy problems - [result from] disaffection due to inappropriate curriculum ... so I think the Government must take some responsibility for some of the problems they forced on school by enforcing a National Curriculum which basically was a grammar school curriculum</i> (Senior Teacher)</p> <p><i>The National Curriculum has been a very limiting experience, limited what you can do with Year 10 and 11. You've got rid of all the kinds of courses that kids generally enjoyed and wanted to be part of, 'cos kids have to do English, maths, science, French etc. We've lost all that knowledge and expertise, just at the time we are going to be asked to reintroduce it. We've got to try and offer pupils something they want. Something related to the possibility of work and experiences of that. [Their curriculum should be] geared to the world outside and not the cloistered area in which schools operate. The National Curriculum has pushed [everyone] down a very academic road, for very academic students, not taking account that we have a lot of non-academic students who need something different, a different menu. The same diet doesn't suit both ends of the curve of distribution!</i> (Head of Special Needs)</p>

Recent changes in examination and assessment policies were often cited as adding to the problems of pupil demotivation and disaffection. The reduced emphasis on coursework was noted, as was the unsuitability of GCSEs for many pupils for whom vocational qualifications were more relevant. (Particularly in the context of a depressed youth labour market, it was pointed out that some pupils perceived current 16+ qualifications as having little employment currency.) Another perspective held that course work could lead to early drop out and demotivation as

pupils recognised while in Y10 that they were not going to succeed in certain GCSEs. Publication of examination results in the market forces culture of league tables was also cited as having a significant bearing on pupil disaffection, given the fact that significant numbers of pupils would not gain C-grade passes. It was intimated that resources and teaching time were perforce invested in exam achievement. Regret at the loss of practical and modular qualifications such as CSE Mode 3 was also expressed by a number of interviewees.

SCHOOL: CURRICULUM FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)
Changes in examination and assessment procedures	<p><i>The fact that GCSEs are not 100 per cent coursework now can make it difficult for pupils to catch up on what they have missed. Sometimes, if they have missed a few weeks, they feel 'maybe it's not worth coming any more?'</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>And whether we like it or not, all schools, if they were honest, would say 'we will only concentrate on the top end', because again the league tables come out, don't they? It's not how many people got Gs and so on. I mean, some of those kids getting a G for GCSE, it might actually be a very positive achievement for them. Well, it's lost, isn't it, because all they are interested in is As, Bs and Cs. I think the Government made a bit of a mistake there by more or less suggesting that anything after a C was a bit of a waste of time. We have to accept that about 60 per cent of your population in your school are in that category, aren't they?</i> (Deputy Head)</p> <p><i>Schools are in a catch-22 situation, when they are measured by their GCSE 1-5 passes and when the very nature of the course is not suitable for the children you have. We're forever in this dilemma of being slated in the press on one hand, against genuinely wanting to meet the kids' needs and do the best for them on the other</i> (Deputy Head)</p> <p><i>The league tables show our school in a bad light and reflect badly on the teachers which is unfair, because it is more an issue of what we have to work with ... These kids are the ones who are suffering. In some places, the National Curriculum becomes a joke ... the more you emphasise the academic rather than the vocational, the more kids you'll disenfranchise ... recent government policy is an unmitigated disaster</i> (Deputy Head)</p>

More generally, the National Curriculum framework was cited as contributing to a sense of failure and lack of self-esteem, particularly among lower attaining pupils.

As identified earlier, low self-esteem was much associated with non-attendance and disaffection. The National Curriculum's general lack of appropriateness for the less academically able, and the stagnation and lack of progress experienced by such pupils within its attainment structure, was thus directly raised as a source of disaffection.

SCHOOL: CURRICULUM FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
<p>A sense of failure accruing from the NC framework</p>	<p><i>One of the reasons why children don't want to be in school is because they experience a sense of failure, which is obviously talking about curriculum issues - the appropriateness of the curriculum and the level of teaching for individuals. I think it is one of the key areas - how you make all children feel valued, even those who are not academically able</i> (Educational Psychologist)</p> <p><i>The National Curriculum and the manner of marking and grading can be a disincentive to pupils because they can look as if they are making no progress. If you have to grade them by level and Attainment Target, they might show skills and knowledge in something else, but it doesn't quite hit what is needed. The National Curriculum is not a fine enough tool. Before it, teachers knew how to motivate and to teach children the skills and knowledge they needed, and to help them make progress</i> (Head of Year)</p> <p><i>Children are no different from adults. If they're made to do something that they don't particularly enjoy, they don't understand and they have difficulty with, then perhaps one way of avoiding it is to truant from school ... at the moment, I don't think the system is geared up to help those who aren't academically gifted ... they are then labelled as non-achievers - so you've got this low self-esteem, because they cannot cope with school, they cannot deal with it, they cannot do maths or whatever ...</i> (Police Office I/C Youth Liaison)</p> <p><i>Some children feel very insecure at secondary school and can't cope. Some, with the pressures of GCSE and stronger curriculum, feel they're a failure and so rather than be being seen to fail, they'll muck up instead</i> (Special Support Team Member)</p>

Some secondary teaching staff additionally voiced the opinion that the cohort currently entering secondary schooling had been disadvantaged by the reduced emphasis on core skills during their key stage 1 and 2 schooling, resulting in lower literacy and numeracy levels for dealing with key stage 3 demands.

As well as the possible dissonance between the learner and his/her current curriculum, the demands of the National Curriculum were cited as having knock-on effects upon teachers in both their teaching and pastoral roles, which in turn could affect pupils' attendance and behaviour. Here, viewpoints invariably referred to a reduction in the pastoral dimension of schools: namely, the pressure to deliver the National Curriculum gave teachers less time to invest in their pastoral roles. Pastoral work generally was felt to be decreasing in status in terms of both school organisation and teachers' career paths. Some interviewees linked this decline to National Curriculum and subject dominance, especially in the context of resource constraints. More indirectly, the changing and inexorable demands of the National Curriculum were sometimes seen to create pressures and a lack of stability in course delivery. Thus inappropriate pedagogy was mentioned as a final cause of disaffection.

SCHOOL: CURRICULUM FACTORS	What do you see as a major cause of disaffection (truancy/ disruption)?
Reduction in time for pastoral provision/ teachers' sense of curriculum pressure	<p><i>The imposition of the volume of work for the National Curriculum does not allow for 'time out' for these children to talk about these problems. It is a constant push to get things done. Under the old system, there was more time to talk to pupils</i> (Pupil Welfare Coordinator)</p> <p><i>The National Curriculum has made life in schools much more hectic and given teachers much more work to do. As a result, they do not have the time for as much pastoral care as they used to or would want, so even the smallest problem is then passed on to the educational welfare staff</i> (Educational Welfare Assistant)</p> <p><i>One problem I see is with the changing curriculum and the pressure that puts on staff... If there's that state of flux in their professional lives, how can teachers possibly provide stability for the children - and the one thing that difficult children need is stability ... the level of uncertainty for teachers regarding the curriculum has had a knock-on effect ... changes take away the time available to deal with things out of the norm.</i> (Behaviour Support Teacher)</p>

<p>Inappropriate pedagogy</p>	<p><i>A lot of disruption is the teacher's fault - we pitch the lesson wrong. This happens because we often focus on the demands of the National Curriculum and cannot devote so much attention to the needs of the children</i> (Key Stage 2 teacher)</p> <p><i>The presentation of some of the curriculum is rather dull for many pupils. Very often when a pupil says they don't like a subject, it tends to be that they don't like the teaching</i> (Principal Welfare Officer)</p>
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Initiatives to deal with the whole issue of disaffection and National Curriculum relevance were evident among the sample. There were examples of schools providing alternative curriculum experiences such as mechanics courses, part-time college attendance, extended work experience, and residential/outdoor activities. Other curriculum initiatives related to extra support for current subjects (including basic literacy and numeracy), negotiated and reduced timetables, curriculum provision in alternative units (on- and off-site) and the introduction of other certification and qualifications. Equally, a whole-school focus on teaching styles and differentiated learning was linked to combating disaffection in more than one instance.

PART TWO

STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES - a first audit

The 30 schools in the first phase sample were all approached because some aspect of their work in the area of attendance and/or disruption appeared to meet the criteria of 'innovative'. Taking account of the range of possible activities to deal with disaffection outlined in GEST 20, the sample was initially designed to include examples of innovative school-based work under four 'themes': new roles of EWS staff; the adoption of various IT registration systems; a school focus on some aspect of behaviour policy, management or support; and the provision of alternative curriculum experiences (both within school and off-site).

In undertaking an overview or audit of the sample's work in this whole area of disaffection, a very wide range of initiatives and approaches was immediately apparent. More significantly, there was often a clear overlap in the work under way: for instance, strategies focusing on improving attendance might well have a behavioural and/or curriculum dimension, and initiatives dealing with bullying or classroom management might also be intended to have a positive effect on attendance patterns. Indeed, the inter-relationship was so evident, particularly in some of the innovative school-based roles undertaken by EWS staff and specially appointed or seconded teachers, that a preferable approach for the audit was to categorise the initiatives into three elements. Thus, all the innovative strategies and practice investigated might be said to focus on one or more of the following:

- (i) maintaining and monitoring pupil attendance in school;**
- (ii) providing direct support for emotional, social and/or behavioural needs**
- (iii) offering an alternative learning environment and/or curriculum experiences.**

(This audit is summarised in table form in the Appendix, and attempts to convey the overlap of focuses which certain initiatives achieve.)

Finally, the audit revealed how a number of the schools were consciously operating initiatives to cover all these aspects of tackling disaffection and non-attendance, recognising that there was a clear interdependency between the elements. Unless behavioural/relationship and curriculum issues were addressed as well as the monitoring of attendance, certain truancy and disaffection problems would remain.

The audit of school initiatives associated with directly addressing the attendance, curriculum or behavioural aspects of disaffection also showed that such initiatives might include three dimensions or levels. These were:

- *whole-school policy: organisation, structures*
- *new school-based roles*
- *external support.*

The most positive accounts of success were invariably associated with initiatives which included all or at least more than one of these dimensions. Put another way, initiatives operating on only one of the levels seemed most vulnerable to the criticism of 'bolt-on', with temporary, or tempered, success resulting. Thus, *new school-based roles* and strategies involving *external support* benefited from being incorporated into existing or concurrent *whole-school policy* initiatives.

(i) maintaining and monitoring pupil attendance in school

Within this section of the audit is included a range of strategies whose purpose was to monitor attendance generally and encourage and maintain pupils in school. In addition, there were examples of strategies which took preventative action on, or offered more direct support for, specific pupils who might experience attendance difficulties. However, specific intervention and support work on attendance often converged with action on other forms of disaffection.

At *whole-school level*, examples of initiatives which dealt directly with attendance issues included the production of written policies (with dissemination to parents); the adoption of IT registration systems; ways of restructuring the school day - either informally (for instance by instituting a Breakfast Club starting at 8.00am) or formally (by reducing lunchtime), and the introduction of reward

systems for attendance (and sometimes punctuality). Staff involvement through consultation, working parties or INSET sometimes accompanied these strategies.

Key issues here included:

- the need to consider the most appropriate forms of communication to (and from) parents
- the willingness and ability of staff to operate new IT registration systems and accept their benefits
- the range of attendance behaviours to reward - variations included rewarding significant improved attendance and punctuality, rewarding class or individual attendance.

New school-based roles to deal with attendance issues included a wide range of practices and personnel.

On general attendance monitoring, it was common for a staff member to be given responsibility for the introduction and then maintenance of the school's IT registration system. Research roles on general attendance issues were also evident, and might include analytic interpretation of the school's statistical data on absence rates; using interview or survey techniques to look into causes of and attitudes towards non-attendance among the school's pupils or parents; and garnering views of staff on IT registration system issues.

Attendance-related roles might also operate with a general preventative or support focus. Here, examples included: intensive liaison with feeder or partner primaries; playing a key role in induction programmes for Year 7 pupils (including involvement in summer holiday provision); and the identification and monitoring of pupils with potential attendance problems.

Liaison work with parents and the community also featured as a special role for school-based staff, and might involve setting up support groups, networks and workshops for parents offering advice, the opportunity to discuss problems, or specific input on aspects of parenting skills or family issues.

Liaison to secure the involvement of other agencies such as Police Community Workers and Social Services, was also a feature of some attendance-related school-based roles.

Beyond that, pupil counselling or befriending roles, offering direct interaction with individual pupils on issues of attendance, were evident in the sample. These might be undertaken by specially appointed staff such as a School Counsellor, Welfare Assistants or GEST project secondees, who, essentially, were non-teaching. The counselling role could involve either operating in a responsive capacity (supporting any pupil who chose to come forward) or proactively working with individual pupils targeted as having attendance-related problems. Alternatively, no doubt highlighting the value - or need - for such a role, existing staff were said to perform this counselling/befriending function unofficially - examples here included the Registration Secretary, and the School Nurse. Some schools were also developing the use of senior pupils in this befriending role, or, in one instance, using them as 'minders' to accompany post-registration truants between lessons.

However, counselling roles could also involve a remit to undertake direct remediating action: such as negotiating reduced re-entry timetables; offering learning support in class; providing behaviour modification programmes; and liaising and making contracts with parents. This added dimension clearly distinguishes focused attendance-related counselling from the more general befriending offered by peers and staff in an unofficial capacity.

Beyond individual work with non-attending pupils, the sample included examples of roles which involved working with groups of pupils, undertaking behaviour- and relationship-focused activities such as self-esteem building, cooperative and team building exercises. Such work might also include an alternative curriculum dimension (off-site vocational projects, trips, etc). It was these approaches which were also often used in dealing with pupils showing disaffection tendencies through disruptive behaviour. A further variation (which also replicated work with disruptive pupils), was to run special small-group withdrawal units, offering support for pupils to continue with aspects of their existing curriculum, as well as to resolve their attendance difficulties.

Key issues here included:

- the degree to which innovative roles were accepted by school staff and pupils, and integrated into the school's organisation, aims and policies with regard to attendance (this might include appropriate accommodation for those working with individuals or groups, or, more profoundly, whether there was consensus on such issues as part-time reintegration strategies)
- the difficulty of overcoming parental and community attitudes to secure involvement
- the availability of resources and materials for behaviour- and relationship-related activities.

The final dimension of attendance-related strategies involved *external support or agents*. Here, public monitoring systems such as pupil pass procedures, Attendance Hotlines and Truancy Watch were all used to encourage those in the local community to report and challenge pupils who might be out of school without authorisation. Providing information about school holiday dates, Baker Days, uniforms, etc. were also seen as a way of *building up good relations* with the community, and raising the profile of attendance generally. Siting an information and support service for non-attenders in a shopping precinct, with links with local schools was also seen as a vital addition to external surveillance in one instance.

Other examples of external support included the use of Theatre-in-Education teams working on the theme of non-attendance. The possibility of introducing and debating the 'affective' dimension of causes of truancy was seen as a particular advantage here.

Finally, the regular work of the Educational Welfare Service would naturally be included in this category of attendance-related external support. Issues here raised by schools often related to the benefits of having sustained continuity in their allocation of Welfare Officers, and the degree to which the EWO and school agreed on purposes and actions.

(ii) providing direct support for emotional, social and/or behavioural needs

Within this category are included all those initiatives whose focus was primarily on dealing with disaffection as exhibited by pupil behaviour, relationships and attitudes within school. Put another way, and using one Principal Welfare Officer's useful distinction: rather than addressing pupil 'flight' strategies, these examples of innovative work by schools have disaffected pupil 'fight' strategies as their major target.

Whole-school level strategies in this category would invariably involve establishing behaviour or discipline policies, and/or anti-bullying policies. These typically included staff awareness-raising or INSET, and in the former, classroom or behaviour management might also be a particular focus. The school-wide introduction of set and agreed procedures for dealing with non-acceptable behaviour or incidences of bullying was an integral part of such policy work. There were a number of examples of schools adopting AD (assertive discipline techniques), with its clear-cut escalating hierarchy of sanctions. In the case of one anti-bullying policy, inclusion within a well-defined whole-school discipline policy and its procedures was seen as an important aspect of its success.

Communication about the school's discipline and reward procedures to parents was also often described as a crucial component of policy work. Equally important in a number of instances was seen to be the involvement of pupils - for instance, by encouraging their contribution to devising Codes of Conduct or a Bill of Rights, or by getting new pupils to learn and even formally sign these on arrival in the school, or by making the behaviour policy and bullying issues a focus of PSE work. Involvement by pupils might also include design tasks to accompany policy introduction and dissemination.

The value of outside support, in the form of LEA staff with expertise in behaviour management or anti-bullying strategies operating with the whole staff or sub-groups, was acknowledged.

Examples of *school structures or organisational features* which addressed behaviour/relationship issues would include those which provided a general increase in pastoral support. Here, such strategies as the extension of form tutor periods (assisted, in one school, by the use of SWIPE cards which reduced time spent on form registration); assigning senior pupils as mentors to forms; or

instituting 'college' or 'house' systems were cited. Increasing pupils' sense of belonging by 'building a family atmosphere' was intended in the latter case.

Other general strategies had pinpointed lunchtime as a particularly 'vulnerable' period of the school day. Hence there were examples of schools instigating behaviour management training for lunchtime supervisors (or at least ensuring their involvement in policy and practices for dealing with misbehaviour and bullying). One school's reduction of the lunch period *per se*, by adopting continuous school day timetabling, was intended to minimise opportunities for disruptive behaviour as well as truancy problems.

Beyond that, all the schools in the sample operated systems of sanctions for unacceptable behaviour, though equally defined school-wide systems for rewarding good behaviour (as opposed to good attendance or good work) were somewhat less evident. As one interviewee suggested, successful social development was not given the same acclaim and kudos as successful academic achievement. Nevertheless, expressions of approval and praise for behaviour would typically be turned into the school's existing currency of merits, credits, certificates, etc; while sanctions would invariably involve a clear sequence of reprimand - detention, on report, parental contact, temporary exclusions and so on.

The use of withdrawal or isolation units as a response to classroom misdemeanours was also evident, though there was considerable variation in their precise place within each school's sanction system. Some schools described their unit as among the first line of sanctions, used for removing problem children from class for the rest of the lesson or sometimes for the rest of the day. Other schools had pupil entry to such units as a later stage in the sanction system and therefore its use was associated with more serious or sustained offences. There were examples of schools operating this sanction as the 'final chance' before permanent exclusion, and one school required pupils to enter their unit directly on return from temporary exclusion, to catch up with work and also, as the headteacher put it, *to impress on the youngster that exclusion from school is a serious business*. In these instances, longer stays in the unit were evident (for some schools this was a matter of days; for others, it involved the pupil being away from their classes for several weeks). The withdrawal of break and lunchtime free time might also be a component of a unit's regime, and typically the pupils would be under close and strict supervision by senior staff, with work sent by the pupils' subject teachers. These units were created from within a school's existing resources and appeared to

have a strong measure of censure in their purpose. As such, they should be distinguished from certain other in-school behaviour support units, which were operated by specially appointed staff who provided focused behaviour modification programmes or specific learning support. Notwithstanding this distinction, it is important to stress that informal support, encouragement and counselling for pupils in the former type of unit was often described.

Key issues included:

- the degree to which all staff shared and supported the values underpinning school behaviour policies, and the accompanying rewards and sanctions systems
- how far staff could achieve consistency in the application of the school's rewards and sanctions systems
- the degree to which in-school withdrawal units could provide behaviour-focused remediation and reintegration programmes
- how far general school reward systems were effective in supporting behaviour-related programmes.

Innovative school-based roles with a behaviour-related focus were also evident in the sample. Most specifically with this emphasis was the example cited above, in which teachers were seconded or appointed to provide in-school supportive supervision for pupils referred with behavioural problems. In these instances, a strong brief of remediation or preventative work was intended. This might be done either in a special unit within the school (sometimes attached to the Special Needs department) or involve mostly in-class support, or be a mixture of both approaches. The amount of time referred pupils could be working with these staff (either within the unit or in class) also varied: examples ranged from single weekly sessions to a substantial part of the week. The supervision might involve individualised behaviour modification techniques and/or group work (including assertiveness training for children experiencing bullying), as well as learning support for the pupils as they worked within mainstream curriculum requirements. Nevertheless, despite a focus on the statutory curriculum, these behaviour support teachers often recognised the particular value of extra-curricular activities as an incentive to, or reward for, good behaviour.

Other school-based roles included targeting support on pupils identified as potentially - or already - demonstrating disaffected behaviour. This work would essentially focus on attitudes and often in effect fused with attendance-related strategies, involving procedures aimed at self-esteem building, developing cooperative/team attitudes, and so on. School-based EWOs most typically operated in this capacity.

Also overlapping with attendance-related work, there were examples of behaviour-related roles which involved working with parents and liaison with feeder (or partner) primaries, including involvement in Year 6 induction programmes. In the same way, those with responsive buddying and counselling roles (such as Welfare Assistants and School Counsellors) might well find pupils with behaviour-related problems part of their clientele.

Behaviour-related buddying/counselling was also evident in the roles which some schools were instituting for senior pupils. There were several examples of sixth-formers acting as mentors to younger troubled pupils, with pastoral staff operating as 'match-makers' to provide the most suitable mix of personalities. Other instances involved senior pupils manning 'listening posts' to offer first-line support to youngsters coming forward with problems. Another example, from a primary school in the sample, was to involve Year 6 pupils as mediators in peer-group disputes and confrontations. This in turn involved some training responsibility for school or EWS staff.

Key issues included:

- how far the objectives and procedures of behaviour-related roles were accepted and understood by staff, and the central role which senior managers played in their successful integration
- whether sufficient pastoral support was offered, particularly to Year 7 pupils arriving from primary school, or, more generally, whether current pastoral systems and roles were always given sufficient time, status and resources to operate effectively.

External support for disaffected behaviour within school was, of course, most evident in the work of LEA Behavioural Support Services, though Educational Psychology Services and EWS staff also might be involved in certain cases.

The Behavioural Support Service's work (which was followed up in two LEAs) usually included a dual role of operating outreach work in schools and the provision of places in special off-site units for referred pupils (now given Pupil Referral Unit or PRU status). Outreach work would typically involve working with individual pupils (and, in primary schools, their class teachers), and might offer analysis of a particular behavioural problem from structured classroom observation as well as providing remediating programmes and targets for the pupil. INSET work with individual teachers, whole staff, and school governors was also offered, and might include support for instituting behaviour policies, reward systems, etc.

The same kind of behaviour-related strategies would be offered to those pupils in off-site units and centres, often there on a part-time basis while still on roll at their school. Hence, in many instances, the curriculum followed would be that provided by the school.

Key issues included:

- the effects of financial cuts on services, and the impact of delegation of school budgets, service agreements and so on
- the degree to which there was consensus on the re-integration of pupils from off-site provision.

(iii) offering an alternative learning environment and/or curriculum experiences

This final section deals with the ways in which the sample of schools addressed or adapted the curriculum as part of their strategies to deal with the needs of disaffected pupils. Some of the initiatives involving whole-school curriculum-related work, or those with organisational implications (such as additional curriculum support), could be described as preventative, in that it was the quality of teaching and learning generally which was being reviewed and improved.

Where curriculum-related strategies were directly targeted on disaffected pupils, two different approaches were evident. In some instances, existing statutory curriculum requirements were focused upon and supported, though perhaps tailored or delivered in some sort of specialised way. In other cases, schools were also attempting to add to the kinds of learning opportunities available for those who exhibited attendance or behavioural difficulties.

Curriculum-focused strategies at *whole-school level* included examples of development work on differentiation, with INSET for staff and LEA advisory support, as well as other strategies such as working parties, departmental reviews, resource development and non-contact time for department heads to observe subject delivery in classrooms. Strategies for developing teaching styles and varying the learning experiences of pupils were two areas particularly under a whole-school focus in one school.

Curriculum-related alterations to school structures and organisation included examples of general additional curriculum support offered within school such as extra assistance to those undertaking GCSE coursework, through tutorial support which monitored progress by target-setting. Variation in these kinds of curriculum support tutorials was evident: one school had instituted weekly meetings for tutor groups of four pupils, another provided individual tutorials on a three-monthly basis. Homework clubs (offering after-school supervision and library facilities) also provided additional learning support opportunities and one school had run extension modules in key subjects such as mathematics, English, science and technology for pupils who had fallen behind or wanted to enhance their chances of higher grades. There was also one example of curriculum-oriented tutorial support offered by senior pupils.

The continuous day system was also said to have a curriculum spin-off in that it involved a longer working period in the morning, when most pupils were felt to *perform better*. (Equally, doing away with morning assembly was said to have improved punctuality, as pupils no longer 'drifted in' to school in order to avoid having to attend.)

Focusing particularly on curriculum strategies directly aimed at the (potentially) disaffected, some schools were attempting to offer alternative vocational qualifications for lower achievers at key stage 4, including, in one instance, their

own 'in-house' certificates and qualification. A number of schemes were mentioned (e.g. Youth Awards, RSA) covering accreditation in areas such as sport, business and basic literacy.

Finally, whole-school level strategies with a curriculum focus included rewards for curriculum achievement, and these figured in a number of schools' accounts: certificates, stickers and, in one instance, Praise Postcards (sent through the post to the pupil's home) were described. Records of Achievement also featured here.

Key issues included:

- the degree to which school reward systems operated as an effective incentive to the academically unmotivated
- how far alternative qualifications could be resourced within the school, and their currency in the employment market-place.

School-based roles with a curriculum focus for dealing with disaffected behaviour included those staff, often from the EWS, who would identify key problem areas with pupils experiencing severe attendance problems and negotiate re-entry through an initial reduction in their timetabled curriculum. Counselling and support would also accompany this return. In addition, those with specific responsibility for disaffected pupils might be engaged in alternative curriculum activities and vocational initiatives, both within and outside school time: trips, motor-mechanic schemes and outward bound activities all featured.

Alternatively, there were the examples of in-school special units, run by trained teaching staff, whose purpose was to provide small numbers of severely disaffected pupils with an opportunity to undertake basic mainstream curriculum activities in a secure environment.

Key issues here included:

- how far school staff were always in accord with strategies involving an alternative curriculum, re-entry and reduced timetables for disaffected pupils

- whether alternative curriculum activities and specialised school-based support staff could be afforded as a long-term strategy.

On *external support* with a curriculum focus, there were examples of disaffected pupils being provided with placements on college courses and work experience, though the former were felt to have particular cost implications under current funding arrangements. Off-site provision within LEA-based services, with their multi-focus remit on addressing behaviour and attitude difficulties, most usually offered some version of the mainstream curriculum (indeed in one case with part-time placements only, work was supplied by the school). Tensions and time constraints in achieving these dual objectives were referred to.

Other key issues here included:

- the need for consensus between schools and external providers in the aims and values underpinning behavioural support work within curriculum initiatives
- the importance of the role of link-person in any college and school interface
- the resource implications of providing alternative curriculum experiences.

CONCLUSION

Three to Remember

In offering a summary of perceived causes of disaffection and a range of school-based strategies to deal with the problem, key issues raised in the report have appeared to fall consistently into groups of three.

Thus, **three** major arenas of influence upon disaffection were identified (individual; family and social; and school factors). Among the initiatives in place to deal with disaffection, **three** major focuses emerged (maintaining and monitoring attendance, providing support for emotional, social and/or behavioural needs and offering an alternative learning environment or curriculum). Finally there appeared to be **three** possible dimensions to any such initiative (whole-school level; new school-based roles; and external support). More significantly, as the report has shown, the three major causes of disaffection, and the focuses and components of any reparative strategy were often acknowledged to be interdependent. Thus, the research to date would seem to suggest that initiatives for dealing with truancy and disruption are likely to be more limited in their scope unless all three of each element are taken into account.

Finally, given the Government's strong commitment to combating and tackling disaffection, the data suggest three possible questions to be addressed at national policy level.

(i) Maintaining and monitoring attendance

The prevalence of parentally condoned absence as a major cause of non-attendance was noted in many of the interviews, both at school and LEA level. Attempts by individual schools and LEAs to clarify non-authorized absence to parents may therefore be a replicated use of resources: could DFE publicity do more to inform parents of their responsibilities in this area, in much the same way as the 'chartersing' of their rights has been a focus of major dissemination campaigns?

(ii) Providing direct support for emotional and behavioural needs

The flourishing of school-based roles offering preventative support for disaffected pupils has been apparent in many of the schools in the sample. The dedication and expertise of staff operating in this way, and their empathy with the pupils experiencing attendance or behaviour difficulties are apparent even in the brief interview extracts quoted in Part One of this report. In each case, accounts of outstanding success with individual pupils supported in this way were offered. Quantifying success in preventative work is notoriously difficult, but the value of, and need for, such roles were unanimously affirmed. This raises the question: is there a need to reconsider pastoral roles and support in schools, particularly in the secondary sector, and to examine the likely cost-effectiveness of providing resources to allow such preventative roles a more permanent place within the system?

(iii) Offering alternative curriculum experiences

A major cause or exacerbation of disaffection was defined by many of the educational professionals interviewed as the inappropriateness of the National Curriculum for many pupils, particularly at key stage 4. In terms of a possible mismatch between causality and solution for disaffection, not surprisingly the audit has shown it is in this area of the curriculum that comparatively fewer resources and time were available to offer remediating strategies. Overall, the mismatch may indicate that reviewing the 14+, as well as the 16-19 curriculum, is also of particular urgency. The viewpoints of the educational professionals also raise the question: how far could the curriculum development and assessment initiatives of the pre-National Curriculum era be usefully included in this reconsideration?

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APPENDIX

WHOLE SCHOOL LEVEL			
	ATTENDANCE-RELATED FOCUS (MONITORING AND MAINTAINING STRATEGIES)	NON-CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS (PUPIL BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDE, RELATIONSHIPS STRATEGIES)	CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS (CURRICULUM ADAPTATION STRATEGIES)
<i>Policies</i>	Attendance Policy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● dissemination to parents 	Behaviour Policy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● classroom management ● positive behaviour strategies ● codes of conduct Anti-Bully Policy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● strategies ● infra-structure 	Differentiated Learning Policy including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● working parties ● resource development ● classroom-based research
<i>Structures: (organisation - timetable)</i>	Registration by IT e.g. BROMCOM, SIMS, SWIPE CARDS analysis, checks, sweeps, DFE statistics	Increased form tutor time	Alternative qualifications e.g. RSA, GNVQ, Youth Awards, AB Achievement Test in literacy, own-school certificates
	CONTINUOUS DAY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reducing lunchtime disaffection, disruptive incidents, truancy 		(more intensive morning working period)
	Breakfast Club (8.00 - 8.40)	Lunch-time supervisor training	GCSE subject support Club Homework Club Tutorial support
		WITHDRAWAL ISOLATION UNITS supervision by existing senior staff, using class work	
<i>Rewards and sanctions</i>	COMPACT/RoA		
	PRAISE POSTCARDS		
	Certificate of Attendance/prizes vouchers awards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● class ● improvers ● individual ● certificates of punctuality 	Credits etc certificates merits	
	DETENTION, EXCLUSIONS ON REPORT, REFERRALS		

SCHOOL-BASED ROLES

	ATTENDANCE-RELATED FOCUS [MONITORING AND MAINTAINING STRATEGIES]	NON-CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS [PUPIL BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDE, RELATIONSHIPS STRATEGIES]	CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS [CURRICULUM ADAPTATION STRATEGIES]	
<i>Staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● INSET provision 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IT system installation monitoring 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research, e.g. pupil causes parent attitudes 			
	Counselling/buddying role (non-teaching) e.g. EWA, school counsellor	Negotiating reduced timetable		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● targeted pupil support: (groups or individuals) group work - on self-esteem cooperative/team-building behaviour modification programmes		IN-SCHOOL: trips vocational initiatives - e.g. Junior Wheels EXTRA CURRICULAR	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● referred pupil supervision 			
				- in class - in 'special' units
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● provision of parental support and networks 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● liaison with primary feeders/ induction work 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● liaison with other community agencies 			
<i>Pupils</i>	Peer minders - accompanying PR truants between lessons	Peers: mentoring and mediation	Peers: curriculum support	

EXTERNAL SUPPORT			
	ATTENDANCE-RELATED FOCUS (MONITORING AND MAINTAINING STRATEGIES)	NON-CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS (PUPIL BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDE, RELATIONSHIPS STRATEGIES)	CURRICULUM RELATED FOCUS (CURRICULUM ADAPTATION STRATEGIES)
<i>Community and Other Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance Hot Line • pupil pass systems • Truancy Watch 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience • part-time college attendance
THEATRE IN EDUCATION			
<i>LEA-based Services e.g. BSS, EWS and Attendance Projects</i>	Targeted pupil support in school (groups or individuals)		
	Behaviour modification programmes, self-esteem building, cooperative/team building, career and future planning (with curriculum support)		
	Focused off-site provision (full- or part-time)		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long-term non-attenders - pupils with behavioural difficulties - excluded pupils 		

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Three to remember: strategies for disaffected pupils

This short report is an overview of innovative strategies in 30 schools which are attempting to tackle the serious problem of pupil disaffection, and also covers what educational professionals see as some of the main causes of truancy and disruptive behaviour.

It is the first in a short series of publications from a project entitled 'School Attendance, Truancy and Exclusions' which is funded by NFER's Membership Programme.

Written as a discussion paper and a reference document for those planning school-based initiatives in this area, it should be particularly relevant to senior school managers, LEA personnel, GEST coordinators and EWS staff.

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