RAISING BEHAVIOUR

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NIL EXCLUSION? POLICY AND PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second publication in the series entitled *Raising Behaviour* and it focuses on the results of a specific line of enquiry into the possibility of nil exclusion as either an overt policy or as a practicable achievement for schools. This remit, requested by the Council of Local Education Authorities (CLEA) Research Programme, utilised both qualitative and quantitative data, which were collected during an extensive interview programme in over 20 primary, secondary and special schools, and also through a questionnaire to a sample of 150 secondary school senior managers. These respondents also formed the samples for the school component of NFER's Effective Behaviour Management project. Within that project's interview programme and its survey phase, specific questions on the existence and efficacy of nil exclusion as a policy were posed to each sample, as well as direct enquiries into ways by which respondents felt exclusions could be reduced. It is the results of this enquiry that are now presented, preceded by a brief history of national policy on exclusion.

It should be noted that the notion of 'nil exclusion' was researched before '*inclusion*' became the key term and policy commitment that now has such a high profile nationally. As such, the concept of nil exclusion could be seen as the natural and logical corollary of an inclusive philosophy: namely, that schools could, and should, operate without the need or right to exclude pupils. How school managers and practitioners viewed this concept, and how nil exclusion appeared in practice, are the specific focus of the report.

CHAPTER ONE

EXCLUSIONS: AN OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

DfEE statistics and research evidence confirm that rates of exclusion from school have been mounting over recent years. The present Government has responded by establishing the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU), with a remit to examine the economic, social and educational causes of alienation and disaffection. This response reflects growing concern about the perceived link between truancy or exclusion from school on the one hand, and welfare dependency, joblessness or crime on the other (Judd, 1998). The association between exclusion and criminality has also been substantiated by research undertaken by the Audit Commission (1996) which showed that 42 per cent of young offenders had previously been excluded from school.

In May 1998, the SEU's first report highlighted what it deemed to be unacceptable rates of exclusion, with more than 100,000 pupils temporarily excluded each year. In 1997, over 13,000 students were permanently excluded from school; this was four times the number reported in 1990 (SEU, 1998). Exclusions from secondary school dominate these figures, but the number of primary exclusions is also increasing. The SEU has highlighted a number of factors which may increase a pupil's risk of exclusion. These include:

- **school ethos:** certain schools exclude more than others; the SEU found that a quarter of secondary schools were responsible for two-thirds of permanent exclusions, whilst a fifth of secondary schools do not exclude any pupils;
- **gender:** boys account for 83 per cent of excluded pupils;
- **age:** 50 per cent of excluded pupils are in Years 10 to 11 (aged 14 or 15);
- **ethnicity:** African-Caribbean pupils are eight times more likely to be excluded;
- **home circumstances:** 'looked after' children are ten times more likely to be excluded; and

- **learning ability:** pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are six times more likely to be excluded.

The following section provides an historical overview of attitudes towards, and responses to, exclusion. It highlights the key changes in policy and legislation which have been influential in determining the rates and nature of exclusion over the past 25 years.

EXCLUSION: AN OVERVIEW

Throughout the 1970s, research on exclusions from school tended to have a psychological focus. For example, the study of York *et al.* (1972) focused heavily on the concept of individual deviance, and sought to find reasons within the individual child for the causes of emotional and behavioural problems. York *et al.*'s research also highlighted 'socio-economic and family status' as influential factors in determining why particular children were unable to integrate into school life and were thus excluded. They concluded that exclusion '*results from the inability of socially deprived, dull children, usually boys, and often from disrupted families with socio-pathic parents, to meet the demands of school life*' (York *et al.*, 1972, p. 265). However, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this psychological focus appeared to lose favour and there was a growing emphasis on a more sociological approach to the causes of disruptive behaviour. Research began to examine the ethos of individual schools and how factors within schools, such as relationships, teaching practices, the school environment and the relevance of the curriculum may be causative factors in the exclusion process (Bradley, 1986). Conversely, research in the 1990s has begun to focus on how the ethos of a school and the school environment may prevent or minimise exclusions and promote good behaviour (Lovell and Cooper, 1997).

Historically, the majority of responses to disruptive behaviour and behavioural problems within schools have focused on segregation, removing the child from school, rather than supporting them within mainstream education. In the 1970s, this was reflected in a growth of off-site, special units established by LEAs for disruptive pupils (see Table 1.1). Basini (1981) found that these units were often viewed by

Table 1.1 Key changes in legislation and policy 1972–1998

1972/3	Rise in the school leaving age to 16 and a concomitant increase in the number of special units established for disruptive pupils and truants.
1986	Three categories of exclusion identified: • *fixed-term* where the pupil is given a date to return to the same school; • *indefinite* where the pupil remains out of school pending further investigation; and • *permanent* where the pupil is unable to return to their original school but remains on the register until an alternative place is found.
1988	The *Education Reform Act (ERA)* introduced parental choice, league tables and competition between schools, reflecting a 'market place' ethos. The introduction of local management of schools (LMS) shifted power from the LEA to individual schools.
1990	The *Elton Report* on discipline in schools highlighted the influence of school factors in relation to discipline and exclusions. The National Exclusions Reporting System (NERS) was also established.
1993	The *Education Act*: • abolished the category of indefinite exclusion; • established a limit for fixed-period exclusions of up to 15 days in any one term; • required LEAs to provide education for excluded pupils and for funding to follow permanently excluded pupils; and • provided for the establishment of 'Pupil Referral Units' (PRUs) for pupils out of school.
1996	The *Education Act* placed LEAs under a duty to provide suitable full-time or part-time education for children excluded from school.
1997	The *Education Act*: • removed the full-time and part-time categories from the 1996 Act due to worries that excluded pupils were not receiving a full-time education; • directed schools to publish policies on discipline and, by December 1998, LEAs to establish Behaviour Support Plans detailing their policies for supporting schools with disruptive pupils and for 'out-of-school' provision; • directed that pupils could be excluded for up to 45 days in any year; • made provision for the establishment of contracts between schools, pupils and parents; • withdrew a parent's right to choose a new school if their child had been excluded from two or more schools; and • gave schools greater representation at pupil exclusion hearings.
1998	The *Social Exclusion Report*: • set targets for LEAs to reduce permanent and fixed-term exclusions by a third by 2002; • provided clearer guidance, with legal force, to reduce inappropriate exclusions; • established 'Education Action Zones' to focus on areas with particularly high levels of exclusion; • made provision for special OFSTED inspections for high-excluding schools; and • directed that, by 2002, all permanent excludees and those out of school for more than three weeks must receive alternative full-time and appropriate education. *The Schools Standards and Framework Act*: contained directions on exclusion procedures which included sections on: • the power of headteachers to exclude; • the duty to inform parents regarding the exclusion of pupils; • the function of the governing body in relation to exclusion; • the appeals procedures for exclusion; and • guidance on the exclusion of pupils. The Act also made provision for: • extended work experience for pupils in Key Stage 4; and • FE institutions to offer secondary education.

headteachers as a mechanism for removing problematic behaviour from their schools, thereby allowing other pupils to learn without disruption. He suggested that the policy of removal only examined the **symptoms** and not the **causes** of disruptive behaviour.

The causes, he suggested, were as likely to be generated by the schools and the wider society, as by the 'problem' pupils. Basini also highlighted that the focus on pupils' deviance ensured that attention was diverted away from the possible need to reform the school.

More recently, Parsons (1994) has argued that the very practice of exclusion continues to rest on the assumption that behavioural problems are intrinsic within the child rather than the educational environment, and that this approach views excluded pupils as children with problems rather than needs. Research by Galloway (1982; 1985) and McManus (1987) has shown that certain schools are more likely to exclude than others and that '*school-related factors are the principal influence on the number of pupils a school suspends*' (McManus, 1987, p. 261). Thus, whether pupils with similar behavioural problems are excluded from school will largely be dependent on which school they attend (Galloway, 1982). These findings were supported by OFSTED research, which highlighted enormous variations in schools' attitudes towards using exclusion as a punitive measure:

> *Some schools are so anxious to avoid exclusions that they incur some danger to themselves as institutions, to staff and pupils. Others are only too ready to exclude. A few are irresponsibly profligate in the use made of exclusion, devaluing it as a sanction* (OFSTED, 1996).

Similarly, even after accounting for differences in socio-economic conditions, the SEU (1998) found wide variations in exclusion rates between LEAs. In 1997, for example, Hammersmith and Fulham's exclusion rate was four times that of Newham, and more than six times that of Oxfordshire. Clearly, some schools are attempting to minimise exclusion, whilst others appear to resort to it as a sanction on a regular basis. Kinder *et al.* (1997) found that educational professionals had varying attitudes towards exclusion and that this may influence the incidence of exclusion in certain schools and LEAs. The purpose of exclusion was varyingly seen as:

- an act of *removal*, in which pupils are removed to protect other children;
- an act of *reprisal*, which shows a non-acceptance of certain behaviour and which is a deterrent to others; and
- an avenue for *remedy*, which is in the excluded pupil's best interests, whereby he/she has failed to cope within the mainstream and therefore requires a change of context.

Despite an increasing emphasis on the significance of school ethos in determining rates of exclusion, legislative responses, as reflected in the establishment of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) in the 1990s (see Table 1.1), have continued to focus on the removal of disruptive behaviour from school. Although PRUs function to integrate excluded pupils back into mainstream education, the reality and appropriateness of achieving reintegration, especially for older pupils, must be questioned (Howard, 1994). Furthermore, once permanently excluded, it is extremely difficult for pupils to return to mainstream schools. Parsons, quoted by the Education and Employment Committee (GB. Parliament. House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, 1998), estimated that the number who did return was less than 40 per cent. It has been suggested that PRUs are the 'special units' of the 1990s (Blyth and Milner, 1994, p. 301), and that they may serve to strengthen excluded pupils' identity as members of an 'anti-school' group (GB. Parliament. House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, op. cit.). The Education and Employment Committee recommended, therefore, that reintegrating disaffected pupils back into mainstream education, training and work must form an integral part of the Government's educational and social policy, and this must be the focus for all interventions with these pupils.

From the 1980s onwards, there was growing concern, often fuelled by sensationalist media reporting, that disruptive behaviour within schools and exclusions from schools were on the increase. Certainly, in the late 1980s, there was an increase in reported exclusions from school, particularly for pupils with behavioural problems and special educational needs (SEN). This increase has been linked directly to the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) (see Table 1.1), which introduced league tables

and competition between schools (Pyke, 1991a and 1991b). It has been argued that, in order to meet targets and succeed in the league tables, schools came under increasing pressure to focus on their more able students and academic attainment, rather than the behaviour management of their difficult pupils. Mounting financial pressures also meant that pupils with SEN and behavioural problems were a severe drain on schools' time and budgets, especially if they were unable to secure additional resources to support these children. As Hayden (1994, p. 135) observed: '*Formula funding and published league tables positively discourage schools from taking on, or retaining, children who contribute little to performance indicators for a school.*' In addition, schools had, until the introduction of the 1993 Education Act (see Table 1.1), a financial incentive to exclude disruptive pupils, as they retained the funding for the excluded pupil until the end of the academic year. Furthermore, changes in attendance regulations introduced in 1991 meant that excluded pupils would improve a school's attendance figures, as exclusion was classified as an authorised absence (Stirling, 1992).

Nationally, it has been difficult to quantify rates of, and increases in, exclusions, due to a paucity of reliable data. In 1990, the Government introduced the National Exclusions Reporting System (NERS), whereby schools and LEAs were asked to report permanent and fixed-term (more than five days) exclusions to the (then) Department for Education. However, this was a voluntary system and only showed 'official' exclusions which schools and LEAs were willing to acknowledge. The 32 per cent increase in reported permanent exclusions from 2,910 in 1990/91 to 3,833 in 1991/92 (GB. DFE, 1992) was merely the '*tip of the exclusions iceberg*'. Stirling (op. cit.) estimated that only ten per cent of total exclusions were reported. This under-reporting reflected the huge incentives for schools to exclude pupils indefinitely and unofficially for months, and even years. Indefinite exclusions (see Table 1.1), used inappropriately by some heads, were, effectively, permanent exclusions which avoided the safeguards attached, such as parents' right to go to an appeals panel (Association of Metropolitan Authorities, 1993). Stirling's (1992) research also highlighted a significant number of unofficial 'voluntary' withdrawals, where schools had persuaded parents to withdraw their children indefinitely. Pupils indefinitely excluded (officially or unofficially) were in an educational 'limbo' as they were

unlikely to be provided with any form of alternative education, such as home tuition or transfer to another school (Manuel, 1991). Furthermore, many of these pupils were lost from the educational system altogether. In an attempt to eliminate this 'limbo' status, the 1993 Education Act abolished the category of indefinite exclusion and established a limit on fixed-term exclusions (see Table 1.1). However, the 1997 Education Act has altered the terms of fixed-period exclusions: from September 1998, pupils can be excluded for longer periods of time (see Table 1.1), making the goal of reintegration harder (Monk, 1997). The following section examines the growing pressure on schools not to exclude pupils and some possible alternatives to exclusion.

THE PRESSURE NOT TO EXCLUDE

The financial and social costs of exclusion are high. Replacement education for excluded pupils is more than twice the cost of mainstream education. On average, excluded pupils receive less than ten per cent of full-time education, amounting to two to three hours tuition a week, either through part-time attendance at a PRU or through home tuition (Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 1996). This lack of provision reflects the severe financial constraints under which much replacement education operates. For example, many PRUs are only able to provide part-time attendance and a limited curriculum. OFSTED's (1995) first inspections of PRUs found that the teaching provided was often lacking in quantity and quality, although more recent inspections have shown considerable improvements. Parsons (cited in Blyth and Milner, 1994) argues that the money spent on alternative provision would be better spent on maintaining pupils in school. The Education and Employment Committee (GB. Parliament. House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, 1998) noted that limited education for disaffected children leads to a decrease in motivation and reduces the possibility of reintegration. They also recommended that attendance at a PRU should be a form of short-term provision which is closely linked to mainstream education. In 1992, the DFE voiced concerns about the rate and management of exclusions by schools and LEAs, stating that:

> *Too many children are excluded, some exclusions go on too long ... alternative educational provision for many excluded pupils is subject to unacceptable variations in both quality and quantity* (GB. DFE, 1992, p. 1).

In the light of growing concerns regarding the financial and social costs of exclusion, recent Government Circulars have focused on the need to reduce exclusions. They have emphasised that schools should only use permanent exclusion as a last resort, that is '*when allowing the child to remain in school would be seriously detrimental to the education or welfare of the pupil, or of others*' (GB. DFE, 1994c, p. 1). The Government has stated that schools should aim to maintain pupils within mainstream education and, if appropriate, provide disruptive pupils with '*time out*' in '*sanctuaries*' where they can '*cool off*'. If a pupil's behaviour is particularly disruptive, it has been suggested that a school's response should be to seek support, for example, from a PRU, rather than to exclude. Schools have also been directed to establish clear criteria, procedures and time scales for exclusions, and to always consider possible alternative sanctions (GB. DFE, 1994c). These directions highlight concerns expressed by the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) (1993) that significant numbers of pupils had been permanently excluded for minor misdemeanours, such as not wearing a tie or their hair being too long. The DFE also issued guidelines detailing instances where schools should consider exclusion as an 'inappropriate' response, including SEN, breaches of uniform/dress codes, minor incidents, such as failure to complete homework, non-attendance and pregnancy (GB. DFE, 1994c).

Furthermore, greater obligations have been placed on schools and LEAs regarding pupils with behaviour problems: for example, recommendations have been made that children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) should not be excluded in order to speed up a SEN assessment (GB. DFE, 1994b). As a mechanism for combating exclusion, all schools are required to have a written whole-school behaviour policy, setting boundaries of acceptable behaviour (GB. DFE, 1994c). By December 1998, all LEAs had to establish Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) detailing policies for supporting schools with disruptive pupils, for supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties, and for 'out of school' provision (see Table 1.1). With the aim of reducing the number of pupils at risk of exclusion, LEAs were required to establish a multi-agency approach in the development of their BSP, incorporating all

the relevant agencies, for example the Youth Service and Education Welfare (GB. DfEE, 1998a).

In Autumn 1998, the DfEE consulted fully on revised guidance to replace DfEE Circulars 8/94 on *Pupil Behaviour and Discipline* and 10/94 on *Exclusions from School* (from the 1993 Education Act), and this took into account the report of the Social Exclusion Unit and the provision of the Schools Standards and Framework Act (DfEE, 1998b). At the time of writing, recommendations made by the SEU to monitor and reduce exclusions are being implemented. League tables showing secondary schools' rates of exclusion will, in the future, include an ethnic breakdown, highlighting concerns about the disproportionate numbers of African-Caribbean pupils who are excluded (SEU, 1998). LEAs have also been set targets to reduce exclusions (see Table 1.1) and schools will be required to inform LEAs of all fixed-term exclusions of a day or more (previously, they only had to report fixed-term exclusions of five or more days). Resources are being targeted at schools which retain difficult pupils rather than exclude them and OFSTED inspection teams will be appointed for schools with high rates of exclusion. The directive by the SEU for LEAs to provide full-time and 'appropriate' education for excluded pupils (see Table 1.1) was introduced amidst concerns that the majority of excluded pupils were not receiving a satisfactory alternative education in terms of time and curriculum content.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the resolution of the issue of exclusions is increasingly recognised as being linked to preventative measures, such as the implementation of effective behaviour management practices and intensive support provided for pupils at risk of exclusion by LEA Behaviour Support Services, rather than to reactionary measures. As OFSTED (1996) noted, schools with good behaviour plans tend to be low-excluding schools. It has also been suggested that league tables should show a measure of a school's success at social inclusion rather than exclusion. It is argued that schools require a proactive approach to behaviour management rather than a reactive approach to poor behaviour (Garner, 1993). Effective responses to disruption, which aim to reduce exclusions, need to focus on a flexible range of

alternatives, based on individual needs, which may require a multi-agency approach. These responses may include pastoral care and counselling, specialist school-based welfare officers, alternative learning experiences outside school, such as community education placements, improving home/school links, establishing mentoring programmes, positive discipline/merit schemes, work-related activities and alternative curriculum projects. Lovell and Cooper (1997), examining positive alternatives to exclusion, highlight that teachers need to be able to take a flexible and interpretative approach in their application of rules and procedures, one which is relevant to the context in which they are working and the pupils they are working with. Kinder *et al.* (1997) highlighted that responses which aim to reduce or minimise exclusions often require the input of extra resources, such as extra staff and time. However, they also showed that many other *effective* responses do not require the input of extra resources. As highlighted previously, the ethos of a school is one of the determining factors influencing rates of exclusion, and this is something which can be changed, often without the need for additional resources. Thus, for example, the implementation of consistent behaviour policies with parental and pupil input, changes in school attitudes towards pupils with behavioural problems and reflection by schools on their own contribution to disaffection can play a significant role in reducing and minimising exclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLICY OF NIL EXCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This section of the report is based on the results from the survey of senior managers in a representative sample of 150 secondary schools and the views of a range of practitioners in the case-study schools, on a policy of nil exclusion. For the purposes of this section of the report, 'policy' is being considered as an overt principle rather than as an actuality. Some schools may not have excluded pupils and may be, in effect, a nil-excluding school, but the **practice** of nil exclusion is dealt with later in the report.

THE SURVEY DATA

As part of a detailed questionnaire regarding effective behaviour management in schools, senior managers in the survey sample of schools were first asked a number of questions about the issue of schools having a nil exclusions policy and, after that, ways of reducing permanent exclusion.

Senior managers in the survey were first asked whether their school had a policy of nil exclusion or a behaviour policy which included an option to permanently exclude pupils. They were also asked if, in their opinion, their school **should** have a policy of nil exclusion or one which included permanent exclusion, and to indicate the reasons for their views. One-hundred-and-twenty responses were recorded to this question.

With the exception of one respondent, all senior managers reported that they had a policy which included the option to permanently exclude.

Further, only three senior managers responded that, in their view, their school should have a nil exclusion policy, while 103 stated that they believed their behaviour policy should include the option of permanent exclusion. Fourteen returns did not respond to the question. Hence, 97 per cent of responding senior managers expressed a view favouring the option of permanent exclusion.

REASONS FOR OPPOSING A POLICY OF NIL EXCLUSION

In a further open question, respondents were asked to amplify the reason for their answer on the appropriateness of having an option for permanent exclusion. Ninety eight respondents chose to complete this question and responses were then coded. The results, in rank order, are set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Reasons for the perceived necessity of an exclusions policy

Reason/qualification	Percentage of respondents (N=98)	Number of responses
As a last resort/ultimate sanction for consistently bad behaviour	43	(42)
To protect the health and/or safety of other pupils	36	(35)
To avoid the disruption of other pupils' education	29	(28)
In the interests of the disruptive pupil	14	(14)
A single specific action of the pupil may be sufficiently serious to require exclusion	13	(13)
To protect the health and safety of staff	12	(12)
Insufficient resources to deal with violent/disruptive pupils	10	(10)
As a deterrent to others	10	(10)
Some pupils are unable to cope in mainstream schools	6	(6)
Insufficient LEA support	4	(4)

The total of the percentages is greater than 100 because a number of respondents offered more than one statement.
Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey, 1997–8.

The top-ranking answer clearly underlined the schools' view that exclusion, in its final resort/ultimate sanction capacity, was an appropriate and necessary response to ongoing behavioural problems. Nearly half of the sample chose to reiterate this

belief. About one in eight (13 per cent) noted that, sometimes, a single action or behaviour would warrant permanent exclusion.

However, responses also frequently signalled that exclusion was particularly associated with the need to preserve a safe environment for other pupils, and one where they can learn effectively. Over a third (36 per cent) couched their rationale in terms of protection of the health and safety of other pupils, while more than one in four (29 per cent) stressed that permanent exclusion was linked to avoiding the disruption of other pupils' learning. One in eight (12 per cent) chose to mention the safety of staff. Hence, the highest-ranking views related to exclusion as having a '*removal*' rationale: permanent exclusion was, above anything else, serving the needs and interests of the rest of the school.

In contrast, very much smaller numbers chose to suggest that permanent exclusion had a positive purpose (or '*remediating*' function) for the excluded pupil. One in six (14 per cent) highlighted that exclusion was in the interests of the excludee, and only about one in 20 (six per cent) noted that exclusion was linked to the fact that certain pupils could not cope in mainstream school.

Any function of exclusion as a deterrent to others also showed a low ranking among senior managers (mentioned by ten per cent), while similarly low numbers highlighted that exclusion was in some way linked to inadequate resources. Less than one in 20 cited LEA support as an associated factor influencing school policy on permanent exclusion.

Put together, this sample's responses did adumbrate a range of factors underpinning the necessity for a permanent exclusion policy option: consideration of the needs of other pupils, staff and the excluded pupil all surfaced. The proportionate stress on these reasons is, however, perhaps noteworthy. Indeed, by implication, nine out of ten respondents did not include resources as an issue for considering nil exclusion or feel that a nil exclusion option would be affected by LEA support. Above all, the reiteration of a commitment to permanent exclusion as a necessary – and perhaps even rightful – final recourse stands out, and this suggests why mainstream schools' mind-set does not embrace nil exclusion as a policy.

THE CASE-STUDY SCHOOLS ON NIL EXCLUSION AS A POLICY

> *I hope we will always be able to meet the needs of the children who are here and if they have a difficult behaviour problem, then it's another challenge and that's what makes it exciting. You get an enormous kick and sense of achievement when the child begins to make progress* (Headteacher, primary).

This section is based on interviews with 115 teachers and school managers in 11 primary schools, 13 secondary schools and three Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). It should be borne in mind that this sample was selected because they were recommended as examples of good practice in the area of behaviour management. Of the interviewees, slightly over one-third were classroom teachers, a similar proportion were senior school managers, and about a quarter were Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) or special needs support staff. During the interview, questions were posed concerning attitudes to the possibility of schools having a nil exclusion policy; and maintaining pupils with challenging behaviour in mainstream provision.

This section of the chapter looks at views surrounding **nil exclusion as a policy issue.** It also considers interviewees' reasons for opposing a policy of nil exclusion and the kinds of factors which might encourage the adoption of nil exclusion policies.

Variations in the responses to this notion ranged from considering nil exclusion as an interesting and intriguing policy possibility, to the view that it was an inconceivable concept in the current educational context. Responses, however, generally fell into one of three main categories, those giving consideration to the concept of nil exclusion as:

- an explicit policy; or
- a feasible aim; or
- inconceivable.

Nil exclusion as an explicit policy

Like their survey counterparts, none of the case-study schools involved in the research operated according to a written nil exclusion policy. Even in the one school that had

practised nil exclusion in recent years and was known as a 'non-excluding' school, the head eschewed embracing such a policy as a hard and fast rule:

> *I think it's something to strive for. I've never said in this school that we won't exclude. What I say is, it's our last resort. People know it's there if it's needed, but they know it's not there as an easy option* (Headteacher, secondary).

Amongst other schools, there were gradations of sympathy towards the concept of nil exclusion as a matter of policy or principle. One respondent expressed an interest in the concept as a possibility to be pursued in the future – that to establish nil exclusion as a policy was at least worthy of consideration:

> *I would love to talk to you about* [nil excluding schools] *actually. I mean I think it's a very difficult one. I mean, if somebody has got that working, I would be interested in finding out how it works* (Deputy head, primary).

While not going so far as to express an interest in establishing a nil exclusion policy himself, one interviewee ruminated on the way in which such a policy could, by its very existence, alter attitudes to behaviour amongst those pupils most likely to fall victim to exclusion:

> *I have not read anything or done anything on that, but I would imagine what that is aiming at is that, if we are not going to exclude, then the child knows they are not going to be able to go, so they are stuck with the situation and I think you need to look at how to improve the situation as it is* (SENCO, secondary).

This respondent would seem to be suggesting that to state a policy of nil exclusion could, in some cases, lead to a positive change in attitudes from both potential miscreants and staff.

Other than these isolated references, there was no consideration that the statement of nil exclusion as a formal policy could be beneficial.

Nil exclusion as a feasible aim

Whilst unable to contemplate nil exclusion as a stated policy or principle, a more common viewpoint from staff was to suggest the concept of nil exclusion as something to be striven for:

> *I would love to think, especially in primary, that that* [nil exclusion] *would be the aim. We are in a very caring, supportive environment here. I've worked in schools in London where children have had to be excluded because others were at risk. Everyone has to be confident that it's a safe place to come* (Deputy head, primary).

One secondary school had no strict policy of nil exclusion, but, in practice, this was being observed, backed by a series of strategies and supports:

> *I think there must be something that would be so terrible that you would have to exclude. I think the principle of nil exclusions is a really good one. Certainly, I feel, here we have got so many support mechanisms in place that if they can't cope here, it's unlikely that they are going to cope at another mainstream school, and also what you do is you just move the problem on – you create difficulties in the community, because if they are not here, if they are not in the building in that interim, while they are looking for another school, they are usually out committing crime or being offensive or that sort of thing, and they go as a failure, and I think that premise, that they are going to go somewhere else and make a success of it, is not a very good one – is not very sound* (Behaviour support teacher, secondary).

This encapsulates and represents an 'holistic' approach to the issue and the idea that exclusion benefits no one and may indeed actually damage the excluded student and the community. While many interviewees cited the interests of their own pupils (both those excluded and those remaining in school) as valid reasons for retaining the practice of exclusion, the reasoning above suggests a responsibility to the community as a whole, including the neighbourhood and other schools.

More than one interviewee referred to the sense of failure when exclusion had to be resorted to, suggesting that exclusion can even be damaging to the morale of the staff of the excluding school.

Others noted the issue of available support as impinging on the possibility of a nil exclusion policy:

> *I came from* [an authority] *where the system was not to exclude, but to support EBD children in school. They invested time and money in primary with support in the class, so that the problem didn't continue through to secondary. When I came to* [this authority], *I was quite shocked to find that wasn't the system here* (Headteacher, primary).

This disappointment with the level of support now on offer from LEAs was alluded to in other interviews, and certainly arose among the case-study interviewees as a frequent factor which would influence schools' ability to retain behaviourally challenging pupils in mainstream education in the future. In that way, the 'good practice' schools sample differed from the representative sample.

Finally, a very large proportion of interviewees felt the need to retain exclusion as a last resort, while expressing the desirability of maintaining disruptive pupils in school if possible:

> *I think it's* [nil exclusion] *not feasible on its own. I think a lot of things have to change in order to have a nil exclusion system. An exclusion system is very expensive. It doesn't do much for self-esteem or personal accountability, which all has a knock-on cost effect. If that cost was ploughed into education to stop it happening, then you might see great leaps forward* (Headteacher, primary).

The desirability of retaining pupils in mainstream provision in order to avoid additional loss of educational and social efficacy was clearly identified:

> *The other part of it is when these young people are excluded from school, they don't disappear – they're down the road at the gate and they're alienated. So it doesn't make for a good learning environment in the area, either. That was certainly one of the things here when there was a lot of exclusions. It's not even good sensible management. So it's better to have those young people within, and with influence over them* (Headteacher, secondary).

This statement is representative of a widely held view amongst managers and classroom teachers in both primary and secondary schools, namely that exclusion is an undesirable and potentially damaging response to an enduring problem in schools. The sense of failure, frustration and sorrow that exclusion has to be resorted to was shared by the majority of the interviewees who expressed a view on the issue. The desire to avoid exclusion was expressed by the majority of interviewees, but a preparedness to express that desire in strict policy terms was universally rejected.

Nil exclusion as inconceivable

A large majority of respondents were very clear that a nil exclusion policy was not an option. While most expressed this with a sense of regret, a small minority expressed rather more enthusiasm for exclusion, and were able to propose positive justifications.

Often, during the interviews, the question concerning nil exclusion had to be repeated, as if it was so unexpected by the interviewees as to be almost incomprehensible.

Interviewer: *Could I ask, finally, for your views on a policy of nil exclusion?*

Answer: *No exclusions?*

Interviewer: *No exclusions at all.*

Answer: *I don't think I would agree with that* (Science teacher, secondary).

and

Interviewer: *What do you think about nil exclusions then?... that some schools might have nil exclusion policies. How do you feel about that?*

Answer: *What, that won't exclude children?*

Interviewer: *Yes.*

Answer: *I couldn't go along with it* (Class teacher, primary).

More rarely, for some, the question concerning the viability of adopting a nil exclusion policy was equivocally rejected.

Interviewer: *Last question. What are your views on the principle of nil exclusions? I mean, often people talk about there shouldn't be this thing called 'exclusion'.*

Answer: *Don't agree with it at all. Very strongly about that* (Deputy head, primary).

Bearing in mind that the case studies in which the interviews were conducted were selected for good practice in behaviour management, it is noteworthy that nil exclusion policies were such an alien concept, and in some instances very far off the agenda. This would seem to suggest that teachers may not be sufficiently aware of

the financial, human and educational implications of excluding pupils, or even of the theoretical possibility of alternative strategies.

It may well be that resistance to stating a nil exclusion policy is simply a pragmatic decision based on a sense of needing to retain a final sanction option, while knowing it to be a very unsatisfactory one. Generally, the implication seemed to be that one would simply be losing some essential right of last resort.

REASONS FOR OPPOSING A POLICY OF NIL EXCLUSIONS

The reasons for the failure to contemplate a policy of nil exclusion were varied, and the views of the sample of secondary school managers (Table 2.1) have indicated the range and ranking of various reasons. This section uses the case-study data to seek to adumbrate further some of the views, and elaborate on the attitudes and sensitivities involved.

The safety of others

By far the single most stated reason for retaining the right to exclude disruptive pupils was the physical safety of other **students**:

> *Just from experience, I have needed ultimate sanctions and that is when children have been so out of control that other children in the class have been in danger* (Class teacher, primary).

> *... if a child in my class room started knifing other children, I would want him not to be there, because it was a dangerous situation. But, for naughtiness or abuse to adults, or kicking that ... we can deal with all those sort of things. But I would never say nil, because you never know what the possibilities might be. If you said no, there might be a very difficult situation where children were in danger – so that would be my resolution* (Class teacher, primary).

Closely related to this, though not quite so frequently stated, was the need to protect **staff** from physical danger:

> *I think, if a child is endangering themselves or other children in school, or staff, you have to think 'Is that the best strategy for the child?'* (SENCO, primary).

> *You can't have a child kicking and biting you and trying to stab you with a pencil when you have 30 other children who need you* (SENCO, infants).

Whilst physical danger to personages **within** the school may have been reduced by the exclusion of misbehaving pupils, other interviewees pointed out that the problem is unlikely to have been resolved or eradicated, but rather removed to another location, possibly only as far as the school gates:

> *When I came, those young people were at the gate, alienated from the school, wanting to come in and create havoc* (Headteacher, secondary).

In effect, what was being questioned was whether, ultimately, the physical safety of the other pupils is necessarily being increased by the use of exclusion. This consciousness, that the use of exclusion is frequently about problem removal, but not problem resolution, was a feature of many interviews.

Educational effectiveness

Several references were made to protecting the **educational** opportunities of other children in the school:

> *To quote ... 'the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few', and if you have got a school of 400 children, and one child continuously disrupts that, then you actually have to balance that. You have to meet the needs of the many* (Assistant manager, family centre, primary).

In contrast, only one interviewee referred specifically to the possible educational opportunities linked to maintaining youngsters with behavioural difficulties in mainstream education, even though this is a frequently stated rationale for integrating pupils with other special needs such as deafness and physical disabilities. Another interviewee recognised behaviour as a special needs issue:

> *I think you have to have the same sort of approaches that you have with those other groups of young people, with moderate learning difficulties, visual impairment, what-have-you. That you start from what is the original special need and how can we meet it?* (Headteacher, secondary).

However, this interviewee did not refer to it as one from which other pupils could learn, or one which they may play a part in addressing.

Exclusion as a deterrent

While the notion of the deterrent effect of excluding disruptive pupils did figure in some of the interviews, it comes way behind the reasons stated above, and even then the views can be very equivocal:

> *I do think you need it as a final resort, that is, an ultimate threat really, but then again it doesn't always work, I don't think. Often it's something that they actually quite like. To be excluded is almost like an extra holiday. Isn't it really*? (English teacher, secondary).

It may be noted that deterrence is a significant, but not high-ranking, reason given by senior managers in secondary schools for retaining an exclusion policy (see Table 2.1).

Staff morale

A few interviewees referred to the potential impact of an imposed nil exclusion policy on staff morale:

> *Interviewer:* *What would your views be on the principle of a nil exclusions policy?*
>
> *Interviewee:* *It makes it very difficult. I think it's difficult for the youngsters and it would certainly do a lot of damage to staff morale. Not that they actually are too preoccupied with the thought that this youngster is a problem, and if I create enough noise we are going to get them excluded, but if there was a nil exclusions policy, then a child was causing serious problems, then I think it would do a lot to undermine staff morale* (Year head, secondary).

It may be interesting to note the contrast between this view and the point noted elsewhere, that staff felt a sense of failure when they had to resort to exclusion as an issue of last resort. These opposing views highlighted a dichotomy: whether disruptive pupils are problems to be removed, or have special needs which, with support, teachers could address themselves.

The disruptive pupil's needs

The educational and social benefits to the excluded pupil were referred to by a number of interviewees, but not as frequently as the previous categories of responses.

> *I think there comes a point where we have to exclude. I hate the word 'exclude'. If that kid's needs are not being met and, if the needs of others are not being met, or are being damaged in some cases, you have got to look for an alternative* (Senior teacher, secondary).

and

> *Course, if the child continues to fail, it is clear that there's inappropriate placement there. The child needs to be somewhere to succeed. Now, if he/she can't succeed at* [named school], *then there needs to be provision elsewhere. But it's not about punishment; it's about appropriate placement* (Head of upper school, secondary).

These views would appear to be a reconciliation of the conflicting attitudes expressed previously. They highlighted a sense, not of failure, but of a system which needed to recognise that special needs should be addressed in a variety of settings. It could be suggested that they were recalling the time before the integration of special needs into mainstream education, and, as such, their views are in opposition to the current educational policy of inclusion. They were certainly in conflict with those interviewees who were arguing for better resourcing so that they could meet those special needs within mainstream provision.

Fixed-term exclusion was viewed by some respondents as an essential tool in maintaining disruptive pupils within mainstream provision:

> *I don't see it as a negative thing, and I always talk to the parents in terms of the positive side of it: the time to be away and to calm down and reflect, and the positive act of putting it back together again through the contract and making a fresh start* (Headteacher, primary).

These comments reflect the belief that fixed-term **exclusion** may, in the short term, be a remedy for disruptive behaviour, and paradoxically, that it may also assist schools' longer-term goal of **inclusion**. However, the validity of such a belief is questioned by the results of this research (see Chapter 4), which show that those schools that have high rates of fixed-term exclusions also have high rates of permanent exclusion.

The lack of resources to implement such a policy

While the desire to maintain disruptive pupils in school may be strong and genuine, in many cases it was the ability and resources available to cope with such pupils which were felt to be lacking. This was a very frequently cited reason for not contemplating a nil exclusion policy:

> *I wouldn't want actually to have a nil exclusion policy. I think it's something that you could aim at, ideally, if you had the staff within school that could give the level of counselling that those children need at the right moments, but the reality is that we are in a situation where resources are being cut back all the time. The children are in larger classes than they were last year or the year before. There are fewer support people. Everything is being cut and cut and cut, and so there are situations where it gets beyond the resources of the school to help the child at that point, and they need to have that time away* (Headteacher, primary).

The nature of the resources required is considered in Part Two of the report.

FACTORS WHICH MIGHT ENCOURAGE THE ADOPTION OF NIL EXCLUSION POLICIES

Despite the range of the arguments against the adoption of nil exclusion policies outlined previously, and the overwhelming majority resistance to them, many respondents implied that, if certain factors were resolved, then nil exclusion might be a desirable alternative approach. Two types of change were identified as necessary before most school staff or managements could contemplate the adoption of such policies.

For some interviewees, the focus lay entirely on the time and resources which would have to be available to make such policies viable. Practitioners might have a willingness to abolish the exclusion of pupils, but only if they had the necessary support in terms of finance, staffing and expertise to do so:

> *So it is unsatisfactory to say that schools will just have to cope. They will need to spend much more time with those kinds of students. We don't have that. We work very hard to try and support students in that way, but we could not cope if we weren't allowed to exclude and did not get extra resources* (Headteacher, secondary).

> *I suppose if someone was to come up and give all the support that we need in order to be inclusive, that might even require a separate unit. I don't know. I*

haven't even begun to think what we would need (Head of upper school, secondary).

These cautious attitudes suggest that a somewhat more fundamental change would be needed to persuade schools to consider the prospect of nil exclusion. Indeed, some interviewees expressed the view that there would need to be changes in the wider context for a nil exclusion policy to be effective in their own school. Some respondents seemed to imply that a universally applied nil exclusion approach could have beneficial effects, basing this view on the fact that they saw the failure of other schools as the cause of behavioural difficulties in their own school:

Sometimes, a fresh start is what is needed, but most heads would find that they are excluding a pupil and then getting another one from somewhere else six months later who is just as much of a problem (Headteacher, secondary).

However, it seems that the universal adoption of nil exclusion policies would need to be the product of voluntary action by individual schools, if one gives credence to the argument stated previously. This would then require an attitudinal change, which would have to reach beyond the teaching profession. One secondary school teacher referred to the attitude of parents whose children are in the same classroom as very disruptive pupils:

I think a nil exclusion policy would be an absolute nightmare. I think there would be parents up in arms. I know that there have been occasions in this school where parents have been quite annoyed because a certain child is still in school, because he is such a problem. You end up alienating them as well, and are you doing the child any favours as well? (English teacher, secondary).

To bring about such an attitudinal change would require raising public awareness of the benefits of maintaining behaviourally challenging pupils in mainstream education, as well as highlighting the additional financial, educational, personal and social costs of exclusion. However, this approach would have to be carefully developed and the process of persuasion would not be an easy one. For some, even in schools with an excellent record for behaviour management, there would seem to be little room for persuasion:

With these [pupils] *we are talking of the small few that cause a maximum amount of difficulty. If they are not responding, I want them out, yes. Somebody else can take them* (Deputy head, primary).

CHAPTER THREE

MAINTAINING PUPILS IN MAINSTREAM PROVISION: REDUCING PERMANENT EXCLUSION

THE SURVEY

The sample of senior managers were asked to rate a series of strategies which are commonly raised as critical components in mainstream schools' efforts to retain pupils with challenging behaviour. Eleven strategies were posited, including vocational opportunities, enhanced specialist staffing and a within-school unit, and the sample were requested to circle whether they felt them to be '*very helpful*', '*quite helpful*' or '*not helpful at all*', as a final option, whether they were '*not sure*' as to their helpfulness in reducing permanent exclusion. The full results are given in Table 3.1 below.

Perhaps, most striking is that the three highest-ranking 'very helpful' strategies, nominated by half or more of the respondents, related to the acquisition of additional, innovative and specialist support within school. Thus, 'more learning support assistants' (nominated by 54 per cent of senior managers); a 'closer home–school liaison' function (53 per cent) and a 'school-based Behaviour Support specialist' (49 per cent) received most favour. Other high ranking strategies included dual registration opportunities for pupils (46 per cent) and staff training to ensure more understanding of challenging behaviour (45 per cent). Put together, this suggests that there is a perceived need for 'at risk' pupils to engage with professionals who have considerable expertise in managing behaviour, and that schools need to access additional support staff to work with the pupils and their families.

Strategies which imply changes to the existing curriculum and to current levels of provision in pastoral support were each rated as 'very helpful' by two-fifths (40 per cent) of the sample, the lower ranking suggesting that challenging behaviour is thought to be resolved by those with expertise and/or a specified Behaviour Support

Table 3.1 Strategies for maintaining pupils in school

Nominated strategy	Very helpful		Quite helpful		Not helpful at all		Not sure		Total	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Greater opportunities for pupils to undertake a vocational curriculum	40	(46)	46	(54)	10	(11)	4	(5)	100	(116)
Options for pupils to spend part of their time in off-site provision and part within-school (dual registration)	46	(53)	37	(42)	12	(14)	5	(6)	100	(115)
An extended pastoral system with more time for heads of year and form tutors to engage with pupils with behaviour problems	40	(46)	46	(53)	6	(7)	8	(10)	100	(116)
The existence of a within-school unit for troubled and/or troublesome pupils	28	(31)	25	(28)	34	(38)	13	(15)	100	(112)
More classroom assistants/learning support staff working alongside pupils with challenging behaviour in lessons	54	(63)	38	(44)	5	(6)	3	(3)	100	(116)
A school counsellor	33	(38)	36	(41)	22	(25)	9	(10)	100	(114)
A school-based Behaviour Support worker/specialist	49	(55)	35	(40)	12	(14)	4	(4)	100	(113)
A greater investment of time in PSE	9	(10)	34	(39)	41	(46)	16	(18)	100	(113)
Training for staff to ensure more understanding of challenging behaviour	45	(52)	49	(56)	3	(4)	3	(3)	100	(113)
Training for all governors in understanding behaviour issues in schools	24	(28)	45	(51)	17	(19)	14	(16)	100	(114)
Closer liaison between home and school	53	(60)	39	(45)	4	(4)	4	(4)	100	(113)

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

brief, rather more than by changing the content of learning or the context for interpersonal relationships more generally. However, vocational and pastoral opportunities did receive particularly high nominations for '*quite helpful*' status, with nearly half the respondents indicating this.

It is noteworthy that 'within-school units' and a 'school counsellor' were particularly low-rated as 'very helpful' strategies. Indeed, one-third of the senior managers (34 per cent) indicated that such units were 'not helpful at all', and one-fifth (22 per cent) held the same view of a school counsellor role. This may suggest that interventions to reduce exclusions are viewed as needing to have a specific behaviour focus and agenda: undertaking internal removal (presumably within schools' existing resources and value system) or providing a more generic support role appeared not to be highly rated.

Most conspicuously, more investment in PSE was deemed to have little impact on behaviour and 'at risk' pupils. Less than one in ten (nine per cent) rated this as 'very helpful', while two-fifths (41 per cent) ranked it as 'not helpful at all'. Given the personal and social dysfunctionality implicit in many youngsters' challenging behaviour, and the finding elsewhere that peers are such an influence on disaffection within school, this low response is particularly noteworthy.

Governor training in understanding behaviour issues was given a notably high rating as a 'quite helpful' strategy (by more than two-fifths of senior managers), while a quarter of the sample thought it 'very helpful'. About one in six (14 per cent) were 'not sure' as to its helpfulness.

Finally, the sample were asked to nominate the three most helpful strategies. All 120 senior managers responded to this question and the full ranking of their nominations is given in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 The most helpful ways for reducing permanent exclusions

Most helpful way of reducing exclusion	Percentage of respondents (N = 120)	Number of responses
On- and off-site dual registration	43	(51)
More teaching/classroom support	36	(43)
Training staff to ensure understanding	34	(41)
School based Behaviour Support worker	32	(38)
Greater opportunities for a vocational curriculum	32	(38)
Extended pastoral system	30	(36)
Closer liaison between home and school	28	(34)
Within-school unit	17	(20)
A school counsellor	13	(16)
Training governors	3	(3)
More time for PSE	2	(2)

The total of the percentages is greater than 100 because respondents identified more than one statement.

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Again, the two most highly rated strategies relate to ensuring youngsters at risk are given specialised support (either, in the classroom or, most popularly, in part, within off-site provision). After that, enhancing the skill base of mainstream educators was also rated by a third of the sample, who selected school-based behaviour support workers or more training for mainstream practitioners as key components in reducing exclusion.

Perhaps what is also particularly striking is the sheer range of strategies which received fairly equal ratings, again signalling the complexity of addressing the needs of those at risk of exclusion. Extending vocational opportunity, pastoral support and home–school liaison all received a similar amount of support.

However, equally noteworthy is the fact that the highest-rated strategy involved an alternative context of learning. This clearly signals that mainstream school was considered an inappropriate venue for certain youngsters. It would seem that, for this sample, reducing exclusions was at least partially dependent on the existence of other provision. Mainstream school, alone, at that point, could not adjust or accommodate to include all its pupils.

As the opening quote in the following section demonstrates, these issues were echoed in the case-study interviews, and it is those responses which are now considered.

THE QUALITATIVE DATA

> *I think that we want to keep them here if we can, but there are some pupils who are better off in a unit away from the school. That may benefit all the other pupils as well. So, I think there are some pupils who have such severe difficulties in working within the rules and regulations of an ordinary school, they are better off in a unit. So, there will be probably one a year, something like that. I think that a policy of nil exclusion is probably a good idea and it would be something we would, as a target, aim to, because I think that as a sanction exclusions can be effective, but are not particularly effective, but what it does for us is that it means that we are beginning to say that the problem is more than something we can handle* (Deputy head, secondary).

A striking majority of teachers and managers in the case studies, at both primary and secondary levels, while eschewing the notion of a nil exclusion policy, were deeply concerned about the use of exclusion as a response to behavioural problems, and did their utmost to avoid such measures:

> *I hang on to them, by the skin of my teeth. I don't like excluding children at all. I just think ... what's going to happen to them? We have only had one exclusion in the nursery and I really didn't want to go down that route, but we had children going home bleeding. It was just so extreme. The problem with exclusion is that children either end up getting little education or they end up in units with other children who behave badly. I worry about that – not having good role models* (Teacher-in-charge, nursery).

The issue of strategies, resources and expertise emerged as a key concern. One secondary school SENCO argued for '*including them back in, bringing them in, providing the time, and I think they need more good practice*' and a headteacher outlined key aspects of provision:

> *I think it's about consistent nursery provision and family support, about putting in training to assist mainstream schools in dealing with pupils properly and, if need be, having a more flexible approach to the curriculum. It's helping these pupils to become reasonable, sensible members of society, because they can't learn unless they have some of those strategies, and then a radical look at secondary education* (Headteacher, primary).

What follows is a closer examination of some of the specific strategies and adjustments interviewees mentioned as a means to encourage schools to reduce the use of exclusions.

Interviewees identified a range of strategies and developments which would enable schools to maintain pupils with challenging behaviour in mainstream schools. These included:

- staged approaches to behaviour management;
- the provision of alternative curricula;
- adoption of specialist techniques within existing curricula;
- intensive staff support and training; and
- an increase in the support offered by the LEA.

The implementation of staged strategies was referred to on more than one occasion:

> *You should not be going from containment to crisis. There should be lots of different strategies that have been worked out by the class teacher, by the year head, by myself, by Behaviour Support. No child should go from nothing to disaster, you know, without a lot of stages having gone through, and I think that's something that this school does work on* (Class teacher, primary).

Implicit in this statement is the involvement of the LEA in a preventative role as well as the use of the Code of Practice for the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs in providing individual Behaviour Support programmes.

Curriculum adjustment

Curriculum provision and adaptation was seen as a useful tool in some cases:

> *Unfortunately, I think that the emphasis on academic achievement has created a problem. I think there were lots of initiatives prior to the National Curriculum, where Year 10 and 11 did lots of alternative curricula, which was right ... more vocational type work, and that went out of the window and we still have this, where you have got a large proportion of children in Year 10 and 11 who are not going to achieve in that system, who are basically wasting their time because they are going along with a system that they can't achieve in, and that's a big cause for concern. How can they achieve?* (Teacher, pupil referral unit).

The same teacher pointed to the possibility of time being spent off-site, making use of community and college link courses, and, of course, such strategies are now well under way in many recent initiatives. Equally, as one primary school teacher

illustrates, there were interviewees who were directly critical of the curriculum as it is presently constituted at secondary level:

> *I also believe they've got to do something about modifying the curriculum at secondary school to meet the needs of pupils. I think the curriculum we have now is designed to fail so many of them. They don't see the point and they're off out of it rather than in it, because there's not a lot to engage in sometimes for some pupils. Like a foreign language at GCSE when they're struggling with literacy in English. I just think we've got to take a radical look at it* (Headteacher, primary).

Specialist techniques within the existing curriculum

In some cases, the delivery or mediation of the curriculum in the normal classroom itself was felt to need addressing:

> *We also tackle things through the curriculum. The Behaviour Support Team and my own department and the Learning Support department are all involved in working on trying to make the curriculum accessible in partnership teaching. I know, for example, the Behaviour Support Team have been looking particularly at key stage 4 modern languages, and trying to work with the languages department in trying to make that accessible, because it's only recently come into key stage 4 and not all the students want to be there, in a German lesson, and that's causing problems. So we try and work through the curriculum. We try and work through strategies that we might suggest through Individual Education Plans, and also building staff skills and confidence, as well, through partnership* (Teacher, secondary).

Again, however, the multifaceted nature of support is evident in this response: Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and staff training are mentioned as crucial factors in the reduction of exclusions.

Intensive staffing support

The issue of necessary staffing levels was alluded to. Indeed, it loomed very large in the minds of teachers confronted with behavioural difficulties:

> *The ideal model would be non-exclusion, but we would have to have somebody with that child all the time and we can't afford to do that. We would be more than willing to keep them in school, if we could have that level of support* (SENCO, infants).

Comments along the same lines were numerous. A simple statement from a primary school deputy head summarises the point: '*We need more bodies in classrooms –*

that's it.' In this way, the survey data findings were borne out by the case-study sample.

The issues raised, above all, point towards the need for considerable extra investment in addressing behaviour problems. However, it was argued by some interviewees that the additional cost of improving staffing ratios to address the issue of behaviour management in schools would be more than offset by the cost saving to society as a whole. The sample thus echoes Castle and Parsons' (1997, p. 4) findings, which show that exclusion is costly and damaging and that '*funding of preventative schemes would enable teachers to teach and not deny pupils their educational rights*'.

Teacher training

A few interviewees identified weaknesses in the teacher training system as a factor which contributes to a high exclusion rate:

> *I think, if I had a vision it would be for properly trained people with behaviour modification systems built into their training, working in schools alongside some of these very challenging children, but as early as possible* (Headteacher, primary).

> *I can almost foresee it going the other way and there being an increase in exclusions. I hope not. I don't think 'get tough' is the answer. I think maybe 'get smarter' and 'get slicker' at dealing with behaviour management, and training people up and getting consistency across the school and across other schools ... How to cope with challenging behaviour is barely covered in teacher training courses. The two NQTs here said they didn't learn it until they were on the job. You need to get that taped or it doesn't matter what you've planned; it'll all go out the window* (Headteacher, primary).

Specialist support

The sample variously pointed to the work of outside agencies as a way of supporting mainstream schools' work with children with behavioural difficulties. This was in a preventative capacity, as well as in the provision of off-site facilities:

> *So far we've been able to contain the situation here. The multidisciplinary team has prevented me from excluding here, because I feel that we've got that network of support – being able to phone up when you have a problem. The advice has been first-class. Without it I think I would have had to exclude* (Headteacher, primary).

The effectiveness of PRUs, as operated by some but not all authorities, was considered by some interviewees, and generally agreed to be a valued, if sometimes regrettable, tool. Understandably, the perspective from within such units is different from those of mainstream schools, the latter sometimes being sceptical about the wisdom of exposing disruptive pupils to a total diet of disruptive peer group role models. Others accept that a regime built around the need to address behavioural difficulties can be beneficial.

For most interviewees who referred to the role of PRUs in coping with the problems raised by students with behavioural difficulties, referral was seen as a temporary measure, with the clear aim of cooling down, affecting behaviour or adjusting attitudes. One head of a PRU went much further than this, suggesting that short-term correctives are not necessarily always appropriate:

> *What I am saying is that I don't think mainstream school is the answer for every child, because of the size, because they are dealing, if you like, with the mass, rather than with the individual. We have not got the time and space to do that, to deal with the individual. What I would like to see is smaller provision for difficult children on a longstanding basis, instead of this silly business of exclusion and then another school and then exclusion and then another school, because what it is is that I think you have got to meet the child's needs; at the end of the day, that's what works. If you meet the child's needs then you don't have the difficulties. So we have some very violent and aggressive students come in here, but again we have to stop and we say our safety is something that we won't go beyond, and I think you have to do that; otherwise, you know, you have got absolute chaos. You have got a situation of kids on the roof and out the window, which we don't have, but, having worked in a school which did have all those problems, then you do have to have a cut-off point. So there will be children who are excluded, and those are the children who actually need longer, more intensive help to meet their needs, and what we need is funding, if you like, recognising that there is a problem for some of these children and so that we provide what they need* (Head of a PRU).

Again, the cost of inclusion is abundantly clear.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOLS' EXCLUSION RATES: WHO DID NOT EXCLUDE?

INTRODUCTION

In this section, the focus turns to those schools which, albeit expressing no formal nil exclusion policy, did not have any incidence of permanent exclusion in the academic year prior to the research. It also looks at key characteristics of high- and low-excluding schools.

Senior managers in the secondary school sample were asked to state the precise number of permanent exclusions, as reported to the DfEE, at the beginning of their questionnaire. A wide range of other information, including the locality of the school, total population of pupils and numbers with SEN statements, from ethnic minorities and with English as a Second Language (ESL), was also requested. Figures for unauthorised absence, numbers of fixed-term exclusions, key stage 3 attainment and free school meals were also obtained. (In some instances, these data were not available for the full sample.)

The results of the figures for permanent exclusion were first arranged into five bands, from very high- to zero-excluding schools, using pupil figures in order to obtain a formula of numbers excluded by percentage of pupil population. Hence, the five bands were:

BAND 1	zero exclusion
BAND 2	less than one exclusion per 400 pupils
BAND 3	one exclusion per 200 to 400 pupils
BAND 4	one exclusion per 100 to 199 pupils
BAND 5	at least one exclusion per 100 pupils.

In all, one in five (22 schools out of 120) completing this part of the questionnaire indicated they had not permanently excluded a pupil in the previous academic year (Band 1). Ten schools were in Band 5 of 'very high' exclusion rates and 14 fell into

Band 4 of 'high'-excluding schools. Thirty schools indicated they had excluded less than one in every 400 pupils (Band 2), while 29 fell into Band 3, with an exclusion rate of one per 200–400 pupils. Hence, high- and very high-excluding schools were clearly the minority within this sample.

The results of this banding were then analysed by the variables mentioned above, and certain factors were shown to have a particular relationship with numbers of permanent exclusions. The characteristics mentioned below were significantly, in statistical terms, associated with rates of exclusion.

CATCHMENT AREA

Schools were asked to nominate their catchment area as either 'rural', 'small/medium town', 'suburban', 'urban' or 'inner-city'. Table 4.1 highlights that six of the ten 'very high'-excluding schools were serving inner-city catchment areas, and no rural or suburban school fell into this category. Half of the schools in Band 4, the 'high'-excluding subsample (one exclusion per 100–199 pupils), were urban.

Table 4.1 School catchment area and permanent exclusion rates

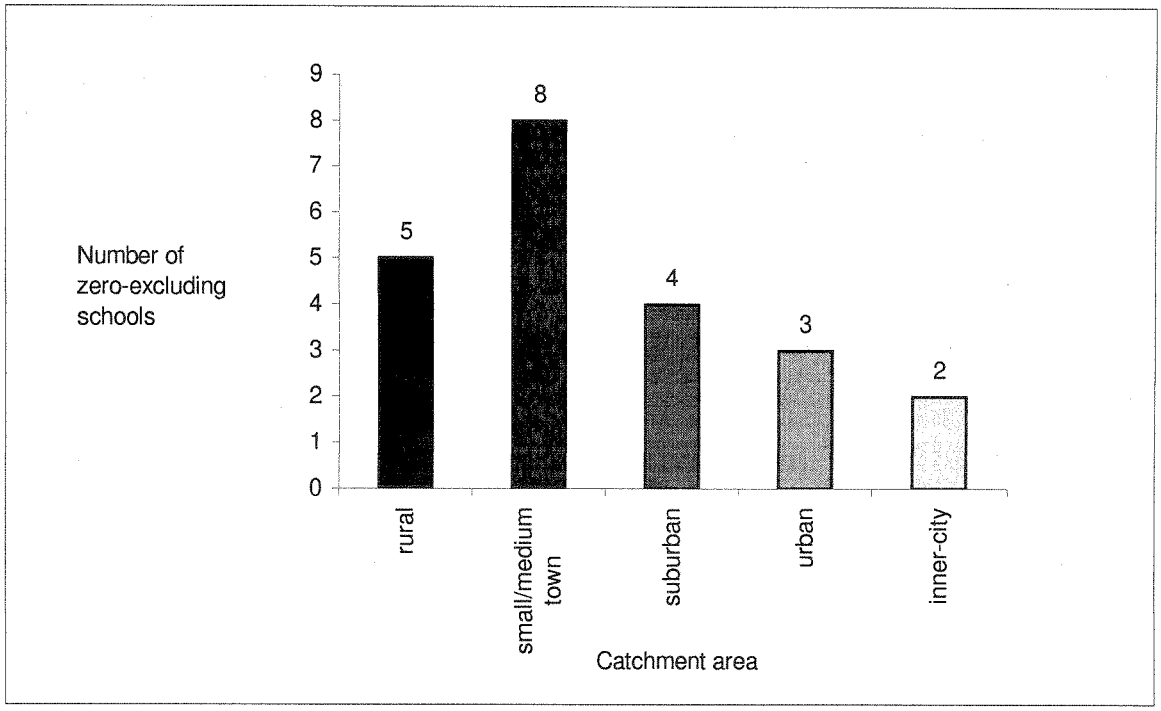
Catchment area	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate >1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Rural	5	5	6	2	0	18
Small/medium town	8	15	7	1	2	33
Suburban	4	3	3	2	0	12
Urban	3	5	11	7	2	28
Inner-city	2	2	2	2	6	14
Total	**22**	**30**	**29**	**14**	**10**	**105**

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Table 4.1 also shows that of the 22 'zero-excluding' schools, five were rural and eight (over a third) were located in small/medium towns. Notably, half of the schools in Band 2 (excluding less than one in 400 pupils) were serving small/medium town

catchment areas. Figure 4.1 highlights that only two of the 14 inner-city subsample schools and only three of the 28 urban schools (11 per cent of that catchment subsample) were zero-excluding schools.

Figure 4.1 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by catchment area



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Hence, an association of permanent exclusion with youngsters from increasingly urbanised settings was evident.

SCHOOL SIZE

The sample of secondary schools was divided into three categories of size: small (up to 700 pupils), medium (701–1,000 pupils) and large (over 1,000). Ten of the 31 small schools were in the zero exclusion band, and, also, these small schools comprised nearly half (46 per cent) of the zero-excluding subsample (see Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2).

Table 4.2 Size of school and permanent exclusion rates

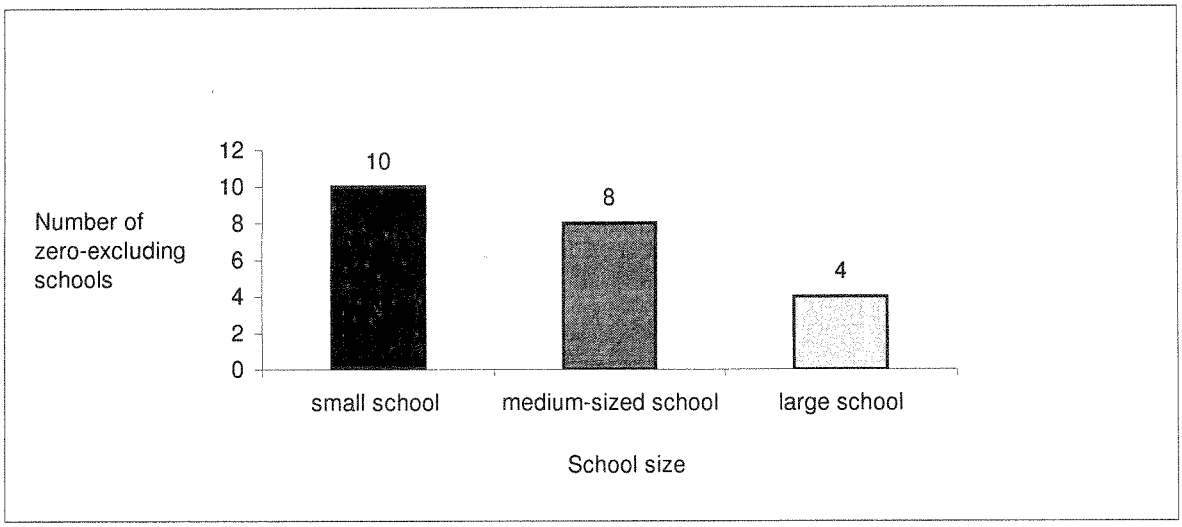
Size of school	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate > 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Small schools	10	2	8	5	6	31
Medium schools	8	14	14	2	3	41
Large schools	4	14	7	7	1	33
Total	**22**	**30**	**29**	**14**	**10**	**105**

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

However, small schools also accounted for some 60 per cent of the highest-excluding sub-sample (six of the ten schools in Band 5), which may suggest smaller size results in either a highly inclusive capacity or it particularly exposes problem behaviour, and a high level of removal is an adjunct of that.

Medium-sized schools were by and large consistently in low excluding bands. However, large schools accounted for half of the schools in Band 4 (one exclusion per 100–200 pupils) and only four (18 per cent) were among the zero exclusion schools.

Figure 4.2 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by school size



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Table 4.2 shows that just one of the subsample of 33 large schools was in the highest band of exclusion. However, large schools did seem to be more likely to exclude than their smaller counterparts.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The number of pupils receiving free school meals was obtained for each of the sample schools (as provided on Form 7 for the DfEE in the previous academic year), and these figures were banded according to the percentage of total pupils in the school. The full range varied from 0.3 per cent of the school population to 50 per cent, and five categories were developed:

very low	(up to 5 per cent)
low	(5.1–10 per cent)
medium	(10.1–20 per cent)
high	(20.1–30 per cent)
very high	(over 30 per cent).

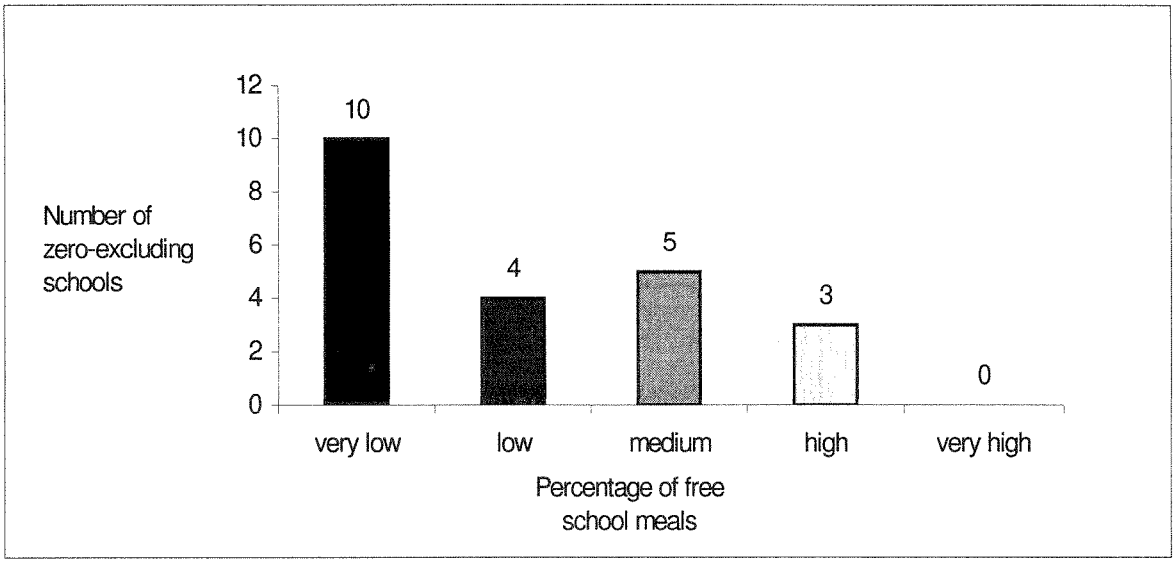
Table 4.3 Free school meals and permanent exclusion rates

Free school meals	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Very low (up to 5 per cent)	10	9	2	0	0	21
Low (5.1–10 per cent)	4	6	4	0	1	15
Medium (10.1–20 per cent)	5	10	13	3	0	31
High (20.1–30 per cent)	3	2	6	5	2	18
Very high (more than 30%)	0	1	4	6	7	18
Total	**22**	**28**	**29**	**14**	**10**	**103**

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Looking at the 22 schools which were zero-excluding, Figure 4.3 shows that nearly half (46 per cent) were in the lowest category of free school meals, while none of the schools in the 'very high' free school meals category emerged as having a zero exclusion record.

Figure 4.3 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by free school meals



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8

Conversely, no 'very low' free school meals school was in either of the two highest bands of exclusion rates, while those schools within the 'very high' free school meals category represented some 70 per cent of the highest-excluding schools, and over two-fifths (43 per cent) of the sub-sample excluded pupils at the rate of one per 100–200 (see Table 4.3).

Given that free school meals may be some measure of social deprivation, an association with high permanent exclusion looks particularly evident.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Information on the number of statemented pupils per school was derived from the submission on Form 7 to the DfEE in the previous academic year. These figures were converted to a percentage of the number of pupils at the school. The range varied

from three schools with none, to one school with 13 per cent of pupils with statements, and this was then banded into four categories:

low	(0-1per cent)
low middle	(1.1–2 per cent)
high middle	(2.1–4 per cent)
high	(4.1 per cent or more).

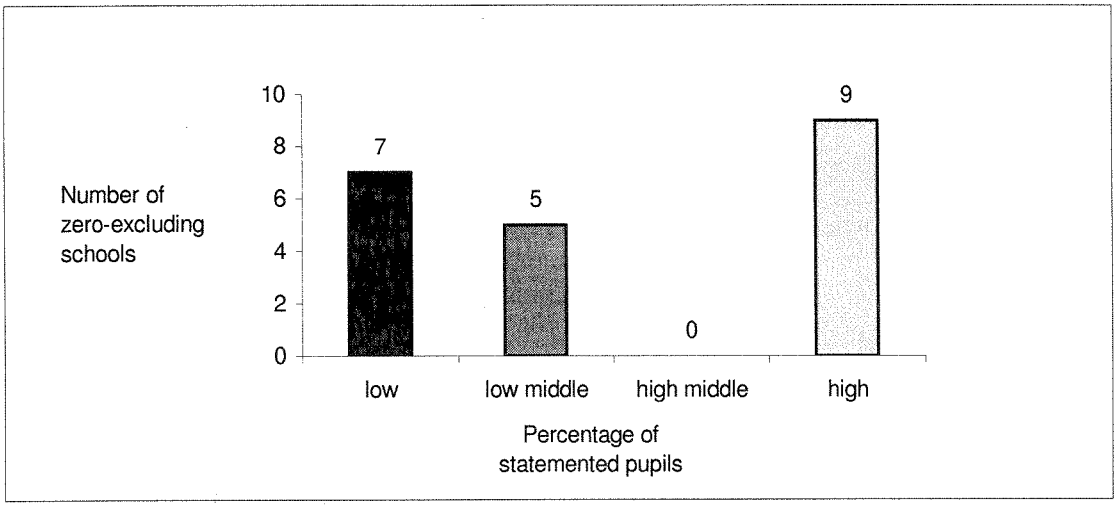
Table 4.4 Special educational needs and permanent exclusion rates

Special educational needs	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Low (0–1per cent)	7	8	3	3	2	23
Low middle (1.1–2 per cent)	5	7	7	1	2	22
High middle (2.1–4 per cent)	0	9	10	7	2	28
High (4.1 per cent or more)	9	4	9	3	3	28
Total	**21***	**28**	**29**	**14**	**9**	**101**

**NB Data unavailable for one school in this category.*
Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

It was evident that over two-fifths (43 per cent) of the zero-excluding subsample had higher numbers of SEN statements, suggesting a possible association of inclusion with formalised statements and their corollary of support.

Figure 4.4 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) with special educational needs



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

However, those schools in the third highest band of SEN statements (between two and four per cent of the school population) appeared to be among the higher excluding schools, noticeably accounting for half of the subsample excluding in Band 4.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Information on unauthorised absences was obtained from figures published nationally via the DfEE as percentages, taking into account the number of pupils per school and the number of half days per school. The percentage of unauthorised absences ranged from none to 30 and this distribution was banded into four groups:

low	(none)
low middle	(1 per cent)
high middle	(2–4 per cent)
high	(more than 5 per cent).

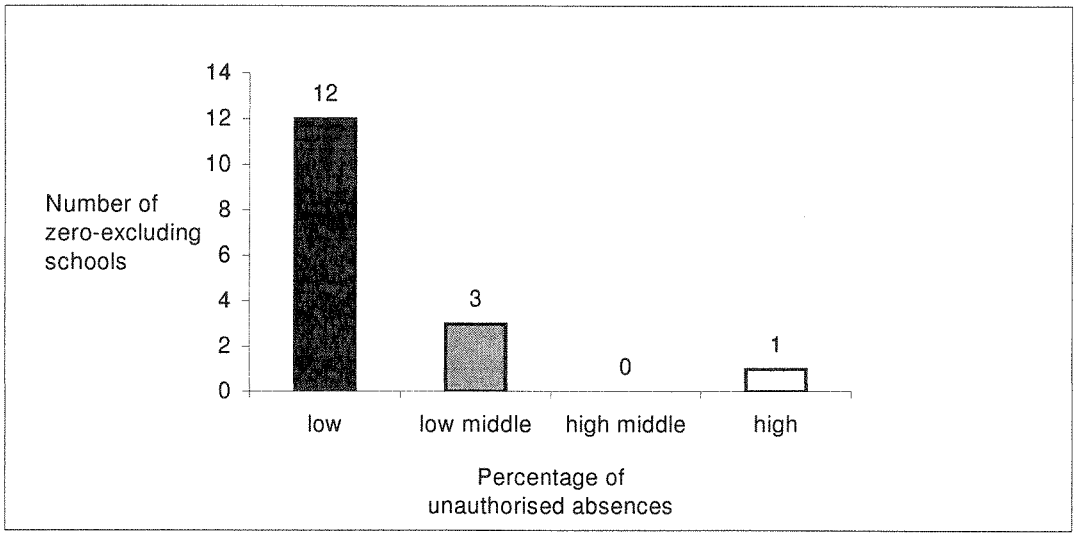
Table 4.5 Unauthorised absences and permanent exclusion rates

Unauthorised absences	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Low (none)	12	15	8	1	0	36
Low middle (1 per cent)	3	9	10	3	3	28
High middle (2-4 per cent)	0	2	8	8	4	22
High (more than 5 per cent)	1	0	2	2	2	7
Total	**16***	**26**	**28**	**14**	**9**	**93**

** NB Data unavailable for six schools in this category.*
Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Applying this variable seemed to show that schools with very low or zero exclusion rates also tended to be those with zero or low recordings of unauthorised absence (see Table 4.5).

Figure 4.5 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by unauthorised absence



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

FIXED-TERM EXCLUSION

Fixed-term exclusion rates were also calculated by expressing the number of fixed-term exclusion days as a percentage of the total school population. Four bands of fixed-term exclusion were created:

low	(up to 0.15 per cent)
low middle	(0.16–0.30 per cent)
high middle	(0.31–0.45 per cent)
high	(more than 0.45 per cent).

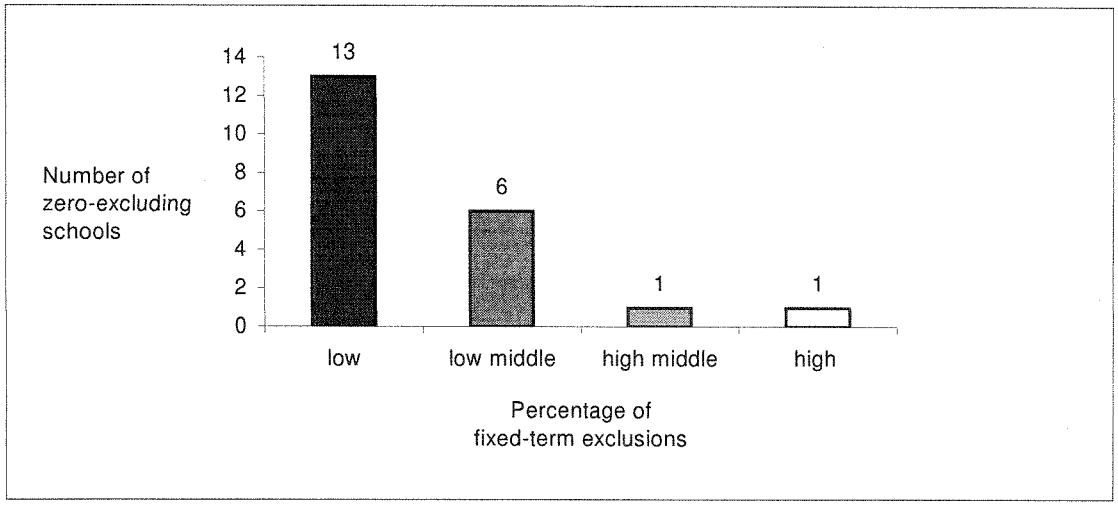
Table 4.6 Fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion rates

Fixed-term exclusion	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Low (up to 0.15 per cent)	13	16	8	0	0	37
Low middle (0.16-0.30 per cent)	6	7	8	5	0	26
High middle (0.31-0.45 per cent)	1	4	7	5	1	18
High (more than 0.45 per cent)	1	2	2	4	7	16
Total	**21***	**29**	**25**	**14**	**8**	**97**

** NB Data unavailable for one school in this category*
Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Table 4.6 shows a strong correlation: namely that some three-fifths of zero-excluding schools were in the lowest category of fixed-term exclusion rates, while seven of the eight schools in the highest permanent exclusion subsample were also in the highest fixed-term exclusion category.

Figure 4.6 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by fixed-term exclusion



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

This would suggest very strong evidence that high levels of fixed-term and permanent exclusions are connected in some way. Hence, the argument that fixed-term exclusion inhibits permanent exclusion, whether used as a deterrent or a cooling off phase, does not seem to borne out by this data set.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

Information on the number of pupils from ethnic minorities was derived from the schools' submission on Form 7 to the DfEE in the previous academic year. The number of ethnic minority pupils in each school was expressed as a percentage of the total school population. The percentages of ethnic minority pupils ranged from zero to 74 per cent and were banded as follows:

low	(up to 1 per cent)
low middle	(1.1 to 5 per cent)
high middle	(5.1 to 20 per cent)
high	(20.1 per cent or more).

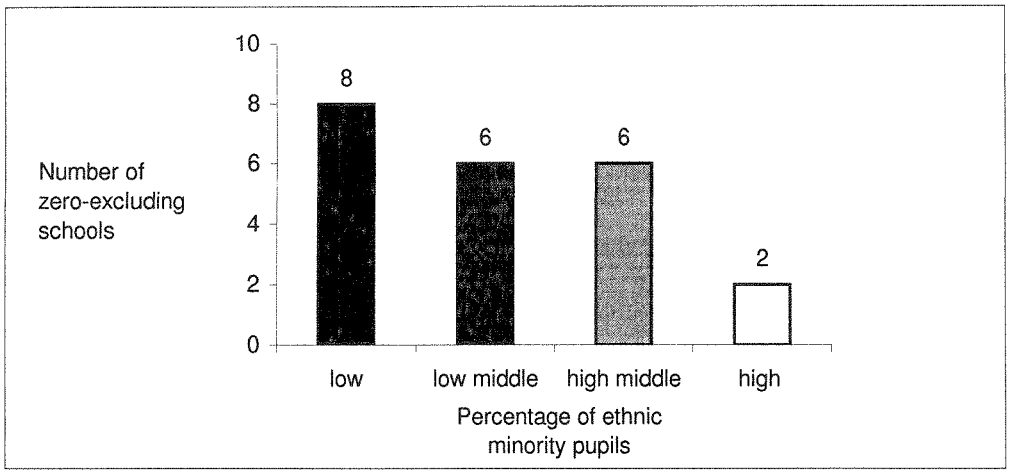
Table 4.7 Ethnic minorities and permanent exclusion rates

Ethnic minorities	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Low (up to 1 per cent)	8	10	11	4	0	33
Low middle (1.1 to 5 per cent)	6	10	8	4	3	31
High middle (5.1 to 20 per cent)	6	3	4	4	3	20
High (20.1 per cent or more)	2	1	4	1	4	12
Total	**22**	**24**	**27**	**13**	**10**	**96**

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Though not statistically significant, it was evident overall that, of the 22 zero-excluding schools, only two (nine per cent) were in the highest category of ethnic minority pupils (see Figure 4.7) and that the ten schools comprising the highest-excluding subsample contained no school with very low numbers of ethnic minority pupils (see Table 4.7).

Figure 4.7 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by ethnic minority



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Concomitantly, 80 per cent of the zero-excluding schools (18 schools) were found in the two lowest categories of schools with pupils with English as a Second Language. This again demonstrated the tendency for zero-excluding schools to have small percentages of pupils from ethnic minority groups.

KEY STAGE 3 ACHIEVEMENT

Information on key stage 3 overall performance for all schools in the country in 1996 was obtained from the NFER database. The range was divided into five achievement bands or categories, with a sixth category of 'unknown' (see Table 4.8). These were derived by splitting the range into five equal-sized groups, each representing 20 per cent of all schools.

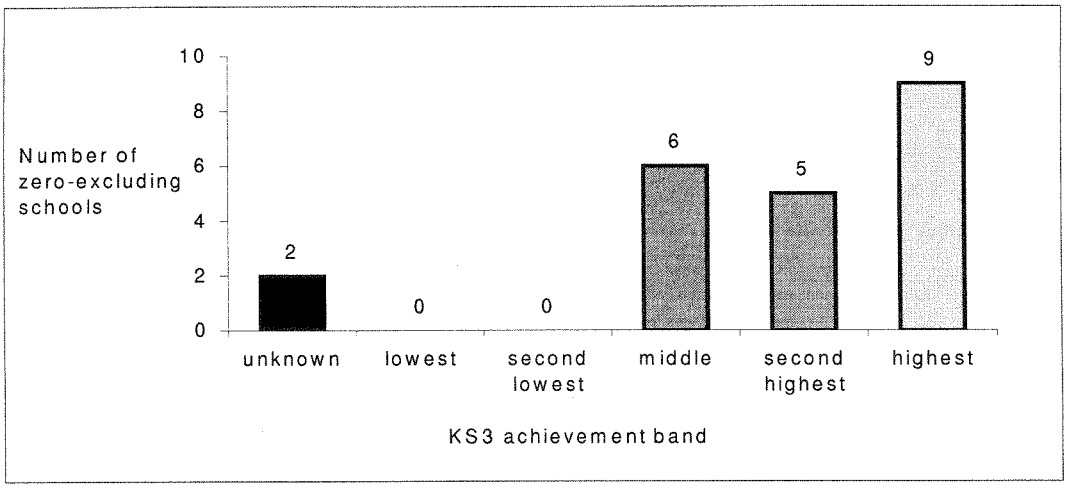
Table 4.8 Key stage 3 achievement and permanent exclusion rates

KS3 achievement	BAND 1 Zero-excluding school	BAND 2 Exclusion rate < 1/400 pupils	BAND 3 Exclusion rate < 1/200 pupils	BAND 4 Exclusion rate < 1/100 pupils	BAND 5 Exclusion rate 1/100 pupils	TOTAL
Unknown	2	2	2	0	0	6
Lowest KS3	0	0	0	1	0	1
Second lowest	0	1	4	7	8	20
Middle	6	9	11	3	1	30
Second highest	5	9	12	3	1	30
Highest	9	9	0	0	0	18
Total	**22**	**30**	**29**	**14**	**10**	**105**

Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

A highly significant interaction was demonstrated between key stage 3 achievement and permanent exclusion. All of the 18 schools in the highest achievement band were in the lowest two bands for permanent exclusion. Figure 4.8 highlights that all of the 22 zero-excluding schools were in the three highest bands for key stage 3 achievement (except for two in the unknown category) and nine out of this subsample (41 per cent) were in the highest achievement band.

Figure 4.8 Profile of the zero-excluding school subsample (22 schools) by key stage 3 achievement



Source: NFER Effective Behaviour Management Survey 1997–8.

Only one school in the whole sample was in the lowest achievement band and this fell into the second highest category for permanent exclusions. Fifteen out of the 20 schools (75 per cent) in the second lowest achievement band were in the two highest bands for permanent exclusion (see Table 4.8).

These findings indicate that there is a highly significant relationship between a relatively high percentage of permanent exclusions and low achievement of the school. This is not to say that one causes the other, only that there is an association which may be dependent on other factors.

CONCLUSION

From this investigation, overall it seems that it is most unlikely for schools to adhere formally to nil exclusion as a policy. While previous research has suggested there are different reasons underpinning the purposes of exclusion (Kinder *et al.*, 1997), this study, with its continuing investigation into views and opinions surrounding the issue, seems to clearly indicate that 'inclusion' is not an option which can be lightly achieved. Schools' general view of exclusion as an inviolable right or necessary fail-safe sanction emerges in the inquiry into the policy of nil exclusion, while other aspects of the study point up the serious resource implications of inclusion. Indeed, the research did find examples of zero-excluding schools, but the general profile of these institutions suggests that certain factors which point to a pupil population characterised by academic engagement and socio-economic advantage are particularly likely to be associated with zero or low exclusion. At the same time, socio-economic disadvantage, urbanisation, ethnicity and high levels of fixed-term exclusion and of unauthorised absence were all shown in the study to be statistically significant in the characteristics of high-excluding schools. Nil exclusion clearly requires resources, commitment and interventions to recognise and tackle the debilitating effects of these factors.

Some of the case-study schools described in *Raising Behaviour 3* did show great resolution and determination to take positive steps to combat any such disadvantages, and were examples of zero-excluding schools. They utilised resources within and beyond school to ensure pupils were both engaged academically and supported pastorally. Instituting systems designed to help youngsters learn appropriate behaviour was often a common factor: empathetic and positive support, rather than merely censure, were the principles underpinning their work.

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Raising Behaviour 2:
Nil Exclusion? Policy and Practice

This is the second in a short series of reports arising from the NFER project 'Effective Behaviour Management in Schools'. It relays findings from an interview programme in over 20 primary, secondary and special schools and from a survey of senior managers in some 150 secondary schools, who were asked about the existence and efficacy of nil exclusion as a policy. This report will contribute to the on-going debate on education and social inclusion and should be relevant to policy-makers and practitioners, as well as those researching in the area of exclusion.

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