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Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Note of visit

Behaviour management in four Pembrokeshire schools

July 2012

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⅄ secondary schools;
⅄ special schools;
⅄ pupil referral units;
⅄ independent schools;
⅄ further education;
⅄ independent specialist colleges;
⅄ adult community learning;
⅄ local authority education services for children and young people;
⅄ teacher education and training;
⅄ work-based learning;
⅄ careers companies; and
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Context

On Tuesday 3 July and Wednesday 4 July 2012, two inspectors from Estyn and one from CSSIW made unannounced visits to two secondary schools and two primary phase schools in Pembrokeshire. Each school received verbal feedback at the end of the visit, followed by a letter, which highlighted any immediate issues for attention and good features and areas for development. Inspectors also provided feedback to local authority officers at the end of the visits.

The visits were made in response to concerns about the use of time-out rooms for withdrawing pupils from classes in Pembrokeshire. The report makes many references to the use of 'time out'. This term covers some of the strategies used in education settings as part of their behaviour-management 'tool kit' and which can be used as part of a behaviour support plan. There is no formal definition of 'time out'. However, it would normally include one or more of the following:

- allowing a pupil time and space away from the class so they can re-gain composure and control over their emotions;
- stopping a pupil's involvement in an activity until they stop displaying unwanted behaviour and engage appropriately;
- asking or instructing a pupil to leave an activity and return when they feel ready to be involved and stop the behaviour that is of concern; and
- having teaching or support staff accompany the pupil to another location to prevent them from taking part in an activity for a set period of time.

The visits were spot checks of arrangements in a small sample of schools and were designed to provide assurance about behaviour management in Pembrokeshire. The schools were chosen to cover the primary and secondary phases and to include schools with specialist provision for pupils with additional learning needs.

Policies and guidance on safeguarding and behaviour management

Overall, the schools visited have appropriate policies and procedures for safeguarding and staff have a clear understanding of how to make child protection referrals. All these schools have increased their awareness of the need for consistent safeguarding policies and practices. Staff are trained at tier one or tier two child protection training. All of the schools are involved in multi-agency safeguarding process, with staff attending child protection case conferences and core groups.

All these schools have policies for making referrals for professional abuse. In the best practice, staff pay good attention to risk assessments and a supported return to work. However, this is not yet consistent across schools. Headteachers are not always kept informed of the progress of the investigations. As a result, they do not always have all the information that is available to help them to manage any possible future risks if the member of staff returns to the school.

The policies governing the use of facilities for 'time out' and withdrawal from class in relation to behaviour are not consistent. In two out of the four schools, children who misbehave sometimes spend time in rooms that are not dedicated to withdrawal or 'time out' purposes. Records do not always show what time the pupil was sent out of class, for how long, where s/he was and who was supervising. This makes it difficult for staff to say at a later date with any certainty that a pupil was not involved in an incident in and around the school or in the community or provide evidence should there be an allegation or complaint from parents or carers. On occasion, individual pupils who are upset or angry and misbehave are taken out of class and supervised by individual members of staff. Pupils are not always supervised in areas where they or the member of staff are visible to other members of staff. While there is no evidence to suggest any cause for concern, this aspect of the supervision of children in 'time out' does not take full account of safeguarding procedures or demonstrate best practice for the protection of pupils and staff.

In the four schools visited, there is a strong emphasis on managing and improving behaviour. Managers recognise that pupils who behave badly are often troubled, face difficult challenges at home and need extra support. One school funds a pastoral support team that is available throughout the day to support staff and pupils. In the primary phase schools visited, good use is made of strategies such as using thinking mats and egg timers so that pupils can see how much time it takes them to regain control. Pupils can then see the progress they make in reducing the time taken to calm down during any future incidents. Staff also use whole-class behaviour rewards to encourage pupils to manage and moderate their own behaviour.

In all of the schools, behaviour policies make the schools' aims clear and focus on the positive behaviour that they wish to promote. Policies outline what is expected of the pupils and what teachers need to do to gain pupils' respect and co-operation. Two good policies list specific behaviours that teachers should avoid, such as sarcasm and shouting. Staff are reminded to criticise the behaviour that is unacceptable rather than the pupil and not to make reference to the pupil's siblings.

However, policies do not all state what support will be available to staff following a difficult incident.

All of the policies outline incremental steps that staff should work through to give distressed pupils opportunities to get back on track and return to their work. However, staff do not always follow these policies consistently. Inconsistencies include:

- sending pupils out of the classroom without making sure that they are working in a designated area;
- ignoring pupils' use of mobile phones, contrary to school rules; and
- using serious incident forms inappropriately for minor transgressions.

The language used by staff to describe pupils' behaviours and the arrangements for sanction are not always appropriate or in tune with positive ethos of the policies. For example, in one case, pupils and staff referred to the group awaiting sanctions as being in the 'sin bin'.

When pupils misbehave and have to leave the classroom, they are usually given work to do. However, this work does not always relate to their curriculum. For example, some pupils are asked to complete low-level tasks such as shredding paper. In the secondary schools, staff are more likely to set work that is appropriate. In one referral unit in a secondary school, a member of staff is trained to give valuable support with pupils' literacy and numeracy.

All of the schools have policies that cover what to do when teachers have to intervene physically for the pupil's own safety or the safety of others. This is known as 'positive handling'. However, these policies do not always give enough explanation about what teachers can and cannot do in an emergency or make it clear how any subsequent complaints should be dealt with. Staff are less familiar with these positive handling policies than with their school's behaviour policy. The schools have not all informed parents and carers about these policies.

All schools have introduced Team Teach which has been recommended by Pembrokeshire local authority and are training their staff in its implementation. The Team Teach training is accredited by the British Institute of Learning Difficulties (BILD) and is designed to reduce anxiety, risk and restraint. One school has two trained tutors who cascade techniques to other staff. This increases the school's capacity to train additional staff and minimises the disruption caused by staff attending external training.

In all of the schools, parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's behaviour. They are involved in decisions about the kind of support that can be offered to their child.

Use of premises

Most of the physical facilities used for 'time out' were broadly adequate in the schools visited. However, all four schools have limitations of accommodation and, as a result, a few inappropriate rooms are used for pupils to work in small groups or individually. During the visits, a few such potential health and safety issues were fed back to particular schools, including storage of cleaning materials or electrical goods in rooms that pupils occasionally use and an open window that was wide enough for someone to climb into. On a few occasions, teachers had made changes to the use of store rooms without notifying the school's managers.

In one school, accommodation for the nurture programme, an intensive intervention to support vulnerable pupils with social, emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, was brightly lit. Pupils worked in a very positive environment in well-proportioned rooms with good equipment and appropriate soft furniture. However, this was not always the case elsewhere. A few rooms have been converted for use by pupils from storage areas and are small and windowless.

There are sensory rooms and quiet rooms in all of the schools, but their suitability for pupils is variable. In one special unit, where there is particularly good practice, staff encourage pupils to use the quiet rooms if they need to calm down or have space for reflection. These rooms are only used when the pupil chooses to use them and challenging behaviour is normally managed within the classroom setting rather than by excluding the pupil. As a result, these quiet rooms have no negative connotations for the children. This unit uses its sensory rooms for stimulation purposes, and everyone is clear about what happens in each room. However, in other schools, sensory rooms are used for stimulation, 'time out' and play purposes. In these schools, pupils are receiving mixed messages about the use of these rooms and it is unlikely that they gain a clear understanding of how and when they will use the room.

Record-keeping and reporting

Overall, the quality and quantity of record-keeping relating to behaviour vary between schools and occasionally within schools. Schools generally have suitable records of how they manage individual pupils' challenging behaviour and details of incidents that occur, but the use of such information is uneven across the schools visited. Schools use behaviour records appropriately to identify support for individual pupils. In the best practice, use is made of behaviour data to:

- track improvements in pupils' behaviour;
- monitor sanctions given to groups of pupils to identify trends or patterns; and
- evaluate value for money of pastoral support programmes.

However, even where good use is made of behaviour data for individual pupils, schools do not always use this data well enough to evaluate the effectiveness of whole-school strategies or plan for improvement.

In three of the four schools, pupils are withdrawn or sent out from the normal class environment as part of the school's strategy for behaviour management. Where this is well organised and managed, there is a clear rationale for the use of the time-out space and detailed records are kept to show when, how and by whom the space was used. However, on a number of occasions during the monitoring visit, spaces were used in three of the schools to manage pupils with challenging behaviour and no records kept of their use. In addition to the health and safety implications of this lack of record keeping, schools are not able to track how much curriculum time pupils are losing or to identify patterns or triggers in behaviour.

All schools have recently developed or updated positive handling procedures, which include the recording of physical intervention and restraint. In the primary phase schools, these records are reasonably detailed, although there is some inconsistency within schools about what should be recorded. It is difficult to make judgements about the quality of recording in the two secondary schools because senior leaders state that incidents requiring restrictive physical intervention and restraint are very rare and no incidents have been recorded using the new recording systems. However, although senior managers in these schools are aware of the importance of record-keeping in ensuring the safety of pupils and staff, instances of physical contact, such as the breaking up of fights, were not always recorded. There are examples of good record-keeping on physical intervention in the specialised teaching facility in one of the secondary schools. Schools are not all giving written reports to governors on the nature and number of positive handling incidents. Although not a requirement, it is good practice for governors to have a role in the review and evaluation of behaviour policies and to understand how many positive handling incidents take place in the school.

All schools make good use of positive handling plans where necessary. However, these plans are not always recorded in pupils' education files, updated regularly, signed and dated by the headteacher, or contain enough detail to be monitored adequately. Staff do not always complete the next steps section consistently. Some focus on the pupil's response to the episode while others focus on how to avoid future incidents. In one school, all staff read pupils' positive handling plans so that they can pre-empt difficulties in and around the school before they escalate to major incidents.

The quality of record-keeping for 'time out', as used for children who have additional learning needs or who do not behave well, is inconsistent across the schools. In the best practice in one special unit, records are kept of the children's use of quiet rooms based on five minute observations. However, in other quiet rooms there are no policies and procedures for careful record-keeping.

The secondary schools visited have begun to use data to analyse where they need to offer pupils and staff more support and to identify trigger points during the school day, when staff need to be particularly vigilant. Both schools record how often individual pupils receive a sanction and the type of sanction they should receive. In one school this information is analysed by groups of pupils, such as looked after children, young carers and those with additional learning needs. This valuable information is passed to heads of year, subject departments and support centres. As a result, middle managers can target improvements. The primary phase schools

have not begun to analyse behaviour records or look for trends, patterns and triggers so that staff can improve their management of pupils' behaviour.

In relation to safeguarding, all four schools use the appropriate multi-agency referral forms, and records are kept securely. However, standards of record-keeping for safeguarding are variable. Schools do not have a standard way of keeping records on children and the records are not always stored centrally. This means that it is more difficult for staff to recognise an overall pattern in issues that arise with a particular pupil.

Staff understanding of behaviour management

Staff interviewed are generally well informed about the schools' behaviour strategies and feel confident in managing challenging behaviour due to the supportive team ethos in each school. For example, staff recognise the importance of using techniques to de-escalate situations in which pupils show high levels of anxiety or anger. Staff understand the importance of creating a calm, orderly and supportive environment where pupils feel confident that their behaviour is dealt with fairly and consistently.

However, senior leaders do not monitor the day-to-day implementation of behaviour policies rigorously enough in all of the schools visited. As a result, they are unaware of areas of practice that do not conform to policy, for example where 'time out' incidents are not recorded in enough detail.

In the schools visited, staff who work directly with pupils with behaviour difficulties or staff who deal directly with incidents are appropriately trained in positive behaviour management and positive handling. All of the schools visited provide basic training on behaviour management for teaching and support staff. In the best practice, good use is made of a closure day at the beginning of the academic year to remind all staff about procedures for managing behaviour.

All staff interviewed felt that they have benefitted from refresher training on safeguarding and were confident about their roles and responsibilities in promoting pupils' wellbeing.

Pupil views on behaviour management

In all of the schools visited, the pupils interviewed were very positive about how their behaviour is managed and how much progress they are making in learning to avoid conflict and develop strategies for managing their anger. There are examples where pupils believe that it is the high levels of support and guidance that they receive that enable them to remain in school. They appreciate the support that they receive from staff and appreciate their flexible approach. They have a clear understanding of school rules, sanctions and rewards and of their own responsibilities. In one school, teaching and behaviour are regular agenda items for the school council and pupils make mature observations about behaviour management.

Recommendations

Pembrokeshire local authority should:

- go ahead with their plans to ensure that the soft play/'time out' area adjacent to the headteacher's office in one school is returned to its original use as a store room and work with the school to explore more appropriate options for additional sensory provision;
- work with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to evaluate how effectively their policies and training approaches in relation to the use of positive handling are implemented by schools;
- finalise the draft guidance for schools on the use and monitoring of 'time out' areas; and
- make sure that relevant school managers are kept informed about the progress of investigations into allegations of professional abuse.

Schools should:

- respond to the issues for immediate attention and the areas for improvement recommended by inspectors;
- record any incidents where the use of physical force with pupils has been necessary;
- include more detail in policies relating to positive handling on how to deal with complaints;
- be more rigorous in the use of positive handling plans so that they contain enough detail, inform future incidents and are monitored and linked to pupils' other education files;
- store safeguarding information on individual pupils in one file to enable patterns to be identified;
- regularly monitor, evaluate and review day-to-day behaviour management practices;
- give clearer guidance to staff on changing the use of rooms or additional space;
- make sure that all 'time out' is recorded and that record-keeping is of good quality;

- make better use of data to inform and improve behaviour management across the school;
- make better use of the time that pupils spend out of the classroom when they misbehave to provide work related to the curriculum;
- make sure that arrangements for supervision of 'time out' are appropriate and take full account of safeguarding procedures;
- improve areas that are used for 'time out' or as sensory rooms to make all of them fit for purpose;
- make sure that the practice and the language used by staff with regard to behaviour and sanctions are in line with the positive ethos of behavioural policies; and
- report incidents and any related analysis to governors, and to parents where appropriate.

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