

SCHOOL PROFILE
LOCATION:
OLDHAM
PUPILS:
1578

All Aboard

A whole-school policy of inclusion and individualised behaviour management has had a dramatic effect on outcomes at one school in the North West of England, as assistant SENCo **Sarah Jones** explains...



Concern about the behaviour of young people continues to be a hot topic in the media and in schools. Of course the latter *are* measured on behaviour but we also recognise that the picture is far more complex than a line of statistics on exclusions and absenteeism might suggest. The true bottom line is that if pupils aren't in school then they're not available to learn and the impact on their future lives is often profound. And if they are in school, but disengaged or disruptive, then it's not just their education that's damaged but also that of the others in their classes. The numbers of pupils with special educational needs that feature in these statistics is also of concern and sometimes overlooked.

At North Chadderton, where I am the Assistant SENCo, the work we have done on pupil behaviour alongside other initiatives in the school has had a significant positive impact on our performance. Set in Chadderton on the outskirts of Oldham, we have below average numbers of pupils on free school meals and on the special needs register; and an average number from minority ethnic groups. In 2009 North Chadderton chose to

10%

FALL IN PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM AMONGST PUPILS WITH SEN IN SCHOOLS TAKING PART IN THE TWO-YEAR AFA PILOT

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participate in the pilot programme for Achievement for All (Afa) – the adoption of a whole-school framework that focuses on improving the results and outcomes for pupils with SEN.

It is difficult to isolate one part of the work that we have identified and introduced – the point of the programme is that it functions as a whole-school initiative, enabling individual pieces of work to slot together with each part informing the rest. But as a school an area that we chose particularly to focus on was the relationship between behaviour, our pupils identified with SEN, and their academic progress. During 2008-09 we had 101 exclusion incidents for pupils with SEN and we were looking for ways to tackle this positively to ensure these pupils not only were included but that their outcomes could be improved.

Team efforts

As part of the programme we introduced structured conversations with the parents of pupils across the SEN cohort to ensure that we had an active two-way and on-going relationship. We decided to designate Key Teachers, who had responsibility for individual students; they are the first point of call for the pupil, the parent and



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for other staff, and take the main role in communicating relevant information and developments to other staff, working alongside the Behaviour Manager and the SEN team to ensure a co-ordinated programme for that pupil. Their knowledge of the student and the issues surrounding him or her is essential to ensuring a co-ordinated approach to behaviour improvement.

We considered in detail the range of behaviour issues that we faced and in order to respond effectively introduced a range of available actions. Some are discipline interventions, others form part of the regular routine – but in each case a behaviour action plan is developed. Throughout all of this there is support for the student and information, involvement and agreement of the pupil, other staff, and the parent(s).

There is a comprehensive behaviour policy, of which staff, pupils and parents are made aware; email communication is embedded in the school to ensure all staff are kept up to date with progress or issues. This work is underpinned by rigorous monitoring and tracking of all students so that where behaviour issues arise they can be quickly identified and acted upon.

As part of the discipline interventions we use a supervised internal exclusion room, which can accommodate seven pupils working in booths in silence on work delivered from the classes they would normally be attending. Alongside this the Behaviour Manager and the Key Teacher work with the pupil to consider their behaviour and consequences following the principles of SEAL.

For pupils with ongoing BESD and/or SpLD we have a Green Room – a separate teaching space staffed by a teacher and TA. For these pupils this is very much part of their regular routine rather than a discipline intervention, allowing them to have time-out from areas or situations that may be causing them problems. We also identified that reading levels were a key contributing factor to poor behaviour for many of these



NORTH CHADDERTON WILL BE RELOCATING TO NEW, PURPOSE-BUILT BUILDINGS IN SEPTEMBER 2012



ABOUT THE EXPERT

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pupils, as they were struggling to access the curriculum appropriately outside of English. The Green Room has been supporting reading development so that these pupils can improve their literacy levels, staff across the school are made more aware of individual literacy needs, and lessons can be adapted accordingly. The result is that these pupils can access other areas of the curriculum more easily as they are being better supported, engaged and motivated to reach the aspirational targets that have been set.

Smoothing the edges

Naturally, this journey has included the usual lumps and bumps that can always be expected. Initially some parents were reluctant to engage, for example – some felt offended that their child had been identified with SEN, and this seemed particularly the case for parents whose children were on the register for behavioural or emotional problems rather than specific cognitive difficulties. We addressed this by a more careful explanation that the term covers a wide range of needs, and by being clearer about the reasons we were concerned about their child, making sure that we were using specific examples, to allow the parent to recognise and acknowledge the issues.

We found that the initial training time we had allocated for Key Teachers wasn't sufficient, resulting in the training being condensed – we now make better use of allocated CPD time to ensure this can happen fully. And co-ordinating staff for our Academic Review Days to allow for extended appointments for structured conversations, and making sure that all information



was passed to the Key Teacher, provided some logistical headaches. However, we've taken all the feedback on board and been able to respond by modifying existing structures. We now have an approach that works across the whole school.

Of course for some pupils the external pressures they face are extreme and complex and we do sometimes have to involve Child Protection and Social Services, but the approach we have adopted means that for us we can speedily identify potential students with issues, and have a consistent and established process and monitoring that allows us to take further actions where necessary.

By 2010-11 we had reduced exclusion incidents for pupils with SEN to 25. Across the school the proportion of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades including English and mathematics rose from 51% in 2009 to 67% in 2011. Specifically, students across the SEN bands saw significant improvements in results in English and maths with those for English A*-C in particular achieving over 10% above the national average; the improvements have been recognised in a Section 8 inspection at the end of last year. We are continuing our work with AfA and have now achieved Quality Mark status sharing the work and experience we have had with other schools and education professionals.

As one of our Key Teachers commented, "I believe that the very early contact in Year 7, and the continued relationship I've had with my AfA student, means that he is safer, more secure, and fundamentally happy and successful at North Chadderton".