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# BEHAVIOURAL STANDARDS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE ENGLISH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SYSTEM

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## FOREWORD

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*By Violet Walker, Headteacher, Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Barnet*

This ResPublica report sets out to better understand how effective behaviour policies in state schools, notably non-faith, non-selective state schools, can lead to better learning outcomes for their pupils. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, the subject matter of behaviour and progress of students is a focus in every school.

I am delighted to write this foreword as Headteacher of Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Barnet, one of the top 10 ranked non-selective state schools in the 2019 DfE Performance Tables – the last published data pre-Covid – and again part of the top-performing cohort of schools in the 2022 DfE Performance Tables – the first post-Covid data – whose policies and learning outcomes were included in the research of this report.

The report finds there is plenty of research to show that high behaviour standards are a key component

in helping pupils achieve better learning outcomes. However, behaviour has been a missing ingredient in the last several decades of school policy legislation.

When such reports are open to hearing the voice of stakeholders in both discrete and contrasting contexts, their recommendations and suggested action points gain validity, particularly for those working at ground level. This validity is all the more necessary and significant in this specific context, at this time, when schools face increasing challenges from student behaviours that are more complex in nature, even simply from the socio-economic fall-out of the pandemic.

This report raises important questions for Government and for school leaders. It aligns its key recommendations with the Levelling Up White Paper and the Schools White Paper to suggest outcomes that will be familiar to leaders of schools where

behaviour is a constant focus because those leaders understand its impact on everyone's learning and school experience. Since Covid, the other consistent priority for schools has been mental health as a response to the associated increasing anxieties identified in adolescents.

The report also highlights the recent "behavioural turn" of the schools reform agenda, with a strong focus on positive rewards alongside negative sanctions. In addition, it started to link behaviour policy explicitly to mental health provisions, and support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils. It is a welcome development that behaviour is increasingly treated as a central part of what schools can "do for" their pupils.

Furthermore, it identifies the potential impact of including behaviour qualifications as part of teacher training, and the need to always be attuned to a school's socio-economic context in terms of data collection and judgement. This latter point perhaps serves to indicate why the report argues that "some of the best schools in the country under Progress 8 measures are non-selective state schools". The best comprehensive schools attend to the diverse needs of their students in terms of the curriculum, including teaching behaviour for learning, and at classroom level in terms of quality-first teaching that meets the needs of every student. This results in them addressing the factors that influence data on pupil potential, such as disadvantage and other identified characteristics, so that those contributing factors become negligible.

The report makes the point that without blurring boundaries between schools' various responsibilities, statutory policies must be crafted

in a way that reinforces simple, clear standards for how pupils should demonstrate good behaviour. Course development, pastoral care, disciplinary management, and SEND support all overlap and interact asserting good behaviour standards, which includes the idea of introducing behaviour teaching as a vital part of the taught curriculum.

The current national challenge regarding teacher recruitment and numbers entering teacher training not meeting Government targets, by a large margin, can partly be understood as a linear relationship with poor behaviour in schools. Poor behaviour management, including neglecting teaching behaviour, not only impacts pupil outcomes but also the wellbeing of the professional workforce; the balance between an acceptable salary, vocational notions of the teaching profession and the need to adhere to a variety of statutory policies, can become compromised.

As a Headteacher leading a school during this academic year that has seen teacher strikes for the first time in 15 years, I note with a keen eye that the report's summary of its section on "Learning outcomes in context" concludes that "the profile of the best performing non-faith, non-selective schools was one of low absence and low persistent absence, better SEND provision, a more diverse but not necessarily better- or worse-off pupil body, and a strong core made up predominantly of better-paid full-time teachers".

The report recognises that while course development, pastoral care, disciplinary management, and SEND support all overlap, they each have their own separate purpose too. Integrating them should not mean putting too onerous an expectation on all members of school staff to address all of these policy areas

at the same time when they go about doing their jobs. Instead, it raises the importance for schools of recruiting specialist, well-trained support staff who can help turn schools into positive socialising environments for pupils.

Impressively, the report acknowledges the importance of engendering a sense of belonging to a school community. Belonging supports the expression of identity, of feeling valued by others in the community so that everyone can make personal contributions. This is particularly important in the classroom where exchanges of thoughts, ideas, and knowledge all encourage risk-taking, respect, and develop confidence in pupils. These all contribute to overall success and their impact is greatest when behaviour does not disrupt learning.

Of note is that the report states schools policymaking has a lot to learn from the schools that have done well in the Government's new Progress 8 measures, especially the ones that do not select for academic performance. What we need is a granular engagement with the different "bottom-up" models of "best practice" that have been developed in the best-performing schools, to learn from what works well and roll it out at the national level.

This report will resonate with all leaders of schools in the English comprehensive school system. All will find validity either in their intentional work or in the work they strive to achieve, impeded by various constraints imposed by their particular context. The proposal for "a scalar measure so that schools' disciplinary performance can be graded in a more granular way" by creating "Behaviour 5 [...] modelled on the way Progress 8 criteria are calculated" will no doubt be a source of great debate; particularly

at this time, when inspection evaluation of schools is a current hot topic. Having to meet additional standards may seem burdensome. However, the report appears sympathetic to this, suggesting that Government should remove the binary cut-off nature of school behaviour, where "intervention [...] is only triggered when pupils' standards fall to a level that is 'unacceptably low'".

A final key point drawn out in the report is a strong message to Government and at the same time, a positive message to schools. Government cannot afford to be shy in taking on the challenge of boosting behavioural standards in schools, and helping pupils make the most of their opportunities for learning. The radical ideas that the English schools system needs are out there – now is the time to use them to convert the "behavioural turn" into a "behavioural revolution".

The report's call to behavioural revolution is in the spirit of a change for the better, and it is undeniably a blueprint for pupil progress.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

In this report ResPublica explores how effective behaviour policies in state schools can lead to better learning outcomes, and develops a series of recommendations for reforms to schools policy in the UK, in particular for the behaviour guidelines to be implemented via national frameworks across the state school sector.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The UK's global position in school learning outcomes leaves a lot to be desired. In successive PISA rankings, British pupils' scores for reading, maths, and science are globally average, historically falling or stagnant before 2015, and only recently enjoying a mixture of slight improvement (maths, reading) and decline (science). It has enjoyed only marginal success in addressing socioeconomic performance gaps in learning outcomes and access to learning resources. British pupils are less satisfied with their lives and more at risk of bullying. And even though the UK is among

the better global performers on school absence and lateness, fully 25% of pupils report regular or even constant problems with classroom disruption.

There is a sizeable body of research to evidence that high behavioural standards have a positive effect on pupils' learning outcomes. Yet over the last three decades, reforms to UK education policy have only marginally treated questions of school behaviour, focusing instead on questions of organisation, choice, selection, and oversight. Where it has confronted behaviour, legislation has overwhelmingly focused on negative behavioural issues, with far too little engagement with the requirements for positive behaviour. They have also taken a *laissez-faire* approach to intervention, stepping in only once the behavioural profile of a school falls below an "unacceptably low" level. Meanwhile, the Progress 8 measures introduced in 2015 to compare the educational 'value added' pupils gain from attending a particular school only take into account academic results, with no consideration of behavioural performance.

This situation has begun to shift with the launch of the Levelling Up and Schools White Papers in 2022. The 'levelling up' agenda includes proposals for new Education Investment Areas designed to boost the local areas with the worst educational attainment in the UK; hubs and projects to help attendance rates, share curriculum and extracurricular expertise among and beyond schools and academy trusts; revised funding arrangements; and ambitious targets to improve reading, writing, and maths results. It remains to be seen how many of these intended moves will reach implementation stage, depending on the future evolution of the 'levelling up' agenda.

The ongoing schools reform agenda has added more detail explicitly on behaviour policy, in particular a new focus on positive communication and explanation of behavioural expectations; an orientation towards rewards over sanctions as the way to incentivise good pupil behaviour; a consensus around better teacher training and support on behaviour management, as well as bringing external expertise into the education policymaking process at national and local level; and a raft of new data-collection strategies to help boost school attendance, including a National Behaviour Survey designed to canvass the views of pupils, parents/carers, and school staff.

## **WHAT THIS REPORT DOES**

This report examines the behavioural policies, learning outcomes, and contextual institutional characteristics of 150 UK state secondary schools, representing the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 of the 2,491 non-selective, non-faith state schools captured by the 2022 Progress 8 rankings. It

compares their behavioural policies and procedures to evaluate how differently they treat positive and negative behaviour, as well as other statutory policies that have a close bearing on how their behavioural policy operates, including codes of conduct and Special Educational Needs and Disability provision.

It accompanies this with an analysis of the available Government data collected as part of the Progress 8 score rankings, including various breakdowns of academic attainment scores, and statistics related to pupil management and school staff structures. Combining these, it derives an extensive list of recommendations intended to inform 'best practice' changes to behaviour policies that can positively impact pupils' educational outcomes.

The report restricts its analysis to only those aspects of schools' educational models over which schools themselves or their administering trusts can exercise a degree of control. Other determinants of school performance include external factors such as geographical location within the UK, the availability of local education support services, and the capacity for curricular diversity. These are often intercorrelated, reflecting wider questions of deprivation and opportunity across the UK, and should be the subject of further analysis in future.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES IN CONTEXT**

In the 2022 Progress 8 measures, a number of high-performing non-selective, non-faith state schools more than held their own against their selective rivals. 39 of the top 50 schools in the country were non-selective, and the top 20 schools were all non-selectives who at least matched and



in some cases significantly outperformed their nearest competitors. Yet non-selective schools' performance may even be underestimated by weighting the EBacc, Attainment 8, and Progress 8 measures so heavily towards English and maths results, at the expense of GCSE teaching in other areas, including more technical/vocational rather than 'academic' subjects. This speaks to the need for more, more granular, better-disaggregated data in future rankings to better gauge schools' success at boosting pupils' learning outcomes.

School size had no discernable impact on pupils' learning outcomes, which raises the prospect of more integration of learning provision, through either place-based or trust-based multi-school 'franchises'. Meanwhile, the better-performing schools boasted lower absence and persistent absence levels, in line with intuitive expectations. There is a case to be made that expanding SEND provision may help improve learning outcomes, although the current structure of Education, Health, and Care plans does not appear to be making a major positive impact.

The results offer a mixed picture of the relationship between socioeconomic status (as measured by the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals) and learning outcomes. At the lower end, higher deprivation is accompanied by lower educational outcomes, but that trend disappears for schools in the middle and top of the Progress 8 rankings. This suggests that, at least for the bulk of pupils and schools, the OECD is right to claim that 'disadvantage is not destiny'. But it also implies that the impact of deprivation on learning outcomes cannot simply be 'undone' by (e.g.) good behaviour policies or curriculum formation. Instead, it supports the case

for conducting supplementary analysis using (e.g.) Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index data to evaluate this relationship further.

Meanwhile, pupils whose first language is not English are unusually highly-represented in the highest-performing selective and non-selective schools. This may be a result of contextual factors such as the 'outcomes bonus' of English as an Additional Language provision in the local area, or differing cultural norms around behavioural standards (respect for authority, compliance) and educational success (as an intrinsic value or a route to social capital and integration) between various communities. Deeper analysis is needed on all of these factors, but lies beyond the scope of this report.

Finally, the non-selective schools who performed best in the 2022 Progress 8 rankings typically boast a larger core of full-time teachers as a proportion of their total staff, and their teachers are on average £1,500–2,500 p.a. better remunerated than their equivalents at other non-selective and even many selective schools. At the top end, average teacher salaries lie in the £45,000–£52,000 p.a. bracket.

## **ANALYSING BEHAVIOURAL BEST PRACTICE**

The best disciplinary policies and procedures are consistent, well-defined, and clear to staff, pupils, and parents/carers. The senior leadership teams, including teaching and administrative staff, play a key role in setting a highly-visible example for implementing these policies at all levels of the school structure. 'Best practice' policies tread a careful line between giving staff autonomy in tailoring their decisions to the situations they face

and hold them rigorously accountable for their disciplinary choices. Positive socialisation and reflection are key to helping pupils understand the reasoning behind the disciplinary rules they face, and pupil–pupil behavioural ‘peer support’ is a useful auxiliary tool to help staff resolve behavioural situations.

Schools typically prefer to rely on offering pupils individual and collective rewards and privileges for positive behaviour over imposing duties and sanctions for negative behaviour. There is scope to unite these systems into a single points-based ‘behaviour account’ that acts as a quantifiable barometer for pupils’ ongoing behavioural performance, building on models already offered by private providers. Behavioural policies also benefit from including provisions for restorative community action, preventing pupils from bringing in items that will distract from their learning, setting careful limits on pupils’ use of school areas, and insisting on clear boundaries around pupils’ personal space.

Schools also award tangible prizes to pupils who exhibit positive behaviour, including vouchers and participation in enrichment activities. At the same time, schools also rely on confiscations, low-level fines, and other financial penalties to sanction pupils for negative behaviour. There is room to expand both of these systems significantly beyond their fairly patchwork implementation, in consultation with local stakeholders and parents/carers.

The values that school ethos statements project most frequently include **integrity, self-esteem and respect, individuality, diversity, achievement, and responsibility**. These sit alongside pupil codes of conduct and mandatory school behaviour contracts (to be signed by pupils and parents/

carers) as the key messaging that helps inculcate positive attitudes and behaviours, especially when staff make the effort to not just instruct their pupils but clearly explain the rationale behind behaviour expectations. At the same time, staff also rely extensively on behavioural signalling to steer pupils towards positive behaviour and away from negative behaviour, which often works best when this is formalised into a ‘card’, ‘flag’, or ‘strike’ pre-disciplinary system. Schools also use mechanisms such as annual behaviour celebrations and other events to integrate their behavioural approaches with those pupils are familiar with from their ‘home life’, and there is scope to align these behavioural expectations even more.

Staff benefit from rigorous training, not just in substantive course delivery or behaviour management but also drawing on insights from media, rhetorical, and communications training. But schools cannot expect teaching and administrative staff to take on all the additional responsibilities for managing pupils’ behaviour. This justifies introducing full-time Behaviour Support Staff to act as liaisons between schools and families on behavioural questions, and introducing formal spaces of collaboration and exchange between staff, pupils, and parents/carers on the content and implementation of behaviour policies.

It is well-established practice for schools to use individualised behaviour plans to give pupils targets for behavioural achievement tailored to their own needs and records. It is equally important to integrate these more closely with existing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and SEND provision, to capture areas where necessarily universal behaviour policies may not adequately capture individual pupils’ capabilities and needs.

Finally, some schools have gradually begun to move beyond purely internal, confidential behavioural records, introducing a system of regular updates and scores accessible to pupils and parents/carers. These offer a promising foundation for a national comparison measure of behaviour across schools along the same lines as the academic 'value added' comparisons of the Progress 8 calculations, which can tell the story of the behavioural 'improvement journey' of both schools and the pupils who attend them.

The gradual rise of explicit behaviour classes likewise has the potential to grow into a core component of the national curriculum, which can be graded and thus used to supplement pupils' academic results. To help craft this 'in-house' training, schools engage closely with the latest expert understandings of 'best practice' in pupil behaviour management, including through the system of Behaviour Hubs, and there is scope for the Department for Education to set up a dedicated unit to offer stronger tailored support as they do so.

## **STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATORS**

- 1. Behaviour accounts.** School rewards and sanctions systems should be joined up into a live 'behaviour account' that pupils can 'pay into' through good behaviour, and from which the school makes 'withdrawals' when they exhibit poor behaviour. Behaviour guidance should provide an indicative national 'points conversion' framework for different types of reward and sanction (such as reprimands, detentions, or suspensions for negative behaviour, as well as stickers, certificates, or commendations for positive behaviour).
- 2. Behaviour records and behaviour scores.** The 'running tally' of the points surplus/deficit that pupils have on their behaviour account should be converted into a termly 'behaviour score'. This should be made a formal component of each pupil's yearly school results, made available to pupils themselves and their parents/carers alongside their examination performance, to evidence either behavioural consistency, growth, or decline. This 'behaviour score' can then be provided as supplementary information for their later UCAS and job applications.
- 3. Behaviour 5 ranking.** The Ofsted ratings system should be supplemented by a behavioural equivalent of the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures for academic outcomes. Like these, the DfE should introduce a standardised points conversion system for a basket that includes: (1) schools' 'behaviour score' (as an average of its pupils' scores); (2) compliance rates; (3) rates of absence and persistent absence; (4) rates of lateness; and (5) number of temporary or permanent exclusions. Comparison of schools' Behaviour 5 scores at KS2 and KS4 would allow for a similar 'value added' assessment as Progress 8 offers for academic results.
- 4. 'Fair play' prizes and 'foul play' penalties.** Financial rewards and sanctions should be given a greater role in school behaviour management. Schools should be further empowered to issue prizes/bonuses or penalties/fines to pupils and their parents/carers if they show instances of outstanding positive and negative behaviour. These prizes and penalties should be calibrated to pupils' individual behaviour plans and targets. National behaviour guidance should offer clear advice on what a fair, sustainable maximum level for any financial rewards and sanctions should be.

5. **School ID cards.** The DfE should roll out a national mandate for school ID cards, to allow school and non-school authorities to hold pupils to account for their behaviour on school premises and beyond. These cards should be scannable, linked to a smart device app, that allows school staff, parents/carers, and pupils to easily access (and in the case of staff, amend) each pupil's behaviour record and behaviour account.
6. **Behaviour contracts.** The DfE should implement a national mandate for school behaviour contracts, to be signed by pupils and their parents/carers at all schools and academy trusts. These will help hold pupils accountable for their actions at school, integrate the mentorship roles of staff and parents/carers, and make the behavioural expectations pupils face at home and at school more consistent and predictable.
7. **Behaviour teaching.** The DfE should set a mandatory minimum weekly quantity of behaviour-focused teaching, where staff and pupils systematically consider key questions of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour in theory and practice. This can be conducted as separate 'behaviour classes', or integrated into existing curriculum provision, either within National Curriculum subjects or alongside Critical Thinking and Citizenship classes. Behaviour guidance should offer indicative teaching and testing materials to provide a minimum expectation for this learning objective.
8. **Bans and interdictions.** Clearer policies are needed around the items schools are empowered to exclude as inessential to learning, such as smartphones or other electronic devices. Existing policies on staff intervention should be expanded to include clear national guidelines around pupils' use of school space, and to better protect pupils' personal boundaries and circumscribe the limits of physical interaction between them while on school premises.
9. **Behaviour policy councils.** The DfE should mandate all schools and academy trusts to create forums for systematic dialogue between staff, pupils, and parents/carers on the content and implementation of school behaviour policies. These are vital to providing clarity and continuity for pupils about the behavioural expectations they face at home and at school.
10. **School Behaviour Unit.** Government should create a dedicated consultancy and intervention unit with a policy scrutiny function that draws on the expertise of welfare, health, social care, police, and education consultancy services. This Unit should oversee, integrate, and structure the resources for the existing system of Behaviour Hubs. Accountable to Ofsted, it should play the role of a 'think and do tank' empowered to help schools and trusts revise and update their behaviour policies and develop strategies to improve their behaviour performance.

### **TACTICAL ACTION POINTS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS**

1. **Positive socialisation.** School staff should be encouraged to give pupils clear, proportionate praise when they exhibit positive behaviour. This praise can be public or private, formal or informal, and handed out to pupils individually or in groups. It should always draw a precise link between pupils' character and effort and the value their behaviour is embodying.

2. **Positive reflection.** School leadership teams should ensure that dedicated time is set aside in schedules and lesson plans for explanatory behaviour discussions led by the staff. Whenever pupils receive a reward or sanction that is entered on their behaviour record, staff should find structured opportunities to hold explanatory conversations with pupils and parents/carers to help reinforce expectations about positive as well as negative behaviour.
3. **Behaviour celebrations.** Schools should introduce half-termly, termly, and annual 'summary events' to mark pupils' behaviour over the preceding period. The aim is to acknowledge pupils' individual and collective efforts to reflect the attitudes and values the school expects of them in their actions, with praise and other rewards for 'best behaved' and 'most improved' pupils and class groups.
4. **'Behaviour buddy' system.** Schools should expand the 'first responder' model of 'monitor' or 'prefect' systems beyond just reporting or issuing low-level sanctions for negative behaviour. Senior pupils should also act as sources of peer support and accountability, acting as 'ports of call' for pupils who are having trouble with behaviour expectations, or as a 'support person' who can accompany pupils to some disciplinary meetings to ensure greater transparency.
5. **Reconciling behaviour and SEND policy.** Schools' personal behaviour plans should explicitly take into account contextual factors that might impact pupils' behaviour, recognising that the experiences they have outside the classroom (on or off school premises) can strongly impact their performance within it. Schools must clarify areas of separation and overlap between EHC and personal behaviour plans, add an explicit behavioural component to SEND provision, and make behavioural policies more sensitive to pupils' SEND requirements.
6. **Behavioural signalling.** School leaderships should develop clear systems of pre-disciplinary, pre-intervention signalling, in the form of 'yellow cards' and 'red cards' to signal that negative behaviour has been noted, and 'green cards' to signal that pupils are making exceptional effort towards positive behaviour. Awards of 'cards' should be included as part of pupils' behavioural records, and integrated into pupils' 'behaviour account' via a clear 'exchange rate' between 'cards' and 'points'.
7. **'Conditional confiscation' as a behavioural sanction.** Schools should institute policies where items that are not essential to the school curriculum can be confiscated as a form of 'collateral' against pupils' behaviour. Pupils who exhibit negative behaviour must demonstrate that they meet the attitudes and values the school expects of them to 'earn back' access to these items on school premises.
8. **Enrichment trips as a behavioural reward.** Schools should provide systematic opportunities for place-based visits and outings for pupils who exhibit either consistently positive or greatly improved behaviour. These should be supplementary to the school curriculum, and schools, academy trusts, and LEAs should partner with local businesses, Further and Higher Education institutions, cultural bodies and sites, public service providers, and local authorities. This would help schools make best use of local facilities, and cultivate 'pride in place' in their pupils.

- 9. Behaviour support staff.** School leaderships cannot expect teaching and administrative staff to take on all current and future responsibilities for mentorship and behaviour management. Instead, they should introduce designated full-time behaviour support staff with a dedicated career path within the school and wider sector. These staff can liaise between the school and pupils' families on positive and negative behaviour questions, taking the pressure off existing teachers and administrators.
- 10. Expand teacher training.** Schools should provide staff with the opportunity for on-the-job or part-time continuing professional development. As well as the latest 'best practice' in course delivery, curriculum development, and behaviour management, training programmes should be supplemented with insights from media, rhetorical, and communications training. This will help staff minimise ambiguity in their communication with pupils, and play a stronger, more proactive part as positive role models.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

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In this report ResPublica examines the range of approaches to behaviour management across the English non-selective state school system, and how a comprehensive awareness of ‘best practice’ across the sector can help improve the UK’s mediocre position in global rankings for learning outcomes.

The specific aims of this report are to better understand how effective behaviour policies in state schools can lead to better learning outcomes for their pupils, and the scope to develop a series of recommendations for reforms to UK schools policy whereby clear and innovative behaviour guidelines can be implemented via national frameworks across the state school sector. It examines the learning outcomes and contextual characteristics of the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 non-faith non-selective state schools in the 2022 Progress 8 rankings, and closely analyses the unique features of the behavioural policies in operation at the top-performing 20 non-selective schools to establish some parameters of ‘best practice’ for effective behaviour management.

The report assesses what is needed for future reforms to schools policy priorities as well as national and regional school behaviour policy guidance, including: creating an equivalent of the Progress 8 calculations for behaviour, taking into account pupil and school behaviour records; targeting schools funding at boosting the average pay of state school teachers; creating personal ‘behaviour accounts’ for all pupils to act as a ‘live tracker’ of their behaviour performance; creating a dedicated career path for Behaviour Support Staff to take the pressure off teaching and administrative school staff; and creating Behaviour Policy Councils within schools to encourage constructive dialogue about behaviour policies between staff, pupils, and parents/carers.

The report makes strategic recommendations to legislators and outlines tactical action points for school leadership teams that can help to integrate strong, innovative approaches to pupil behaviour management as a vital component of the UK’s mainstream education system.



## 2. POLICY CONTEXT: THE LONG NEGLECT OF SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR IN EDUCATION POLICY

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The debate over the relationship between behavioural standards and learning outcomes is set against the background of several long-standing education policy concerns. These concern the UK's largely static and unimpressive placing in global rankings of learning outcomes, and the long-running gap between education research on the link from pupil behaviour to learning outcomes and the degree of importance that has been attributed to behavioural issues in UK education policy up to this point. This chapter overviews the policy context for this report, and outlines the approach this report takes to examining the relationship between pupil behaviour and academic success.

### *2.1 SITUATING THE LINK BETWEEN LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR*

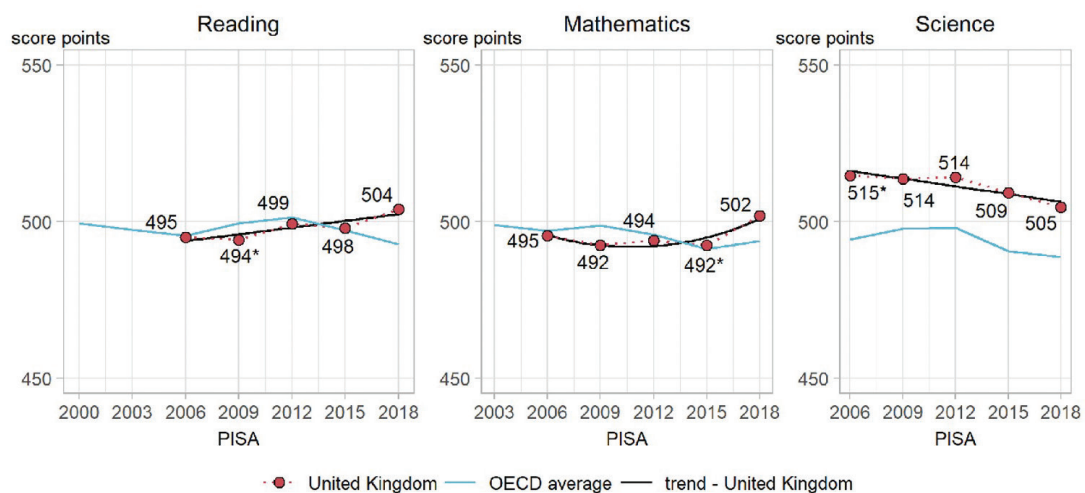
#### *2.1.1 THE UK'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION*

From an international perspective, the UK's performance in school learning outcomes offers a somewhat mixed picture. In the 2018 PISA rankings, the UK sits slightly above the average for OECD countries in its score points for core school subjects of reading (504, OECD average 487), mathematics (502, average 489), and science (505, average 489).<sup>1</sup> It lags far behind typical high performers such as Canada, Estonia, Singapore, and South Korea, but lies largely on par with other major economies such as Australia, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and the US.



But this superficially favourable position is a very recent development, and belies a number of concerning trends. In reading and mathematics, the UK's past performance has historically been broadly stagnant, and has consistently lain at or below the OECD average prior to 2015 (see fig. 1). In science, where the UK has most clearly outperformed other OECD countries, its scores are noticeably declining. Since 2006, the UK's share of top-performing pupils in science has plummeted from 14.1% to 10% (OECD average 7%); this is only partly mitigated by the rise in its share of top-performing pupils in reading from 7.6% to 11% (OECD average 9%).

FIG. 1: TRENDS IN PERFORMANCE IN READING, MATHEMATICS, AND SCIENCE (SOURCE: OECD)



The UK is also having limited success in addressing socioeconomic inequalities. In 2018, socioeconomically advantaged pupils outperformed their disadvantaged peers by 80 score points in reading (OECD average 89), a fairly modest decrease from a socioeconomic status performance gap of 92 in 2009 (OECD average 87). 30% of pupils enrolled at disadvantaged schools face shortages in staffing and materials that inhibit their schools' capacity to provide adequate instruction at least to some extent (OECD average 34%), compared with only 13% of pupils at advantaged schools (OECD average 18%).

More worryingly, the UK performs below the OECD average on pupil well-being and school climate. Only 53% of UK pupils are satisfied with their lives (OECD average 67%), while 27% are bullied at school at least a few times per month (OECD average 23%), and 16% have felt lonely at school (OECD average 16%). This tallies with an unusually competitive environment at UK schools, with 59% of UK pupils reporting that their schoolmates cooperate with each other (OECD average 62%), while a remarkably high 66% see one another as competitors (OECD average 50%). Together, these paint the picture of a somewhat depressing 'sink or swim' climate at UK schools.

Finally, the UK faces a troubling record for school attendance and classroom disruption. 19% of UK pupils missed at least one day of school in the two weeks prior to the PISA test (OECD average 21%), while 39% had arrived late in the same period at least once (OECD average 48%). At the same time, a full 25% of pupils face classrooms where, in every or most lessons, teachers have to wait a long time for pupils to quiet down (OECD average 26%). While the UK is slightly—or, in the case of school lateness, significantly—outperforming the OECD average, the absolute figures indicate persistent problems in behavioural management.

### **2.1.2 LINKING BEHAVIOUR WITH LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

There is extensive evidence that high behavioural standards are positively associated with better learning outcomes. This is especially true of classroom disruption, which has a clear negative effect on pupil achievement.<sup>2</sup> In the 2018 PISA study, UK pupils in frequently disrupted classrooms scored as much as 30 points lower in reading than those in classes where disruption happens only rarely.<sup>3</sup> Classroom disruption also acts as a ‘gateway’ to more serious behavioural infractions, with 43% of all suspensions and 35% of all permanent exclusion cases in 2021–22 attributed to disruptive behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

Minimising disruption has intuitive beneficial effects for both teaching and learning. It gives teachers greater time to focus on curriculum delivery rather than behavioural management, and to pursue diverse teaching strategies tailored to the needs of pupils and the topics at hand. At the same time, it allows pupils to concentrate more easily on their work.<sup>5</sup> This, in turn, is reflected in pupils’ own perceptions of the classroom climate, which is positively correlated with their learning performance.<sup>6</sup>

Alongside disruption, one of the most significant influences on learning outcomes are school attendance and absence. The DfE has found that pupils with 100% attendance records at key stage 4 are almost two times more likely to achieve 5 or more GCSEs than pupils with 85–90% attendance.<sup>7</sup> Attendance rates also have a clear impact on pupils’ wider life prospects, with 90% of young offenders in the criminal justice system exhibiting persistent absence while at school.<sup>8</sup>

One of the most prominent current concerns in education policy is the ‘attention crisis’ caused by the widespread use of smartphone/technological devices, which has the effect of undermining pupils’ development of routine and self-discipline. Research has focused on three aspects of the disruption that can result from the use of mobile devices: the sources themselves (e.g., ringing, texting, social applications), the targets of their disruption (reading, attending classes), and the subject identities they exacerbate or challenge (gender, culture, personality).

As a result, much of the scholarly and policy discussion has examined how and why mobile devices impair learning, as well as what can be done to prevent the distraction that mobiles can cause.<sup>9</sup> There is some recognition that mobile devices can provide learning benefits if they are properly integrated into teaching

methods through 'Bring Your Own Device' approaches. Meanwhile, education institutions of all levels have developed a slightly *ad hoc* range of mobile phone/device policies, but can sometimes struggle to enforce them effectively. The upshot is that mobile devices still occupy a somewhat nebulous position in the classroom, neither fully banned nor fully integrated into the learning process.

One contextual factor that must be taken into account is the role of schools' and pupils' relative socioeconomic advantage or disadvantage. Socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils benefit more than their advantaged peers from an orderly classroom environment.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that school behaviour policies can play a vital role in redressing socioeconomic learning outcome inequalities, as well as factoring into wider strategies of social mobility and EDI.

Meanwhile, advantaged schools tend to have a more positive disciplinary climate than disadvantaged schools.<sup>11</sup> This, in turn, makes pupils more likely to attend than to skip school, forming a virtuous cycle in improving behaviour.<sup>12</sup> Crucially, this improvement is only partly attributable to schools' internal policies, which suggests an important supportive role for investment in school staffing and materials.

## **2.2 SCHOOLS POLICY REFORM IN THE UK**

### **2.2.1 DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR LEGISLATION SINCE 2000**

Over the last 30 years, school behaviour has featured only intermittently in the major items of schools and secondary education legislation, many of which have prioritised questions of school organisation, choice, selection, and oversight. The first key intervention came with the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998, whose 'landmark' behavioural policy feature was the abolition of corporal punishment, but which also set in place the regulatory framework for setting attendance targets in maintained schools. This move was designed to curb pupil absences, which remained persistently over 7% in the late 1990s, before starting to sink to nearer 6% by the mid-2000s.<sup>13</sup>

This was followed by the Education Act 2002, which broadly set out to increase schools' autonomy over their teaching approaches and institutional policies. On the behavioural front specifically, it sought to clarify the process around pupil exclusion and attendance targets. It empowered headteachers of maintained schools and teachers in charge of pupil referral units to exclude pupils for fixed periods or permanently on disciplinary grounds, with regulatory provisions for the processes to review (reconsider or quash) exclusion decisions and reinstate excluded pupils.<sup>14</sup> The Act also added language to the 1998 provisions around pupil absence to systematise the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absences.<sup>15</sup>

The final piece of education legislation from the last Labour government was the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which was framed as a radical intervention to boost standards and foster school choice for parents

and pupils. Its intended content was laid out in the 2005 white paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools For All*, including legislation on discipline informed by the Practitioners' Group on School Behaviour and Discipline.<sup>16</sup> Its key elements were:

- Expanding teachers' rights to discipline pupils in the face of parental challenges to their authority, including searches for illicit weapons and restraining misbehaving pupils using reasonable force, and reforming exclusion appeals panels.
- Introducing a statutory obligation for schools to have clear sets of behavioural rules and sanctions, especially to combat bullying (including removal from the group, withdrawal of break/lunchtime privileges, detention, and withholding participation in extra-curricular school activities), to properly monitor and manage absence, and to record all exclusions.
- Using 'parenting contracts' and 'parenting orders' to make parents take responsibility for excluded pupils' behaviour, including supervising their schoolwork, fines if they are found in a public place during school hours, and mandatory presence at reintegration interviews.
- Requiring schools and local authorities to make on- and off-site fulltime provisions for long-term suspended and permanently excluded pupils, through multi-school partnerships that use pooled funding from partner schools' delegated budgets and devolved LA funding.
- Making discipline a key factor in evaluating school performance.

Of these elements, all but the final one were eventually included in the 2006 Act.<sup>17</sup> The role of discipline in assessing school performance, however, only appeared in the extreme case of the criteria for intervention in maintained schools. Specifically, the Act provided for interventions where "breakdown of discipline" threatened either "a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed" or "the safety of pupils or staff", and hence led "standards of performance of pupils at the school" to become "unacceptably low".<sup>18</sup> In other words, **school behaviour remained a binary cut-off rather than a genuine scalar measure by which schools' disciplinary performance could be 'graded' in a more granular way.** There has been insufficient consideration given for how to devise a school-level indicator for pupil behaviour, using (e.g.) anonymous data from confidential surveys of pupils, teachers (except for school leadership teams), and parents.

The Coalition government's first major item of education legislation, the Education Act 2011, concentrated its disciplinary provisions in two main areas: further clarifying the rights of staff to search pupils for prohibited items, and refining the review process for exclusion decisions.<sup>19</sup> Both are wholly in keeping with the longer landscape of behavioural policy in the UK education system, which has been characterised by an overwhelmingly negative focus on issues such as exclusion, bullying, restraining, and confiscating illicit possessions. **What has been missing so far is an equally detailed engagement with requirements for 'good' behaviour, and a national framework for positive standards and policies that schools might be expected to implement.** This is out of kilter with the increased focus on 'positive ethos' and rewards operated by many schools and trusts within the parameters of the policy requirements introduced in 2006.

## **2.2.2 RECENT SCHOOLS POLICY DEVELOPMENTS**

### **PROGRESS 8**

In 2015, the Coalition government introduced a major policy shift in how schools' academic performance is calculated. The previous focus on the proportions of students achieving A\*–C grades at GCSE, which treated the C/D borderline as, in effect, a binary cut-off between school success and failure, was replaced by a measure that tracks the relative improvement each pupil at a school undergoes between their Key Stage 2 (KS2) testing at age 11 and their GCSE results at age 16. The aim was to create a measurement framework where "those schools that will be rewarded are those that push each pupil to reach their potential".<sup>20</sup>

This is the Progress 8 framework, which rests on a calculation that integrates several subsidiary scores. The first is the KS2 attainment figure, taken from the tests pupils take in feeder primary schools and modified into a numerical value. The second is the Attainment 8 figure, based on a summation of the points scored by pupils in three baskets of results:

- Basket 1: Mathematics; English (both double weighted).
- Basket 2: 3 GCSE subjects from the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) list: English Language **and** English Literature; Mathematics; **either** Combined Science **or** three of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, and Physics; **either** a Modern Foreign Language **or** an Ancient Foreign Language; **either** Geography **or** History.
- Basket 3: 3 GCSE subjects (including EBacc subjects) or any other DfE-approved non-GCSE qualifications.

Between 2016 and 2018, the points were awarded by an equivalence scale for A\*–G grades; from 2019, GCSEs results were awarded on a 1–9 scale. The Progress 8 score is achieved by subtracting the Attainment 8 score from the KS2 attainment score, and dividing by 10 to give either a positive (educational progress) or negative (educational falling back) score. Schools that score an average of -0.25 are held to be 'coasting', and the floor at which intervention is authorised is a score of -0.5.

The Progress 8 framework offers an arguably fairer way to assess and compare the educational benefit that accrues to pupils from attending one particular school rather than another. But these measures of the 'value added' by a school to its pupils between KS2 and GCSE only take into account the 'final outcomes' of academic results. **The calculations do not offer any way to measure the separate but equally important 'value added' by schools on the question of behavioural improvement—in terms of compliance, absence/attendance, or exclusion rates, or other criteria of pupils' behavioural 'growth' over the course of their time at a given school.**

## THE LEVELLING UP AGENDA

The far-reaching strategy to 'level up' the UK, announced in February 2022, included improvements in school performance as part of its vision. Its fundamental vision for pre-18 education rests on the view that outstanding school outcomes rely on a confluence of positive investments and improvements in several areas: infrastructure, workforce skills and experience, innovative ideas and resources, strong communities and trusting relationships, and good leadership and capacity.

The primary levelling up tool designed to foster joined-up growth in these areas is the launch of 55 new Education Investment Areas. These EIAs are designed to cover the third of Local Authorities in England with the weakest educational attainment, as well as additional LAs that contain an Opportunity Area, or were previously identified as having the highest potential for rapid improvement. The Levelling Up White Paper envisaged the introduction of new 16–19 free schools targeted in high priority EIAs (also based on calculations of demographic need), including new specialist 16–19 maths schools, along with a more general expansion of strong multi-academy trusts into low-performing areas.

The White Paper also announced the development of a network of school hubs and new pilot programmes intended to improve school attendance. **This is an important development, and should be pursued urgently in a place-based way through the new EIAs, in conjunction with the existing Local Education Authorities. Their remit should also be expanded to address wider behavioural issues beyond school absence, including disruption and bullying, dangerous and risky behaviour, and the maintenance of clear interpersonal pupil–pupil boundaries. Their approach should also be proactive rather than reactive, empowered to make positive 'best practice' recommendations and (if necessary) interventions in school behavioural policies.**

The 'levelling up' education agenda also covers a number of specific proposals to increase the quality of learning provision available to pupils:

- The introduction of a UK National Academy, in the form of a digital education service developed jointly with schools and experts.
- Refocusing university Access and Participation Plans to ensure close work between FE and HE providers and schools to raise pupils' educational standards (in particular to support those from disadvantaged backgrounds), such as providing tutoring, summer schools, or aligning needs and priorities for curriculum development.
- Pledging a National Youth Guarantee, giving every young person in England access to regular out-of-school activities by 2025: adventures away from home, opportunities to volunteer, expanding the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, and increasing Cadet Force participation by boosting links between participating private and state schools.

All three of these proposals essentially rely on the principle that schools can benefit from the perspective of external expertise in developing and refining their curriculum offerings. **By the same token, the National Academy, school–FE–HE collaboration, and partnerships with out-of-school activity providers should also be given a more explicit behavioural component.** This could include integrating the principles of ethos statements and codes of conduct from other institutions into the values cultivated in each school, either horizontally (between schools), or vertically (from employers, community bodies, or other professional institutions). It may also include integrating the expectations of future professionalism into the rationales that schools give their pupils about why they expect them to conform to or avoid certain behaviours.

On the behavioural front, the White Paper acknowledged the need for better coordination on a number of factors that are key to creating optimal learning situations. With the Supporting Families programme, it pledged to pursue a cross-agency approach to helping families facing the challenges of unemployment, poor school attendance, poor health conditions, crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic violence. This feeds into a number of other ‘beyond the school gates’ interventions, including around improving children’s social care and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services, Family Hubs, Start for Life services. Lastly, it announced an Early Career Framework entitlement for teachers’ professional development to ensure that staff can access the highest-quality, most up-to-date training. **All of these proposals are important and helpful developments in improving the conditions within which school-age learning takes place. However, the details around all of them remain underspecified.**

The final set of proposals in the ‘levelling up’ agenda concern education funding. These are:

- Reviewing the National Funding Formula used to allocate money across schools in England, with the aim of replacing the ‘postcode lottery’.
- Allocating a total of an extra £4bn per year to school funding, amounting to 5.4–6.1% extra funding per pupil (depending on the LEA).
- A system of retention payments designed to help schools keep hold of the best teachers in high-priority subjects.

As yet, these remain underspecified, in particular regarding the intended uses to which this additional funding is meant to be put: increased staffing, school infrastructure investment, and academic, SEND, or behavioural provisions.

The hope for what the education component of ‘levelling up’ can achieve is encapsulated by two of the ‘missions’ outlined in the White Paper:

- For 90% of primary school children to achieve the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths by 2030.
- For the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas to be increased by over a third.

But there is also a more general aspiration of the White Paper that has not yet been explicitly connected to education policy, namely the generation of 'pride in place'. The ultimate aim of 'levelling up' is to strengthen the sense of belonging and rootedness among residents of each local area. The idea of 'pride in place' is to boost local people's satisfaction with their urban centres and engagement with their local culture and community, focusing on (1) regeneration, (2) communities, and (3) culture, heritage, and sport. The White Paper earmarked £2.6bn of Shared Prosperity Fund support to bolstering 'pride in place' projects across the UK.

'Pride in place' is generally seen in terms of national, regional, or local identity, but there is no equivalent as yet for other group identities (such as school identity). **'Pride in place values' are a vital addition to the existing expectation for schools to cultivate 'British values' among their pupils. In the same vein, more must be done to explicitly link the activities of pupils in their schools to the resources, opportunities, and identities of the communities in which they are situated.**

### THE SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER

The Schools White Paper, released in March 2022, contained a number of dedicated proposals that aim to help Government better understand the wider factors underlying poor behaviour, including mental health, with the aim of offering better targeted support especially to pupils from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society. This was tied to an explicit and straightforward aim that by 2030, "all children will be taught in calm, orderly, safe, and supportive schools with high levels of attendance".

The central proposal in the White Paper is to revise national Behaviour in Schools guidance and statutory Suspension and Permanent Exclusion guidance to provide school leaders with more practical support. The priorities in these guidance revisions are:

- An orientation towards positive behaviour culture, shaped by the DfE report *Creating a Culture: How school leaders can optimise behaviour*.<sup>21</sup>
- A new focus on behaviour as a skill to be taught and viewed as a curriculum subject, with a view that behavioural teaching is an ongoing process that is 'never done'.
- A new focus on teaching and not telling behaviour, including clear explanations of the expectations staff have of pupils.



- The creation of a detailed charter setting out the expected models and concepts of behaviour pupils are to abide by.
- Ensuring that sanctions are consistent and predictable, and rewards are personable and proportionate.
- A clear targeting of early intervention to manage challenging behaviour and needs, in part through reforming SEND alternative provision, to reduce preventable exclusions.

Many of these priorities have also been captured in the DfE's *Trainee Teacher Behavioural Toolkit*, a live document outlining key principles of proactive and behaviour management that builds on the 2015 Carter Review of initial teacher training.<sup>22</sup> The toolkit emphasises some of the most important component of effective behaviour management in the classroom:

- Establishing clear norms (and only exceptional, logical, and consistent exceptions).
- Routines around assemblies, class entry and dismissal, corridor conduct, transitions between activities, and obtaining silence.
- Clear and immediate consequences for actions (i.e., sanctions and rewards).
- Thorough knowledge of the school behaviour policy.
- Mental preparation for the most common behaviour problems ('scripting').
- Regular and explicit revisiting of norms, routines, and consequences ('reboots').
- A willingness to ask for support and assistance, using clear escalation frameworks.
- Persistent effort to develop relationships of trust with pupils (especially vulnerable or challenging ones), based on mutual treatment with dignity.

Overall, this reflects a belated and welcome shift away from the 'negative only' focus of much education policy legislation up to this point. The White Paper acknowledges that its proposals have to tread a careful line between meeting the needs of pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour and meeting the needs of the school community at large. **There is scope to specify in greater detail what role behavioural teaching will play in pupils' learning outcomes, as well as joining up more systematically the sanctions and rewards in operation in each school, and the boundaries and overlaps in responsibility between (e.g.) SEND and behavioural provision at the practical level.**

The White Paper announced a raft of new statutory requirements: on schools to publish their attendance policies; and on schools, LAs, and LA attendance services to work together to reengage children who are 'severely absent' (defined as missing more than 50% of their school sessions). **This is a welcome development, but there is a risk that simply asking schools to craft and publish ever more statutorily**

obligated policies creates an increasingly unwieldy set of policy and procedure documents that impose an ever greater burden on teaching and support staff. This can also come at the cost of formulating intuitively joined-up policies that respond sensitively to each school's particular context and requirements.

The need for better training and support is a significant component of the behaviour policies the White Paper outlines. This includes embedding behaviour management training across teacher training and development programmes, with the help of Behaviour Hubs that match schools with other 'Lead schools' in their areas who have a strong record in instilling a positive behavioural culture, to help them learn to create cultures that support good behaviour.<sup>23</sup> These Hubs are a 1- or 2-year programme of DfE-funded bespoke training, support, and advice that schools participate in through self-referral via applications by senior leadership teams.

The Behaviour Hubs are constructed in a voluntary, decentralised way, which means that they stop short of a national system of mandatory interventions. This reflects the fact that the DfE has moved away from a 'command and control' approach to school interventions, towards producing guidance and offering support through hubs and training. **But this also means that, aside from the existing system of Ofsted inspections and their resulting 'broad-brush' ratings ('Outstanding', 'Good', 'Requires Improvement', 'Inadequate', and 'Special Measures'), there is no way for Government to hold schools to account on their behaviour standards, seen not just in terms of outcomes but also the methods and processes of maintaining and improving them.**

The White Paper also proposes that all state school teachers and leaders have access to a fully-funded training scholarship to undertake a National Professional Qualification in Behaviour and Culture. This is intended to go in tandem with introducing more effective continuous professional development courses for primary and secondary school teachers. **It should be clarified that this provision should be made available to staff at any and all career stages, under the lifelong modularised learning structure put in place by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022.**

The White Paper also envisages longer-term specialist support to help excluded pupils access good quality education and reintegrate into mainstream education. It aims to rely on the resources and materials of the Education Endowment Foundation and Youth Endowment Fund to deliver off-the-shelf school attendance interventions. **However, given how important it is to find alternative ways to limit fixed-time and permanent exclusions and the negative impact they have on pupils' learning, the DfE should consider introducing its own dedicated unit to act as an intervention and consultancy body, focusing on improving school behaviour and the link to learning outcomes.**

The curriculum dimensions of the White Paper also potentially lend themselves to improving behavioural policy guidance. It proposes creating a national curriculum body that works with teachers to co-design, create, and refresh packages of optional, free, and adaptable digital curriculum resources, drawing on the

expertise of schools, trusts, subject associations, national centres of excellence, and educational publishers. The specific aim is to improve the uptake of EBacc subjects, especially among disadvantaged children, but also to improve access to high-quality language teaching by creating a network of modern foreign language hubs. A broader parallel aim in the White Paper is to address the lack of consistency in school opening hours and extra-curricular offers, although it is less clear what the national mechanism for this is intended to be. **In light of the aim to treat behaviour as a curriculum subject, it is imperative to include behavioural skills in the remit and outputs of this national curriculum. In addition, there is a strong case for introducing an analogous national behaviour policy body along the same lines.**

Many of the proposals in the White Paper rely on a portfolio of targeted data-collection strategies, with the ultimate aim of driving up attendance and helping agencies to protect vulnerable children. One part of this is a national data system designed to better understand individual attendance patterns, including a register for children not in school, which will act as an incentive to modernise the rules on how attendance and absence are recorded. Another part of this is an annual National Behaviour Survey that aims to better understand what pupils, parents/carers, teaching staff, and school leaders think of behaviour and wellbeing in their schools.

These are welcome developments, and it is vital for the DfE to consider which areas of school policy (e.g., behavioural, SEND, EDI) hold sole or joint responsibility for implementing the findings from this data-collection. This particularly concerns the different reasons behind pupil's attendance pattern (e.g., health, out-of-school challenges, truancy), which need to be sensitively recorded and differentiated in both the data-collection and policy treatments. The National Behaviour Survey should ensure it explicitly addresses staff perceptions of classroom stability, pupil self-discipline, job satisfaction, and personal well-being in a scalar way, in order to create a more granular picture of the situation in individual schools and across the country than just a binary 'cut-off' between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'.

## **2.3 THE APPROACH IN THIS REPORT**

### **2.3.1 OBJECT OF ANALYSIS**

This report examines the behavioural policies, learning outcomes, and contextual institutional characteristics of 150 UK state schools. These schools are sampled from the 2,491 non-faith non-selective schools that were awarded Progress 8 scores in 2022—the most recent data available before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The report's analysis of behavioural policies focuses on the 20 comprehensive schools (i.e., excluding faith and selective/grammar schools) that were awarded the best Progress 8 scores. To supplement this sample, the report conducts contextual assessments of an additional 130 schools to give a larger sample of 150, which together cover 146,745 pupils (24,684 pupils at the end of Key Stage 4), and which represent the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 non-faith, non-selective schools in the 2022 Progress 8 rankings.

To examine the top 20 schools' behavioural policies, the report focuses on the disciplinary and sanction strategies they operate for poor behaviour. This includes the range of punishment scales stretching from warnings and detentions up to suspension and permanent exclusion. However, in light of the White Paper's focus on positive behavioural standards reinforcement, the report also examines the reward strategies these schools have implemented for good behaviour, including reward systems, privileges, and other forms of special recognition. It pays particular attention to policies around attendance, truancy, and lateness, as well as the use of smartphones and other mobile devices.

At the same time, the report also broadens its focus to evaluate other statutory policies which these schools have developed in areas of overlap with the topic of behavioural standards. This includes first and foremost codes of conduct for pupils (as opposed to teachers and other staff members) and values/ethos statements intended to apply to the school as a whole—or, in the case of multi-academy trusts, across all trust members. It also includes the pastoral aspects of SEND provision, special arrangements for fees and other charges not related to teaching, and how the schools deal with pupils who have a history of disruption to their family/domestic caregiving situation or who face other external sources of disadvantage.

To assess the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 schools' learning outcomes, the report draws on the data provided online for the Government's Progress 8 school rankings. As a point of additional comparison, the data for the top 20 selective schools was also collected to help refine the focus on the top 20 comprehensive schools. The primary measure is the Progress 8 score, since the main focus of the analysis is how far behavioural policies enable schools to 'add value' educationally to their pupils' academic achievements. This is supplemented by the other measures provided in the data: the proportion of pupils entering study for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc); the proportion of pupils staying in education or entering employment; the proportion achieving grade 5+ in English and mathematics GCSEs; the schools' Attainment 8 score; and the schools' EBacc average point score.

For these 150 schools' contextual institutional characteristics, the report examines statistics relating to pupil management policies and school staff. On the pupil side, it looks at: total pupil numbers; the proportion of pupils with SEND support; the proportion with a dedicated SEND Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan; the proportion whose first language is not English; the proportion eligible for free school meals; the rate of overall school absence; and the rate of persistent absence. On the staff side, the report examines: the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teachers; the average number of pupils per FTE teacher; the average FTE teacher salary; the number of FTE teaching assistants (TAs); and the number of FTE support staff.

The report restricts its analysis to only those aspects of schools' educational models over which schools themselves can exercise a degree of control. Other key determinants of school performance include geographical location within the UK (regional, size of conurbation), the availability of services (such as alternative provision, educational psychologists, Pupil Referral Units, Speech and Language services, English

as an Additional Language services, targeted youth support, and attendance officers), and the capacity for curricular diversity. **These are often intercorrelated, reflecting wider questions of deprivation and opportunity across the UK, and should be the subject of further analysis in future.**

### **2.3.2 METHODOLOGY**

This report uses a mixed-methods methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather evidence on issues surrounding pupil behaviour and learning outcomes at these 150 schools. The primary sources of qualitative data are the policy documents which schools are statutorily obligated to formulate on pupil behaviour, code of conduct, attendance and absence, SEND, charging and remissions, exclusion, looked after children, and recognition and rewards, available on the websites of schools or their 'parent' trusts. For each of the top 20 schools, these include (where these are disaggregated into separate documents): their behaviour policy; attendance policy; absence policy; exclusion policy; anti-bullying policy; mobile devices policy; recognition and rewards policy; code of conduct; values statement; charging and remissions policy; SEND policy; and looked after children policy.

The strategies outlined in these policy documents are coded into one of seven dimensions of behavioural standards inculcation. These are as follows (listed here along with some examples of specific behavioural measures):

- Disciplinary: punishment categories and scales, monitor systems, pupil–pupil and pupil–staff accountability.
- Regulation: special duties, special privileges, status sanctions, status rewards.
- Financial: fines, penalties, 'fair play' prizes, bonuses.
- Communication: codes of conduct, ethos/values statements, explicit instructions, 'proper behaviour' reminders, warning systems.
- Pastoral care: behavioural mentorship, individually-tailored behaviour targets, behavioural components to SEND provision.
- Training: 'proper behaviour' classes, behavioural records, behavioural grading metrics.
- Ceremonial: regular 'proper behaviour' tasks and routines, special behavioural gestures or signals, meaningful behavioural symbols.

The top 20 schools are then compared in order to identify any clear commonalities in their strategies towards fostering high behavioural standards.

For the quantitative side of the analysis, the majority of the data is provided in either absolute values (of pupils or staff, or of £ sterling in the case of teacher salary) or as percentage shares. The exceptions to this are the Progress 8, Attainment 8, and EBacc average point scores, which are calculated according to the

DfE-devised scales outlined earlier. It is important to stress that the contextual information presented here is intended to show some indicative trends in the relationship between educational outcomes and school characteristics. A full assessment would require a multivariate analysis of the complex correlations between these and other factors. This report can help shape the testing hypotheses for future analysis along these lines.

The evidence provided by these two approaches is supplemented by additional information gathered through a semi-structured roundtable involving a number of stakeholders, including the leaderships of a cross-section of the top 20 non-selective schools, in particular the staff members in charge of determining their behavioural policies, and education specialists with experience in schools beyond the 150 the report examines. This roundtable took the form of deep conversations designed to understand different schools' behavioural approaches, such as the available range of punishments, expected rates of pupil compliance, and reference to case studies to illustrate each approach in action.

### 2.3.3 AIM

This report sets out to conduct rigorous research into the origins and impact of negative pupil behaviour, which remains a relatively underdeveloped area of education-related research in the UK. It addresses this glaring lacuna in the existing body of scholarship by providing an outline of impactful behavioural 'best practice' policies that are able to strengthen educational outcomes in the UK. To do this, it explores how far the schools with the most successful learning outcomes can attribute their success to unique, replicable approaches aimed at minimising poor behaviour.

This research intends to play an integral part in the development of a broader policy agenda that includes targeted interventions to address negative behaviour among pupils—proactive initiatives that help to create a more stable and secure educational environment for both pupils and staff. It contributes to the wider discussion around the effects of poor behaviour on pupils' educational performance, the key dynamics surrounding young people's behaviour at schools, and how in-school disruption affects the day-to-day lives of pupils and staff alike.



### 3. LEARNING OUTCOMES IN CONTEXT: COMPARING SCHOOL RESULTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

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The Government's rankings data covers all UK state schools, faith and non-faith, selective and non-selective. Its main data points are the schools' Ofsted grades and their overall Progress 8 scores, along with a raft of more granular academic and other contextualising information. For the purposes of this report, the Progress 8 data and other contributory data such as Attainment 8 and EBacc scores are the primary way of assessing pupils' learning outcomes at the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 non-faith, non-selective schools in our sample. The remaining data breaks down fairly neatly into three categories: further learning outcome statistics; pupil characteristics; and staff characteristics. This chapter compares the results for these 150 schools in our sample, commenting on standout performances by individual schools where relevant, and drawing out useful insights and conclusions for future policy directions.

#### **3.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The central plank of this analysis of learning outcomes are the schools' Progress 8 scores, as well as the Attainment 8 and EBacc scores that form part of the Progress 8 calculation. For the other learning statistics, the Government data provides the proportion of pupils at each school who achieve Grade 5+ in English and maths GCSEs, the proportion of pupils entered for the EBacc, and the proportion who stay in education or enter employment after leaving school.

### 3.1.1 OUTCOME SCORES

#### PROGRESS 8

The key starting observation here must be that non-selective schools perform extremely well in the Progress 8 measures, and at the upper end outperform their selective competitors. Of the top 50 state schools in England in the 2022 rankings, 11 are selective schools (10 girls-only, 1 boys-only), and the remaining 39 are non-selective (12 girls-only, 27 mixed). The 20 highest-performing schools are all non-selective, and at the upper end—such as Michaela Community School (Progress 8 score 2.27), The Steiner Academy Hereford (2.15), and Bentley Wood High School (1.34)—score significantly higher than the top-placed selective school—Altrincham Grammar School for Girls (1.06).

FIG. 2: TOP 20 NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)

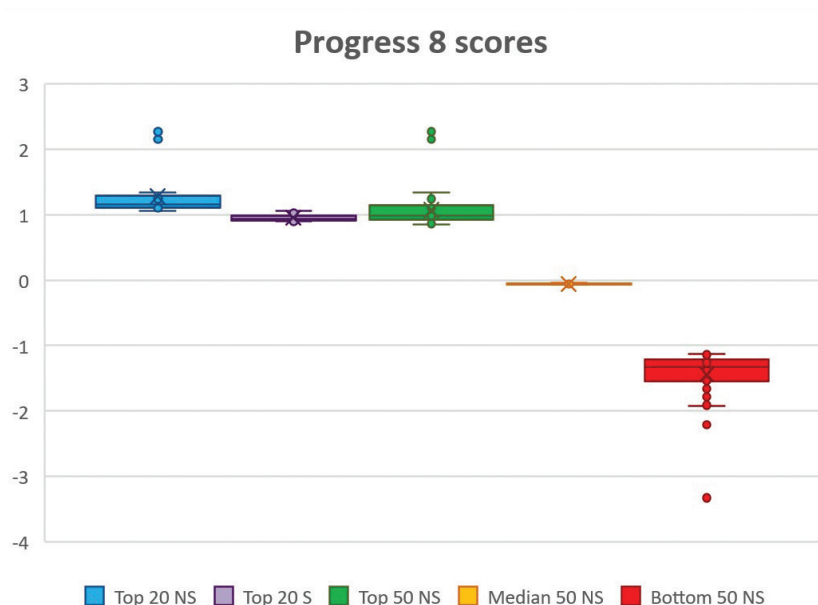
TOP 20 NON-SELECTIVE SCHOOLS	PROGRESS 8 SCORE	TOP 20 SELECTIVE SCHOOLS	PROGRESS 8 SCORE
Michaela Community School	2.27	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	1.06
The Steiner Academy Hereford	2.15	Newstead Wood School	1.05
Bentley Wood High School	1.34	Dr Challoner's High School	1.02
Ealing Fields High School	1.32	Dartford Grammar School for Girls	1.01
The Hurlingham Academy	1.3	Wirral Grammar School for Girls	0.99
Glenmoor Academy	1.27	Woodford County High School	0.99
Ark King Solomon Academy	1.24	The Henrietta Barnett School	0.98
Manor High School	1.18	Beaconsfield High School	0.97
Avonbourne Girls Academy	1.16	Highworth Grammar School	0.95
Levenshulme High School	1.16	Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet	0.94
Whitmore High School	1.15	Stratford Girls' Grammar School	0.93
Ark Greenwich Free School	1.14	The Tiffin Girls' School	0.92
Ashcroft Technology Academy	1.14	Kendrick School	0.92
Villiers High School	1.14	Dartford Grammar School	0.92
Featherstone High School	1.12	Ripon Grammar School	0.91
Forest Gate Community School	1.11	Colchester County High School for Girls	0.91
Parkside Community College	1.11	Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School	0.91
Ark Isaac Newton Academy	1.1	Nonsuch High School for Girls	0.9
Rosebery School	1.1	Wallington High School for Girls	0.9
Beaumont School	1.06	Langley Grammar School	0.9



This is borne out through a wider comparison of the top 20 selective and top 20 non-selective schools (see fig. 2). The non-selectives' Progress 8 scores mostly lay between 1.1 and 1.3, with an average of 1.28 and a couple of outliers above 2.0, while the selectives' scores clustered around the 1.0 mark, with an average of 0.95. The latter was slightly below the average score of 1.07 for the wider sample of top 50 non-selective schools, which stretched the lower bound score down to 0.85. In other words, while selective schools lie towards the upper end of the rankings for England as a whole, the real outliers—and hence the 'standout' institutions from which policymakers should seek to learn—are to be found among non-selective schools.

The Progress 8 score for the median 50 schools was -0.05, slightly below the average score for all England state schools of -0.03, but also just above the score of -0.25 at which the DfE considers schools to be 'coasting'. Most of the bottom 50 schools had Progress 8 scores from -1.1 to -1.7, average -1.44, with a handful of worst performers around -2.0 and one even below the -3.0 mark.

FIG. 3: 2022 PROGRESS 8 SCORES FOR NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DfE)

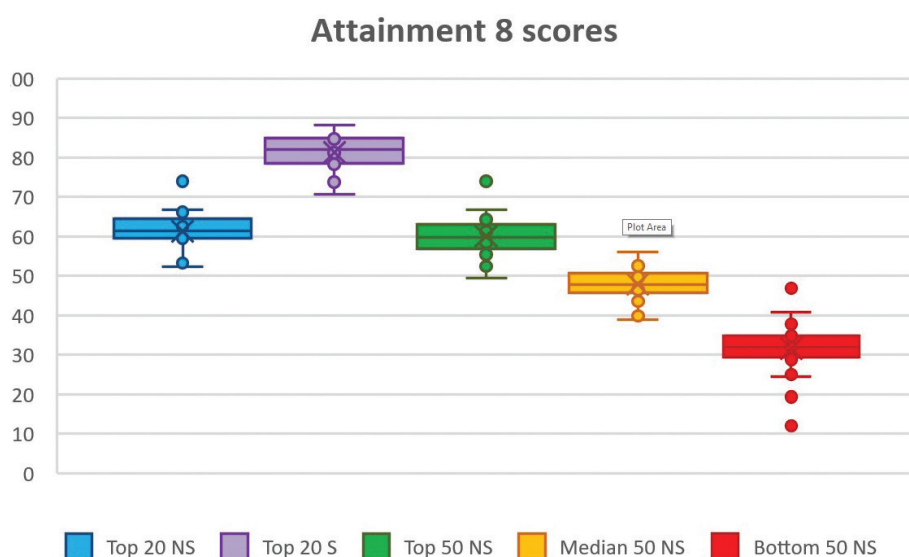


### ATTAINMENT 8 AND EBACC

The top non-selective schools' achievement for learning progress becomes even clearer when comparing their Attainment 8 scores and their pupils' average EBacc point scores. Overall, the top 20 posted Attainment 8 scores between 52.4 and 74, with an average of 61.29; once expanded to the top 50, the lower bound decreased to 49.4—above the England-wide average of 48.8—while the average only dipped slightly to 60.04. This compares with ranges of 39.0 to 56.0, average 47.9, and 12 to 46.9, average 31.59, for the median 50

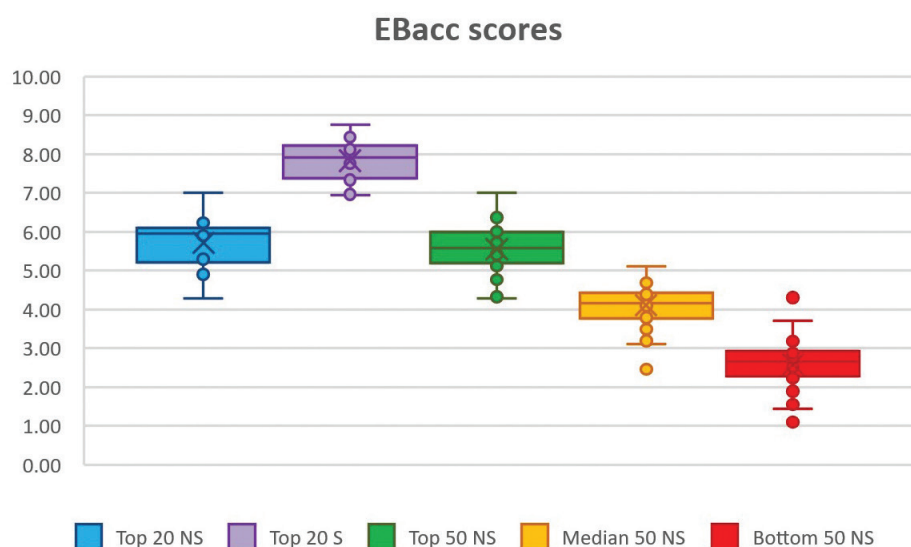
and bottom 50 respectively (see fig. 3). But while the top comprehensive schools clearly outperformed their non-selective competitors, they still lag considerably behind their selective rivals. The top selective schools' Attainment 8 scores ranged from 70.6 to 88.2, with an average of 81.23. This means that, at the top end of the non-selective sector, a few strong performers are almost within touching distance of selective schools on learning attainment alone, but there is still some way to go before their outcomes become fully equivalent.

FIG. 4: 2022 ATTAINMENT 8 SCORES FOR NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



The picture for EBacc scores is unsurprisingly similar, given the close connection between how the two are calculated. The top 20 non-selectives' pupils scored on average between 4.29 and 7.01, with an overall average of 5.71; for the top 50, the upper and lower bounds remained the same, while the average EBacc score dipped slightly to 5.56 (see fig. 4). These are roughly equivalent to a B/C grade under the pre-2019 A\*–G GCSE grading system. The median 50 marginally underperformed the England average (4.27), with pupil scores between 2.46 and 5.1, average 4.1—equivalent to a former C/D grade. For the bottom 50, EBacc scores ranged from 1.1 to 4.3, average 2.58, roughly E grade standard. By contrast, the top 20 selectives' pupils scored from 6.95 to 8.75, and 7.83 (a pre-2019 A grade) on average. In other words, for EBacc subjects, a small amount of learning outcomes 'overlap' has been achieved between the strongest non-selective and some of the more middling selective schools.

FIG. 5: 2022 EBACC SCORES FOR NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



The implication of this is that, in order to find the ‘best practice’ in the state school sector, policymakers must focus their attention on those non-selective institutions that have proven capable of ‘keeping pace with the best’ among the selective schools. Taking together the Attainment 8 and EBacc scores, the 3 best performers are Michaela Community School (Attainment 8 score 74, EBacc average point score 7.01), Beaumont School (66.7, 6.37), and Ashcroft Technology Academy (64.4, 6.23). Other strong performers include Ealing Fields High School (65.1, 6.11), Rosebery School (64.4, 6.05), Bentley Wood High School (62.9, 6.07), and the Hurlingham Academy (66.2, 6.01).

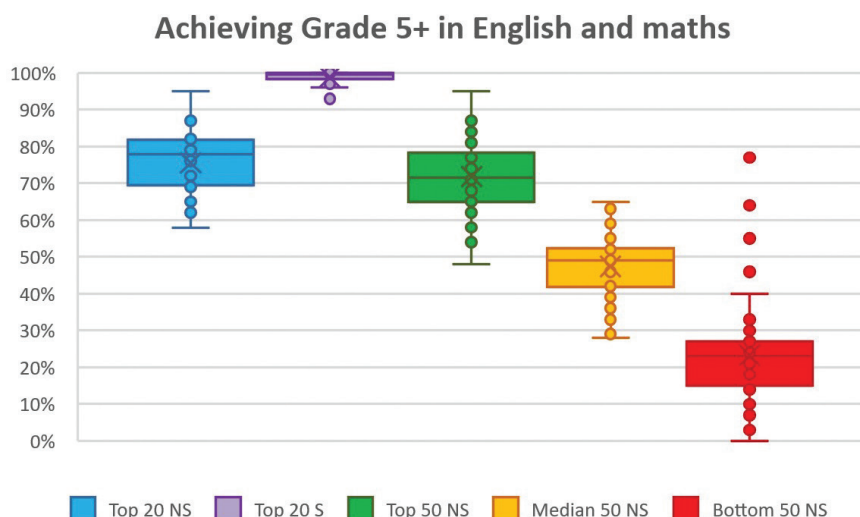
### 3.1.2 LEARNER STATISTICS

#### ACHIEVING GRADE 5+ IN ENGLISH AND MATHS GCSES

The selective/non-selective divide is at its starkest in the proportions of pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and mathematics GCSEs—the two subjects that are double-weighted in the Attainment 8 calculation. The share at the top 20 comprehensive schools lay between 58% to 95% and averaged 75.45%, with a new lower bound of 48% and a lower average of 71.74% once the top 50 are taken into account (see fig. 5). In both cases, the top non-selective schools performed well above the England-wide average of 50%. By comparison, the shares at the median 50 schools were slightly below average, ranging from 28% to 65% with an average of 47.38%; for the bottom 50, many of which are University Technical Colleges (UTCs), the percentage lay in the 10-30% range, apart from some extremely low and high outliers, with an average of 23.28%.

But, as is to be expected, these figures are dwarfed by the proportions at the top 20 schools that admit based on academic selection, which lie between 93% and 100%, averaging 98.8%. At the upper end, only a couple of comprehensive schools came close to rivalling these results: Michaela Community School (95%), the Hurlingham Academy (87%), Ark King Solomon Academy (83%), and Ashcroft Technology Academy and Beaumont School (82%), and Ark Greenwich Free School (81%). This suggests that comprehensive schools' results in English and mathematics may have an especially deflationary impact on their Attainment 8 and hence Progress 8 scores, and in turn on their capacity to compete with selective education provision. But to gain a complete picture of where the more and less extreme differences between selective and non-selective schools in their GCSE teaching lie, **more detailed data is needed on the equivalent grade 5 and above proportions for the other EBacc and non-EBacc GCSE subjects as well.**

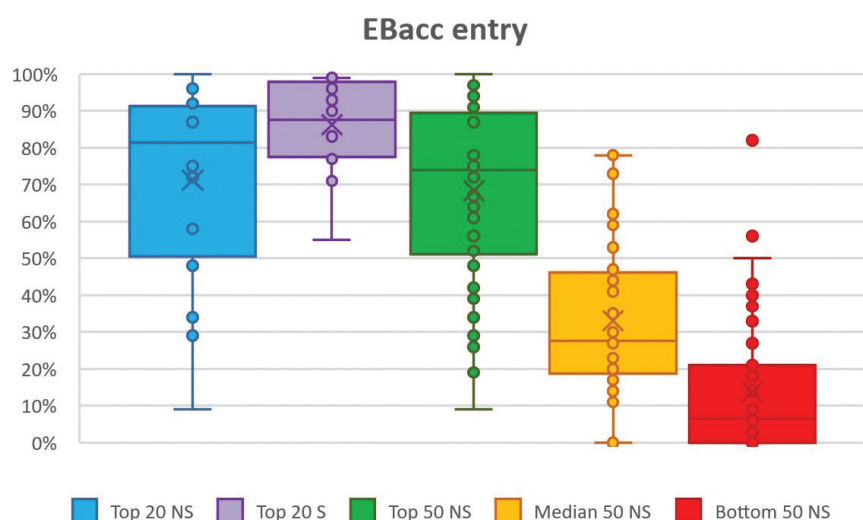
FIG. 6: 2022 PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS ACHIEVING GRADE 5+ IN ENGLISH AND MATHS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



### EBACC ENTRY

One of the greatest divides among state schools is in the proportion of pupils who are entered for the English Baccalaureate—i.e., for qualifications in English, maths, sciences, a language, and either history or geography. The top 20 non-selective schools entered between 9% and 100%, on average 71.2%, of their pupils for the EBacc; the top 50 matched this vast range, while the average sank slightly to 68.34% (see fig. 6). The situation for the median 50 comprehensive schools was similarly divergent, entering between 0% and 78%, on average 33.1%—below the national average of 39%—while the bottom 50 schools saw a fairly large share of 0% entries up to a solitary outlier of 82%, on average 13.72%. The top 20 selective schools, again perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly, entered a far higher proportion of their pupils for the EBacc, between 55% and 99%, and 86.3% on average.

FIG. 7: 2022 EBACC ENTRY IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



These gaps reveal a potential source of institutional discrimination in how schools' educational 'value added' to their pupils' learning outcomes is determined. Given that the calculations of Attainment 8 and hence Progress 8 scores are heavily skewed towards EBacc subjects (above all English and mathematics), schools whose pupils pursue learning in other areas are arguably disadvantaged in these measures. This is especially true of schools, disproportionately non-selective schools, that focus on technical and vocational subjects rather than more 'academic' EBacc content. This can result in sections of their pupil body—and these pupils' 'contribution' to the school's overall learning outcomes—being partly or wholly brushed over in the current measures. For the purposes of this report, it is of course valuable to explore the link between behavioural policies and *academic* or *classroom* learning outcomes. But disruptive behaviour can also inhibit more technical learning as well, which means that the **measures of educational 'value added' must also be broadened in future to incorporate a wider sweep of the subjects that pupils are able to take.**

### 3.2 PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS

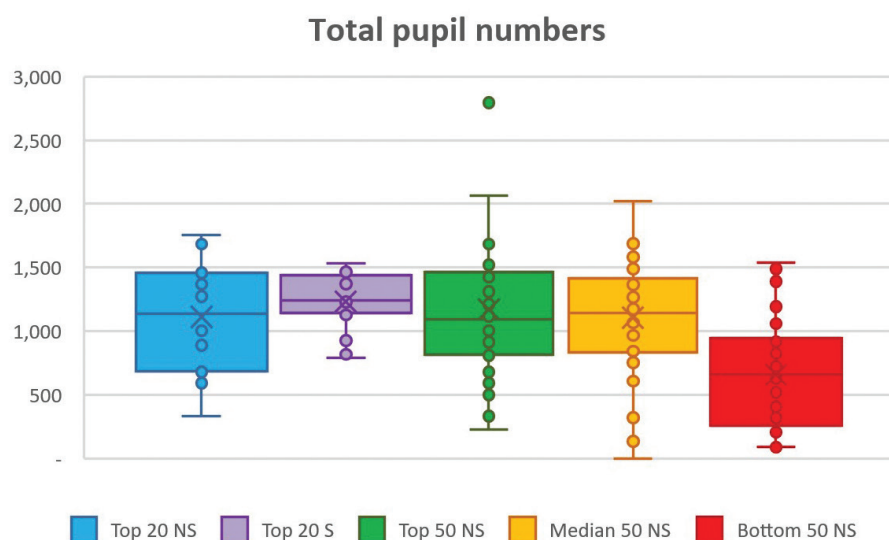
From the behaviour policy perspective, the most important data the Government tables offer is that on rates of overall and persistent absence at each school, with the contextualising aid of total pupil numbers. To lend more detail to the overall picture of each school's demographic make-up, the data also provides a number of disadvantage measures. Education disadvantage is assessed by the proportion of pupils in receipt of SEND support, and the proportion who have dedicated SEND EHC plans. Wider socioeconomic disadvantage is marked by the share of pupils whose first language is not English (which codes for ethnicity, race, and nationality), and the proportion eligible for free school meals (which codes for household income).

### 3.2.1 ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

#### TOTAL PUPIL NUMBERS

There were no significant differences between the selective and non-selective schools in terms of total pupil numbers, especially at the higher end of the Progress 8 rankings. For the top 20 non-selectives, these ranged from 333 to 1,758, average 1,113; for the top 50, the range was even larger, with extreme outliers of 228 (Gaynes School) and 2,824 (Loxford School), along with a slightly higher average of 1,172 (see fig. 7). The figures for the median comprehensive schools were between 135 and 2,022, average 1,106; for the bottom 50, the range overall lay lower, with some outliers as low as 89 and as high as 1,537, average 657. Overall, these were somewhat lower than the equivalent for the top 20 selective schools, who had between 793 and 1,534 pupils, with a slightly higher average of 1,233.

FIG. 8: 2022 TOTAL PUPIL NUMBERS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



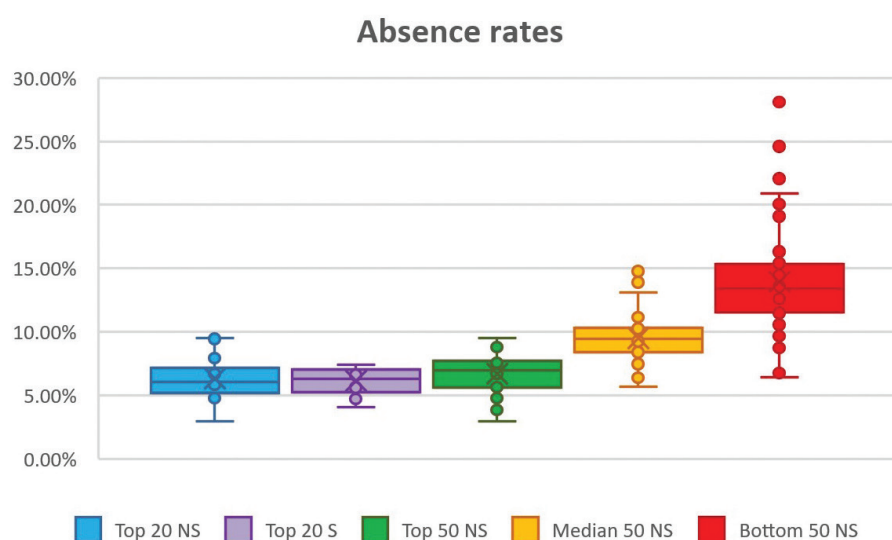
Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of this finding is that the evidence offers no support for the idea that smaller, more specialised institutions fare better at learning outcomes than larger, generalised ones. If anything, the reverse is true, since many of the top-scoring schools in terms of learning outcomes—such as Featherstone High School (1,758 pupils), Ark Isaac Newton Academy (1,754), Whitmore High School (1,684), Beaumont School (1,496), Villiers High School (1,459), and Rosebery School (1,449)—are far above average school size.

This raises the possibility of **introducing points of learning integration across institutions, including pooling teaching provision, staffing, and materials, among multiple schools**. This could happen in a ‘franchise’ sense within the context of a multi-academy trust, or geographically within a given Local Education Authority area, and would maximise pupils’ access to less mainstream, rare, or more resource-intensive subjects—without the concern that this will negatively impact learning outcomes.

### ABSENCE AND PERSISTENT ABSENCE

There are greater differences among state schools in their rates of overall absence, defined as the “percentage of possible mornings or afternoons recorded as an absence from school for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised, across the full academic year”. For the top non-selective schools, these ranged from 2.94% to 9.53%, average 6.32%, for the top 20, with the same range and a slightly higher average of 6.72% for the top 50 (see fig. 8). These compare well with the rates for the top 20 selective schools, which lay between 4.1% and 7.44%, and averaged 6.12%. But for the median 50 schools, rates were noticeably higher, from 5.69% to 14.77%, average 9.52%; for the bottom 50 schools, the range was 6.77% to 28.1%, average 13.96%—well over the national average of 7.6%.

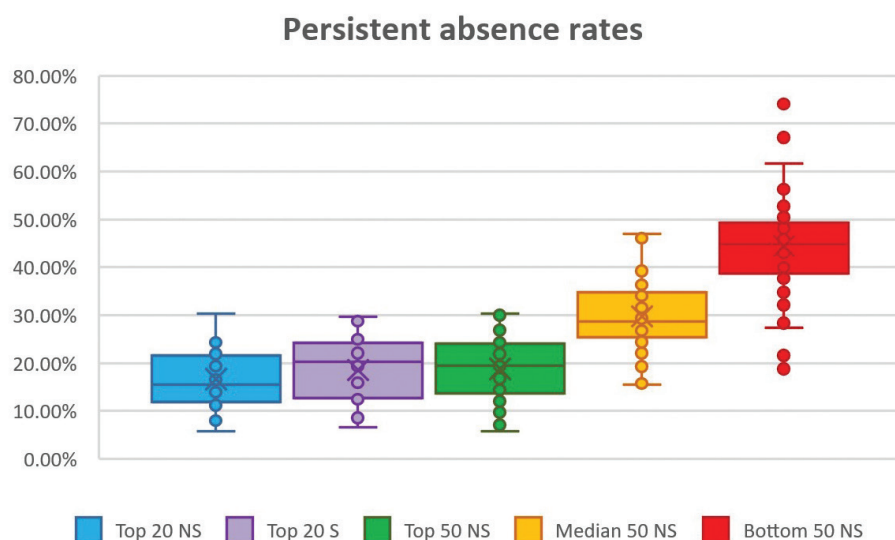
FIG. 9: 2022 ABSENCE RATES IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



These differences are even more exaggerated for persistent absence, which refers to the “percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of the mornings or afternoons they could attend”. The top 20 non-selective schools had persistent absences of between 5.82% and 30.33%, with an average of 16.63%, with the

same range for the top 50 along with a slightly higher average of 18.78% (see fig. 9). Here, they slightly outperformed the best selective schools, which saw persistent absence rates of between 6.61% and 29.74%, with an average of 18.53%. But they performed significantly better than their rivals from lower down the Progress 8 rankings. The median 50 saw persistent absence rates of between 15.5% and 46.94%, on average 29.71%, and the bottom 50 ranged from 18.78% to 74.12%, average 44.48%—both significantly worse than the England-wide average of 22.5%.

FIG. 10: 2022 PERSISTENT ABSENCE RATES IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DfE)



The best performers on both absence measures among the non-selectives include schools that also stood out for their learning outcome scores: Ashcroft Technology Academy (2.94% absence, 5.82% persistent absence), Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy (4.19%, 9.75%), Villiers High School (4.79%, 8%), Michaela Community School (4.87%, 11.88%), and Whitmore High School (4.99%, 11.44%).

In brief, this finding corroborates the consensus in the education studies literature that lowering absence, and especially lowering persistent absence, is a key ingredient to boosting learning outcomes, both for individual pupils and for the school environment as a whole. It also suggests that there are **concrete target figures that schools and trusts can set themselves to prevent absence from inhibiting learning outcomes**. These targets could, for instance, be included in DfE guidelines for determining which schools are in need of targeted investment and intervention (including ‘special measures’ decisions). For the **percentage of possible mornings and afternoons recorded as absences, a 5% target** would be generous and feasible; for the **percentage of persistently absent students, a target of 10%** would be appropriate.

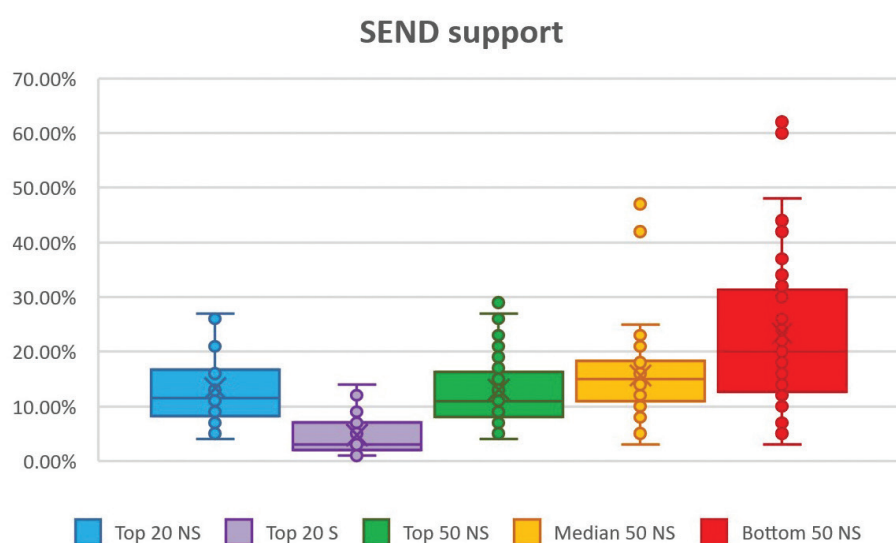


### 3.2.2 DISADVANTAGE

#### SEND SUPPORT AND SEND EHC PLANS

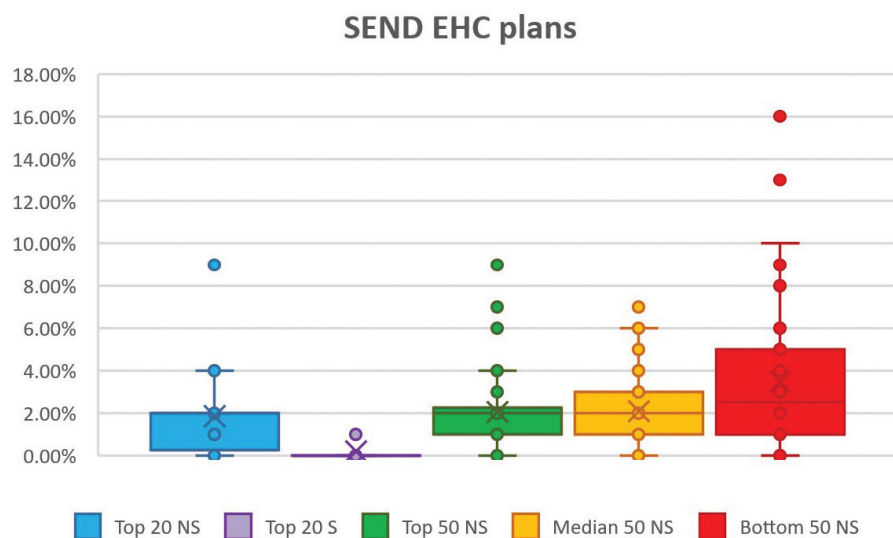
The evidence on the two SEND measures is on the surface somewhat contradictory. For the proportion of pupils receiving SEND support, the top 20 non-selectives ranged from 4% to 27%, average 13.35%, while the top 50 have a slightly higher upper bound of 29% yet a slightly lower average of 13.08% (see fig. 10). The equivalents for the median non-selectives were a range of 3% to 47%, average 15.66%, along with a range of 3% to 63%, average 23.36%, for the bottom 50. All of these are above the England-wide average of 11.92%, although levels of SEND support are noticeably albeit marginally higher among the top-performing schools. However, in all cases, the proportion of pupils receiving SEND support is far higher for non-selectives than for the top 20 selectives, which posted shares between 1% to 14%, and an average of merely 4.75%.

FIG. 11: 2022 SEND SUPPORT IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



This difference between the top and median non-selectives especially is far more marginal for the proportion of pupils with SEND Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans. The top 20 non-selectives range from 0% to 9%, average 1.85%, while the top 50 have the same range and slightly higher average of 2.06% (fig. 11). The figures for the median schools are noticeably similar, with a range of 0% to 7% and average of 2.08% for the median 50, and an even wider range of 0% to 16% and a fractionally higher average of 3.48% for the bottom 50. Between them, the non-selective schools' EHC plan pupil proportions bridge the national average of 2.15%. But the really eye-catching contrast is with the top 20 selective schools, whose proportion of pupils with EHC plans ranges from 0% to 1% and averages a mere 0.2%.

FIG. 12: 2022 SEND EHC PLANS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



It is noticeable that the schools that stand out from the crowd on several of the other context measures here are outliers on SEND provision in both directions. Some, such as the Hurlingham Academy (4% in receipt of SEND support, 0% with EHC plans) or Forest Gate Community School (5%, 1%) lie at the lower end on both SEND provision and EHC plans. Others, like Ark King Solomon Academy (27%, 9%) or the Steiner Academy Hereford (27%, 4%) are at the upper end. This is a challenging picture to parse. In brief, it implies that either (1) schools have found ways of achieving high educational attainment/progress without SEND, or (2) schools have made SEND a core part of their offering.

Looking at the overall trends, however, suggests that, in a context without academic selection, marginal expansions of SEND provision may help support improvements in learning outcomes, both for individual students and for the school environment as a whole. But as a specific instance of such provision, EHC plans currently do not adequately address the educational, health, and social needs of the pupils they are designed for. In particular, they do not fully overcome the deficits in learning outcomes at the level of individual pupils or their schools as a whole, as reflected in the schools' relatively lower Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores.

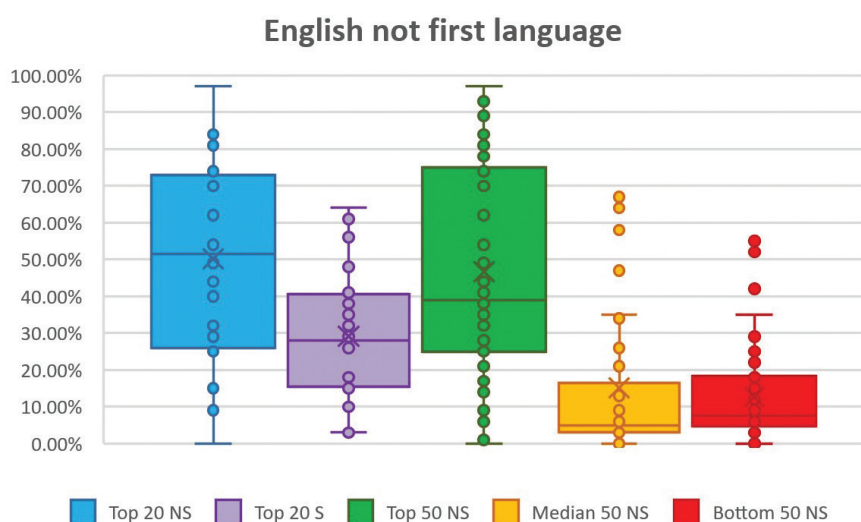
**Revisiting the formulation of EHC plans to make them more explicitly focused on boosting learning outcomes is thus a priority for future schools policy reform.**

### SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS

Two intriguing results concern the various schools' statistics around the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English, and the proportion who are eligible for free school meals. The top non-selective

schools had a substantial proportion of pupils who are not native English speakers, ranging extremely widely from 0% to 97%, average 50.15%, for the top 20, and the same range with a slightly lower average of 46.68% for the top 50 (see fig. 12). For the median non-selectives, the figures are noticeably lower, mostly clustering in the single figures aside from a couple of high outliers up to 69%, average 15.14%, for the median 50; for the bottom non-selectives, this clustering was even more pronounced, with only a few outliers up to 55% and a lower average of 12.7%. The figures for the top 20 selective schools lie in between the two, from 3% to 64%, with an average of 29.2%—just under double the England-wide average of 17.48%.

FIG. 13: 2022 PUPILS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



To start, this suggests that non-native English speakers might enjoy a slight advantage in the context of the admission process for selective schooling. By itself, this has **positive implications regarding the role that school selection might play in wider policies of ethnic, national, and cultural integration**. But the far stronger presence of non-native English speakers at the top end of the non-selective sector also implies that exclusion from selection does not stand in the way of non-native English speakers' educational success. This is best demonstrated by Villiers High School (non-native English speaker proportion 97%), Featherstone High School (84%), Ark King Solomon Academy (83%), and Levenshulme High School (81%).

Indeed, the opposite trend seems to be the case. The unusually high representation of pupils whose first language is not English within the highest-performing schools may be a result of a number of other contextual factors. One is the well-documented 'outcomes bonus' of English as an Additional Language provision in the local area, which may provide eligible pupils with positive learning 'spillovers' that lift their overall academic performance. Further, this may also reflect well-established insights around the benefits

of multilingualism for both pedagogy and information-acquisition. This might be a justification to **make acquiring a second language a more prominent feature of learning outcome targets**, including the EBacc, Attainment 8, and Progress 8 calculations.

Alternatively, differing norms among communities with either recent generational migration background or strong non-British cultural influences may foster positive attitudes towards educational success (as an intrinsic value or a route to social capital and integration), as well as education-related behavioural standards (respect for teachers' authority, compliance with rules). Deeper analysis is needed on all of these factors, but lies beyond the scope of this report.

On free school meals eligibility, the figures for non-selective schools are similarly disparate. The top 20 range from proportions of 6% to 49%, average 27.7%, while the top 50 have a decreased lower bound of 5% and a slightly lower average of 26.78%—remarkably close to the England-wide average of 26.92% (see fig. 13). Meanwhile, the median 50 present a very similar range of 8% to a high outlier of 87%, but a marginally lower average of 25.64%, although for the bottom 50 the range clusters noticeably higher, stretching from a lower outlier of 6% to 78%, with a much higher average of 43.46%. The proportions for selective schools are considerably lower, ranging from 3% to a lone outlier of 17%, with an average of merely 5.6%—a strong indication that mechanisms of school selection reflect, and arguably entrench and reproduce, pre-existing socioeconomic advantages.

FIG. 14: 2022 PUPILS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



The results for non-selective schools are slightly more difficult to parse. Of the top 10 schools in the Progress 8 rankings, 6 lie above the English state school average: Bentley Wood High School (28%), Ealing Fields High School (37%), the Hurlingham Academy (38%), Ark King Solomon Academy (49%), Avonbourne Girls Academy (28%), and Levenshulme High School (44%). But, in turn, other standouts lie well below the average: the Holt School (5%), Rosebery School (6%), Beaumont School (7%), and the Market Bosworth School (10%). It is hard to draw a conclusive inference from this diverse set of results. At the lower end of the Progress 8 rankings, levels of pupil disadvantage are clearly above the UK average; but pupils at the top end of the rankings enjoy much the same socioeconomic position on average as those in the middle.

**At the very least, this evidence suggests that, for the bulk of pupils and schools outside areas of extreme disadvantage, learning attainment and progress are not necessarily hindered by low-income family circumstances.** This is a viable way to interpret the OECD's suggestion that "disadvantage is not destiny"—but this should not be taken as an indication that disadvantage can simply be 'overturned' in terms of its effects on learning outcomes by good policies in other areas (e.g., curriculum formation, behaviour policies, SEND policies). The relationship between socioeconomic status and learning outcomes is one that needs to be investigated further beyond the scope of this report. For this, it would be helpful to include supplementary analysis that relies on alternative measures and data sources, such as the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) dataset.

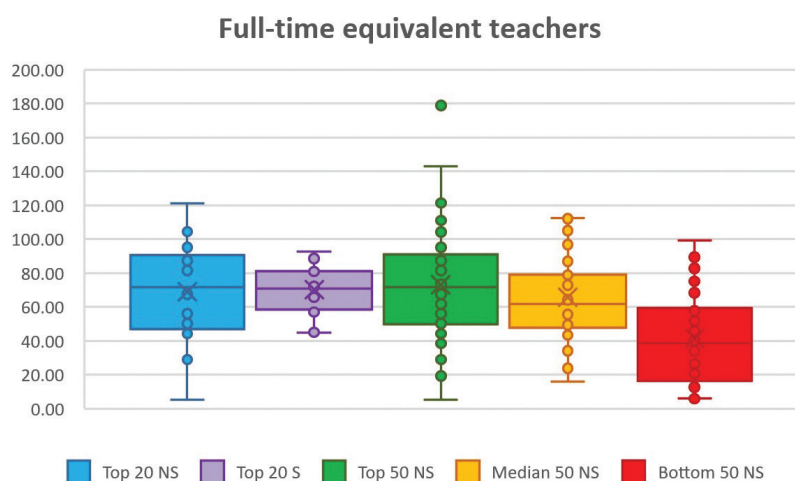
### **3.3 STAFF CHARACTERISTICS**

Finally, the Government data provides a moderately granular breakdown of staffing numbers at each school, divided into teachers, teaching assistants, and support staff, each measured in terms of their full-time equivalent figures. The remaining data concerns the ratio of pupils to FTE teachers, and the average salary earned by FTE teachers at each school.

#### **3.3.1 STAFF COMPOSITION**

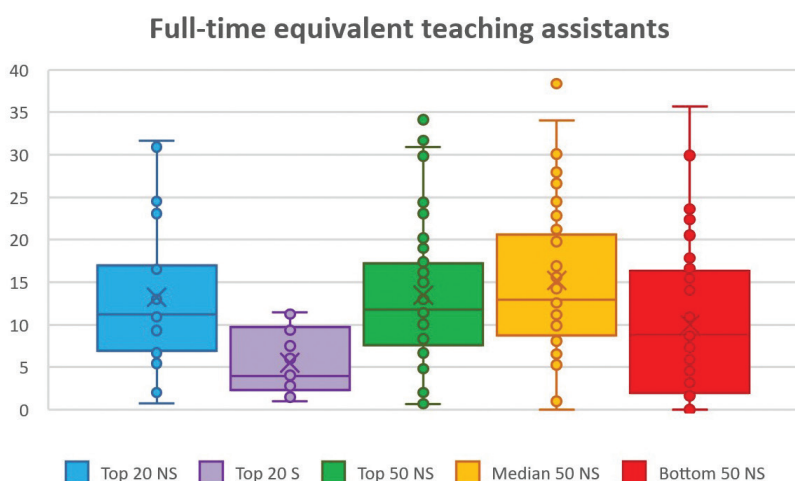
For the number of full-time equivalent teachers, the top non-selective schools had typically 10–75% more staff than their lower-ranked equivalents. At the top 20, FTE teacher numbers ranged from a low outlier of 5.3 to 121.32, average 68.88, while for the top 50 the range extended up to 179.00, with a slightly higher average of 73.08 (see fig. 14). By comparison, the median 50's teacher numbers ranged from 16.2 to 112.66, but with a noticeably lower average of 65.6, while the bottom 50 shifted the range down, stretching from 6 to 99.2, with a significant drop in the average to 41.35 (attributable partly to the large share of relatively new UTCs in this sample). At the upper end, these numbers lie relatively close to the equivalent figures for the top 20 selective schools, who have between 44.77 and 92.9 FTE teachers, or 70.24 on average.

FIG. 15: 2022 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT TEACHERS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



For FTE teaching assistants, meanwhile, the numbers at the top non-selective schools were 10–15% lower than at the median schools, but at least 30–35% higher than at the bottom-ranked schools. The top 20 had between 0.7 and 31.69 FTE TAs, on average 13.26, while the top 50 slightly increased the upper bound to 34.14 and nudged the average up to 13.44 (see fig. 15). For the median 50, the range lay similarly between 0 and 38.39, and the average ticked up to 15.21, while for the bottom 50 the range shifted down to between 0 and 35.73, with a lower average of 10.03. Unlike for teachers, however, the equivalent figures at the top 20 selectives were much lower, between 1 and 11.44, and with an average of 5.52.

FIG. 16: 2022 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



Lastly, the numbers for FTE support, administrative, and auxiliary staff were more consistent across all state school types, but again the top non-selective schools tended to have 15–20% more non-teaching staff than their lower-ranked competitors.

These results can perhaps best be summarised with the rubric ‘staff composition matters’. In general, schools who have chosen to invest their resources in teachers instead of teaching assistants performed better on pupils’ learning outcomes. This suggests that there is a benefit for pupils in having a larger, more diverse core of well-resourced, well-trained, experienced teachers with the autonomy and responsibility to lead teaching delivery. It is likely a cost-saving measure for schools to reduce their teaching staff to a streamlined core, supplemented by a ‘reserve army’ of teaching assistants. Yet this ultimately comes at the cost of downward pressure on the academic results that pupils can achieve.

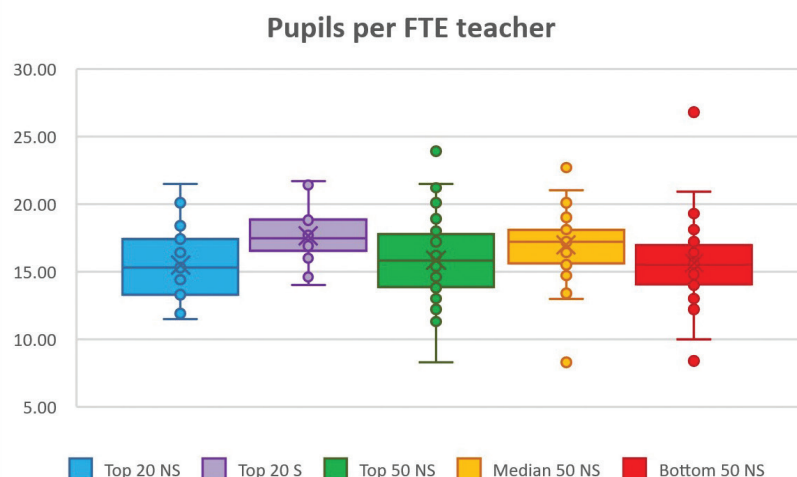
**Future teaching investment should thus be targeted at giving schools and trusts the infrastructural capacity to ‘upgrade’ their teaching assistants into full teaching staff, including giving schools the latitude to broaden and tailor their curriculum offering, and targeting teacher training courses to ‘upskill’ existing teaching assistants.** This should build on the work already being done through the Initial Teacher Training Core Content Framework, the Early Career Framework, and teaching-related National Professional Qualifications, to create a clear system of **lifelong career and learning pathways for teacher training**. These pathways should combine a standardised structure of career progression with a navigable route through the ‘climbing frame’ of qualifying and continuous professional development options in pedagogy and school management.

Equally, it is clear that ‘more’ is not necessarily ‘better’ when it comes to the size of schools’ support, administrative, and auxiliary staff. The differences between schools are certainly not drastic enough to justify swingeing cuts in non-teaching staff numbers. What it does justify, however, is a closer examination of what roles the support staff in each school fulfil: how their tasks are divided up, what particular functions they are specialised in, what their internal structure and relationship to the teaching staff are. Intuitively, it makes a difference to how schools operate if their support staff are focused on (e.g.) SEND support, mental and physical health, financial and resources, behavioural, or logistical activities. In conjunction with Ofsted, the DfE should undertake a comprehensive survey of school non-teaching staff across the UK state school sector, in order to develop clear national guidelines about what school support roles are the most important to boosting learning outcomes.

### **3.3.2 TEACHING CONDITIONS**

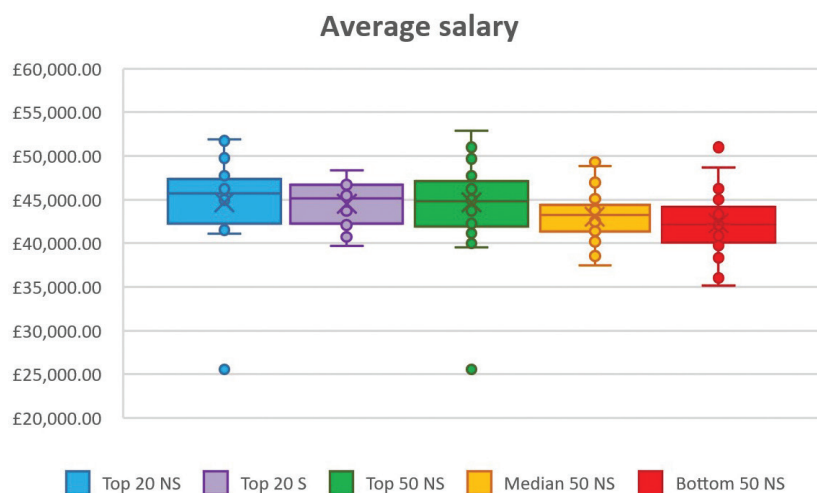
There are only limited differences between the schools in the average number of pupils per FTE teacher. The top 20 non-selective schools had from 11.5 to 21.5 pupils per teacher, on average 15.48, while the top 50 broadened that slightly to between 8.3 and 23.9, average 15.85 (see fig. 16). Meanwhile, the median 50 non-selective schools had a very similar range of between 8.3 and 22.7 pupils per teacher, with an average of 16.98, and the bottom 50 had between 8.4 and 26.8, along with a lower average of 15.62—all broadly in line with the England-wide average of 16.3. Interestingly, pupil per FTE teacher numbers were around 10–15% higher at the top 20 selective schools, ranging from 14 to 21.7, on average 17.66.

FIG. 17: 2022 PUPILS PER FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT TEACHER IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOLS (SOURCE: DFE)



Finally, there are clear differences between schools in the average salary they award teachers, with FTE staff paid around £1,500–2,500 p.a. more at the top end of the state sector. For the top 20 non-selectives, FTE salaries ranged from a low outlier of £25,567.80 to £51,930.80, with an average of £44,671.71 p.a., while for the top 50, the range extended up to £52,911.90, though with only a fractionally higher average of £44,700.93 (see fig. 17). By contrast, the median 50 non-selectives offered between £37,473.40 and £49,311.10, with a lower average of £43,048.98 p.a., while the bottom 50 ranged from £35,142.30 to £50,982.10, averaging even lower at £42,305.86. At the top 20 selective schools, however, pay largely matched what was on offer in the non-selective sector, ranging from £39,735.70 to £48,316.10 and averaging £44,536.06.

FIG. 18: 2022 AVERAGE SALARY IN NON-SELECTIVE AND SELECTIVE STATE SCHOOL (SOURCE: DFE)





These are two of the most intriguing results from the Progress 8 result analysis. ‘Smaller class sizes’ has been a longstanding shibboleth of education policy, and on the surface these results contradict this assumption, as they do not bear out the idea that having a lower pupil-to-staff ratio is always linked to better learning outcomes. But this ratio can be achieved in multiple different ways: by taking on more teachers rather than teaching assistants, in line with the comments above; by diversifying the subjects offered in the school/trust curriculum; by dividing subject-groups into ‘sets’ taught by different teachers based on aptitude; or by having more, shorter lessons run by different teachers so that pupils in large classes encounter ‘more’ staff over their school career. **Certainly, however, it reinforces the imperative to steer school investment towards hiring and training more highly-qualified full-time teachers to increase state schools’ overall teaching capacity.**

Meanwhile, it is clear that boosting teacher pay gives schools the capacity to attract the best staff—not only those with higher qualifications or better subject knowledge, but also teachers who have the skills training, experience, and motivation needed to communicate effectively with their pupils. It is noticeable that some of the best-performing non-selective schools offer salaries well in excess of the selective sector. Of the schools sampled here, those that operate a model of both high teacher numbers and high teacher pay are Loxford School (11.8 pupils per FTE teacher, £51,004.90 average teacher salary), Ricards Lodge High School (14.6, £51,363.90), Forest Gate Community School (12.2, £51,742.50), Plashet School (14.3, £49,667.40), and Ashcroft Technology Academy (14.4, £48,148.70), with an average teacher salary of £50,385.48.

Further research is needed into the precise structural and financial conditions that allow these schools/trusts to strike this balance, and DfE should use their model as an insight for how to help academy trusts across the UK. But, taking their pay as a model, easily one of the most effective investments Government should commit to is to target schools funding at junior teachers in the lower half of their schools’ salary paycales, with a commitment to increase average teacher salaries in the state school sector to £50,000 p.a. by the start of the 2025–26 academic year.

### **3.4 SUMMARY**

All in all, the profile of the best-performing non-faith, non-selective schools was one of low absence and low persistent absence, better SEND provision, a more diverse but not necessarily better- or worse-off pupil body, and a strong staff core made up predominantly of better-paid full-time teachers.



## 4. BEHAVIOURAL POLICIES: ANALYSING BEST PRACTICE

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UK schools are statutorily required to publish online a large number of policy and procedure documents. From the perspective of pupil behaviour management, by far the most relevant of these documents evidently the school's dedicated behaviour policy, which some schools may either combine with or separate out from their codes of conduct, their attendance policy, their absence policy, their exclusion policy, and their rewards and recognition policy. Other policies that also bear on behaviour questions are their SEND policy, their charging and remissions policy, and their looked after children policy. This chapter surveys all the relevant documents for the top 20 non-faith, non-selective state schools, focusing especially on the schools that emerged as repeated outliers in the contextual analysis of learning outcomes.

### *4.1 DISCIPLINE*

Schools across the sample are closely aligned in terms of the broad actions and attitudes they consider instances of misbehaviour. In general, their disciplinary approach relies on a series of punishment categories and scales as well as a raft of positive responses, which schools make the effort to apply consistently, fairly, and equally to all members of the school, alongside explicit measures of positive socialisation and accountability between staff and pupils and among pupils themselves.

#### **4.1.1 PUNISHMENT CATEGORIES AND SCALES**

There is a solid baseline similarity across essentially all the schools sampled for this report in the fundamental disciplinary rationale for behaviour policies. From these, a number of core principles emerge that should be emphasised in all future behavioural guidance:

- Policies and procedures must be tailored to respond effectively to specific negative behaviours. They must outline a range of responses that give staff scope to 'start small' and escalate when addressing negative behaviour.
- The actions, choices, and decisions available to staff must be consistent, well-defined, and unavoidable. They should take the format reset–prompt–consequence: remove the conditions for pupils' negative behaviour, steer pupils towards positive behaviour, and provide a decisive outcome to the behaviour situation.
- Disciplinary actions must make clear to pupils and parents/carers about why they are being taken, and what changes in behaviour are required.
- Policies and procedures should distinguish between minor and major cases of poor behaviour, between different responses for pupils at different ages and stages of development and learning, and low-stakes and high-stakes disciplinary responses.
- Staff must be given both the autonomy and responsibility to use their professional judgment in deciding the appropriate response 'there and then'. Mechanisms are also needed for senior staff to review these decisions, and for feedback from pupils and parents/carers.

Many schools already conform to some version of this disciplinary guidance. **But it is important to craft national behavioural guidelines that strike a balance between ensuring that staff feel empowered to make disciplinary decisions immediately, and holding these decisions to a clear standard of accountability.** Responses to pupils' negative behaviour must be proportionate and transparent to all parties with a stake in pupils' learning and behaviour: pupils themselves, their parents/carers, and other staff.

A noticeable finding is that some schools' behavioural policies encourage staff to draw a clear distinction between who pupils are and what they do. Especially when it comes to punishing misbehaviour, schools such as Ark King Solomon Academy instruct staff to emphasise that it is pupils' *behaviour* that is unacceptable, not pupils *as persons* themselves. This helps pupils to 'take ownership' of their behaviour, which empowers them to see their behaviour as something they can change, letting perpetrators and victims of misbehaviour resolve their disagreements and move on. **Drawing this distinction between pupils and their behaviour must lie at the heart of future disciplinary guidance.**

### 4.1.2 POSITIVE SOCIALISATION

A clear message that emerged from the most successful schools in this sample is that discipline must be enforced on a 'carrot and stick' basis. In fact, several schools explicitly place greater emphasis on positive messaging as the primary strategy to pursue, with negative measures only invoked where positive socialisation fails. School policies outlined an extensive roster of provisions to acknowledge, promote, and celebrate good behaviour and discipline—specifically to encourage pupils to be thoughtful, caring, and polite, and to be positive in their actions and attitudes.

One of the most common strategies is the use of formal and informal praise targeted at both individuals and groups. This can be issued 'privately' in class or in telephone calls, texts, emails, postcards, and letters to parents/carers acknowledging good work and effort, or 'publicly' in front of the wider school community (e.g., through newsletters or in assemblies). To be effective, schools have found that praise needs to meet a number of specific conditions:

- It must be precise and skilfully delivered.
- It should focus directly on character and effort, and only indirectly on achievement.
- It should be explicitly linked to the value or behaviour the staff member wants to reinforce.

These conditions are designed to ensure that pupils know unambiguously which of their various behaviours is being singled out for approval. The guidance around praise also instructs staff to ensure that they carefully acknowledge the ratio of praise and acknowledgments to correction and criticism, so that every pupil spends more time being affirmed when they are doing the right thing than being denigrated for getting something wrong. **It is important that future guidance around positive socialisation stresses the benefits that public and private, formal and informal praise can bring for encouraging pupils to want to contribute to making their school community a well-functioning space for themselves and for others.**

Another strategy is setting aside opportunities for staff to hold conversations with pupils to help them reflect on their behaviour *when things have gone well*. Expanding the place of 'having a think about what you have done' in disciplinary measures to foster the positive sides of school behaviour lets pupils better process and understand why certain behaviours are expected of them. **The role of clearly-defined positive reflection should be given a much greater role in positive socialisation guidance in future.**

### 4.1.3 PUPIL–PUPIL AND PUPIL–STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY

Many of the most successful schools place a high premium on early intervention, pursuing a strategy that can be summarised as 'no misbehaviour left behind'. Every instance of negative behaviour must be addressed at the time, if necessary by removing the pupils in question from the area, in order to maintain a culture of

safety, respect, and behavioural excellence within the wider school community. In order to ensure maximum accountability between pupils and staff, staff forming an initial evaluation of these instances should:

- Offer advice, comfort, reassurance, and support to victims. If the incidents are cases of misunderstandings, explain them sympathetically to victims. If they are justified complaints, provide a course of action to help them overcome their experiences.
- Speak to alleged perpetrators as soon as possible, offering support and taking detailed notes. In cases of misunderstandings, give clear advice to perpetrators to modify their behaviour. In cases of justified complaints, issue clear instructions, warnings, and disciplinary sanctions to perpetrators as appropriate.
- Speak to witnesses as soon as possible, taking detailed notes.
- If possible and agreed to by victims, hold a supervised meeting between perpetrators and victims to discuss their differences, as well as ways to avoid future conflict.

Creating a circle of accountability among staff and pupils is key to ensuring that responses to such incidents are proportionate and sensitive. In all cases, **it is best if the staff member is a known adult** (form teacher, personal tutor, senior staff member) to elicit the most favourable response from pupils. **Pupils must also be encouraged to cultivate a habit of 'coming forward' (as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators) in order to minimise longer-term damage to the school community.**

Schools often operate a 'monitor' or 'prefect' system, partly to reward senior pupils with a consistent record of good behaviour, and partly to act as 'first responders' to report incidents of negative behaviour to responsible staff when they occur. In some instances, these monitors are even empowered to issue low-level sanctions (e.g., verbal reprimands) to pupils exhibiting negative behaviour. **Future behaviour guidelines should explore the scope to expand the role of 'monitor' systems in behavioural management approaches.** This includes broadening their role to positive socialisation via a peer support system, where senior pupils can act as formal 'buddies' or informal 'ports of call' for pupils who are finding it difficult to stick to behavioural expectations. Schools could also allow pupils to bring their 'buddy' as a support person when they have conversations with staff where they receive sanctions. More systematically, monitors could be made present under conditions of confidentiality when senior staff hold disciplinary meetings with pupils to ensure full transparency and pupil–pupil accountability for the disciplinary process.

## **4.2 INTERNAL REGULATION**

Schools typically regulate pupils' behaviour through (sometimes explicitly connected) systems of rewards and status privileges on the one hand, and duties and status sanctions on the other, as well as clear lists of banned items and forbidden behaviours on school premises.

#### 4.2.1 SPECIAL REWARDS AND STATUS PRIVILEGES

In line with the focus on positive socialisation, several of the best-performing schools strongly embrace the role of tangible, clearly-defined rewards as a way to motivate pupils to realise the value of meritorious behaviour. This includes factors such as:

- Pupils' attitudes.
- Attendance and punctuality.
- Learning and behavioural attainment, commitment, effort, and progress.
- Contribution to wider school life, including participation in staff–pupil school council.
- Having a positive impact on school outside lesson time (e.g., charity work, displays, helping out at open evenings, achievements beyond the classroom).

These schools' policies instruct staff to use rewards more frequently than sanctions or other negative consequences, to ensure that pupils become accustomed to a culture of *seeking* achievement, aspiration, and success—rather than *avoiding* failure. Rewards allow for regular positive reinforcement of core values, prioritised character traits, and advantageous behaviours. This is critical to helping pupils build up their confidence and their ability to follow new guidelines and processes.

Most rewards are handed out on an individual basis, in the form of personal commendations, achievement or reward points, stickers and stamps, certificates (e.g., Yate Academy's weekly 'positive character card'), badges (e.g., Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School's use of 'Commitment', 'Ambassador', and 'Resilience' badges), or any other ways of personally acknowledging pupils' behaviour. These offer pupils a range of achievements and aspirations to set their sights on, and the most sophisticated systems include a clear hierarchy for how these rewards are ranked, or how they build on each other.

Some of these individual rewards also have group effects, such as class points, form points, and house points (such as at Ashcroft Technology Academy or Manor High School), which hold out the prospect of collective benefits, usually awarded termly or annually. Some schools also operate a separate system of acknowledgments for collective demonstrations of school values by classes, forms, or tutor groups (e.g., Ark King Solomon Academy's 'marble jar' and 'summit score' awards, or Avonbourne Girls Academy's average class 'REACH scores'). Together, these make it clear to pupils that their individual effort can let them contribute to a larger group too as a 'team player'. They help pupils grasp that positive behaviour is not just about gaining direct benefits for themselves, but leading to better group outcomes in which they also share.

**Future guidance on rewards should make clear the value of having both individual and collective reward schemes, to encourage pupils to pursue both personal achievement and social responsibility and respect.**

This will help pupils understand the ‘multiplier effect’ that their choices and actions can have within their wider school group (class, form, tutor group, whole school community).

#### **4.2.2 SPECIAL DUTIES AND STATUS SANCTIONS**

Creating a system of such rewards and privileges also allows schools to develop a richer range of punishments in addition to familiar approaches such as verbal reprimands, notes/letters and phone calls to parents, detentions, isolation, suspension, and exclusion. At its simplest, it can involve empowering staff to withhold or take away the rewards that pupils have been given for good learning or behaviour performance. Individual achievement or reward points, as well as those with group effects such as class, form, and house points can be lost as well as gained. This encourages pupils to see positive behaviour as a ‘flow’ they have to steer in the right direction rather than a ‘stock’ they can simply ‘bank’. It also provides a form of collective pupil–pupil accountability, where the ‘multiplier effect’ of negative behaviour can lead pupils to ‘let down’ their peers and undermine their positive efforts.

**Behavioural guidance should encourage schools to treat rewards and sanctions for pupils as a live, points-based ‘behaviour account’ that pupils can ‘pay into’ through good behaviour, and from which the school makes ‘withdrawals’ when they exhibit poor behaviour.** Some schools already operate a points system (such as Ealing Fields High School’s ‘positive’ and ‘negative conduct points’, Rosebery School’s ‘conduct merits’ and ‘demerits’, or Hurlingham Academy’s ‘demerits’ and ‘golden postcards’), which is often based on a hierarchy of cumulative awards (e.g., at Glenmoor Academy). But these are often fairly analogue (such as Avonbourne Girls Academy’s physical ‘REACH cards’), tend only to be reviewed intermittently rather than through daily or weekly ‘tracking’, and not every reward and sanction is integrated into the points system.

Crucially, these systems tend only to be accessible to staff members, rather than transparently available to parents/carers and pupils themselves as well. Two notable exceptions are Manor High School and Rosebery School, whose record systems (School Gateway, ClassCharts) enable parents/carers to track their child’s achievements and school conduct on a daily basis, either online or via an app. **These models should act as clear prototypes for a nationally standardised ‘behaviour account’ system, which can be integrated with the information systems used for (e.g.) UCAS applications.**

This ‘behaviour account’ should be integrated with the existing behavioural logs recorded on the school’s management information system, typically School Information Management System (SIMS) or another close equivalent (such as Arbor, used by the United Learning multi-academy trust schools). Pupils whose accounts stay ‘in the black’ for a designated amount of time (half-term, term, year) should accrue either additional points (as ‘interest’) or be given other privileges. By the same token, pupils whose accounts stay ‘in the red’ for similar stretches of time should either be ‘fined’ points or given other sanctions. This has the advantage of incentivising continuous positive behaviour, as well as introducing pupils to the basics of financial literacy.

At the same time, some schools also sanction pupils who exhibit poor behaviour by removing or withholding privileges they initially hold as members of the school community. This can include interrupting pupils' break or lunchtime privileges by isolating them from recreational or extracurricular activities. At more severe levels, it can also involve excluding pupils from school visits and trips, as well as formal celebrations, arts, sports, or other events where these are purely for curriculum enrichment rather than examination or learning requirements (as happens at Featherstone High School, at the discretion of the senior leadership team). **These approaches should sit alongside 'behaviour account' systems, and could complement them through an 'exchange rate', whereby reaching a certain 'points deficit' automatically triggers the removal of certain privileges, to be determined by the school/trust.**

As a rule, the best-performing schools tend not to use systems of collective punishment (e.g., detentions for whole classes), so they do not have any equivalent for their collective reward system. Instead, they seek to identify the individual pupils who are at the epicentre of negative behaviour, and target sanctions at them specifically. The closest most schools come to linking individual and collective responsibility is through schemes of restorative community action: pupils complete tasks in relation to the physical school environment, especially where this is a way to reverse the impact of specific cases of negative behaviour (e.g., cleaning graffiti, picking up litter). **These are a crucial way to help pupils grasp the impact their misbehaviour can have on the quality of life and learning at their school as a whole, and future behavioural guidance should explore ways to expand restorative duties as a way of fostering pupil–pupil accountability.**

#### **4.2.3 BANNED ITEMS**

In general, the best-performing schools have a far more extensive list of forbidden items and restrictions on how pupils use school space. Some items are essentially universal across all schools, especially those related to health and safety infringements or outright lawbreaking: weapons, illegal substances and legal substances intended for trading (specifically, alcohol, tobacco products, and drugs), stolen goods, fireworks, pornography, and anything that could be used to cause injury and damage. These typically attract the most severe penalties, either fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

But a number of the highest-performing schools extend this zero-tolerance approach to other items that fall under the broader bracket of 'items considered unnecessary in school'. These tend to include:

- Mobile phones and smart watches.
- Radios and personal stereos, headphones, and MP3 players.
- Computer games and videos.
- Glass bottles.
- Items of jewellery and accessories, including earrings (except studs) and loom bands.



- Items of non-school uniform, including hats and hoodies.
- Visible (especially facial) piercings, extreme or heavy make-up, extreme or unnatural hairstyles and hair colours.

In some cases, schools also ban:

- Expensive items liable to loss, damage, or theft.
- Sweets and junk food.

The general tenor of behavioural and uniform policies is that none of these items should be on school premises at all, and (in the case of non-uniform clothing) should only be brought in if absolutely necessary, and be removed on entering school grounds. Paired with this, the same schools' policies detail the extensive powers staff have to search pupils for banned items, and confiscate them either temporarily or permanently.

The aim of these more expansive lists is to ensure that pupils face a minimum of distractions from their learning, and can give their school work a suitably professional level of focus. It also encourages them to maintain firm boundaries between 'school life' and 'outside life' in a self-disciplined way, creating a clear distinction between themselves as pupils and themselves as people with active developing social attachments. **In this vein, schools and trusts should be explicitly mandated and encouraged to formulate policies that exclude anything that they deem inessential to learning from school premises.** This should include consideration about the severity of the penalties handed out to pupils who have these items in their possession on school premises, as well as increased explicit staff–pupil discussion about why it is important to minimise the distractions these items represent.

#### **4.2.4 BEHAVIOURAL INTERDICTIONS**

Several of the best-performing schools have developed detailed rules around pupils' use of school space, including corridors and other areas of school premises. Some of these rules stem from the new guidelines that came into force during the Covid-19 pandemic, but they have beneficial effects for pupil behaviour well beyond limiting the chance of viral transmission. These include the following requirements:

- Pupils are expected to move between destinations (classrooms, washrooms, outside areas) quickly and efficiently, sensibly and calmly, purposefully and directly.
- They are required to use only the appropriate corridors and designated stairs, with a clear 'one-way system' to minimise pupils passing each other in the corridors.
- They are prohibited from loitering and are expected to head straight to their lessons.

- They are not allowed to use areas of the school they are not timetabled to be in.
- They are prohibited from moving around school during lesson time without explicit written permission from a staff member.

In addition, several schools have implemented a 'hands off' policy that is designed to ensure pupils respect each other's personal space, and prohibits all forms of unnecessary physical touch or other contact between pupils. The aim is to help pupils keep a 'professional distance' between themselves and their peers, appropriate to their age, their level of maturity, and their stage of learning and behavioural development. **Clear guidelines along these lines around the use of school space and physical interaction should be integrated into national behavioural frameworks.** They are another important way to create firm boundaries between 'school life' and 'outside life', and minimise the distractions pupils confront when they are trying to learn.

### 4.3 FINANCIAL MEASURES

Monetary behaviour management tools are not typically a major part of schools' disciplinary arsenal, but many nonetheless operate a system of prizes and bonuses as well as fines and penalties for good and poor behaviour respectively.

#### 4.3.1 PRIZES AND BONUSES

It is fairly common practice for schools to distribute prizes with an explicit or implicit monetary value attached to them as more substantial, infrequent, and often public ways of rewarding good behaviour. At a lower level, these can include book tokens (such as at Avonbourne Girls Academy), vouchers (including Amazon gift vouchers, as at Manor High School), stationery, or other pieces of useful school equipment. The idea behind all of these prizes is to reward 'fair play' in the classroom and on school premises, and to acknowledge pupils who have consistently demonstrated to conduct expected of them in a tangible way.

**Where possible, if these prizes are awarded for good behaviour, they should feed into a self-replicating upwards spiral, so that the prizes themselves allow pupils to more easily stick to their conduct expectations and contribute to school life in future. Instead of a generic portfolio of choices, prizes should also be calibrated to pupils' specific individual behaviour plans and targets.** Taken together, these might include: vouchers for up-to-date classroom equipment, for an extracurricular activity through which pupils contribute to the school, for new uniform items. They could also take the form of a cash 'bonus' awarded to pupils as credit for the fees/costs for which they or their parents/carers are liable (e.g., lunch money), or simply direct cash awards for pupils and their parents/carers to spend as they think best.

But some schools go further, and reward pupils either individually or collectively for positive behaviour by inviting them to school trips or other experiences (e.g., 'reward trips' at Ashcroft Technology Academy and

Featherstone High School, 'reward activities' at Villiers High School, or both in the case of Whitmore High School). These typically sit outside the requirements of the academic syllabus, and take the form of 'enrichment'.

Through Local Education Authorities, schools should partner with local businesses, Further and Higher Education institutions, cultural bodies and sites, public service providers, and local government to provide systematic opportunities for place-based enrichment trips. Schools would then be able to choose which of their pupils are eligible to go on these trips based on their behaviour records. This would encourage pupils to make the explicit connection between not only academic attainment but also behavioural maturity and professional success in later life. It would also alleviate some of the pressure on schools and trusts to bear the financial burden of these trips themselves.

#### **4.3.2 FINES AND PENALTIES**

It is much rarer for schools to issue fines or penalties with explicit or implicit monetary value as a way to sanction poor behaviour. What is far more common is temporary or permanent confiscation of property, and several of the schools sampled for this report have detailed rules in place for how, and when, staff can conduct searches of pupils or their belongings. Typically, these confiscations target items that are banned either because they are harmful/dangerous or because they are unnecessary to—and likely to distract from—the learning process. This is its own form of self-replicating spiral, in that the confiscations are intended to quite simply make it harder for pupils to flout their conduct expectations or disrupt school life.

**This raises the possibility for future behavioural guidance to investigate formal use of 'conditional confiscation' for items not essential to the school curriculum as a kind of 'collateral' against pupils' behaviour.** Pupils who exhibit poor behaviour must be able to demonstrate conformity to the standards expected of them to 'earn back' access to these items on school premises. It is especially important to ensure maximum transparency around confiscation procedures, and such decisions should be made in explicit consultation with the pupil's parents/carers as well as the school's Behavioural Support Staff (see below).

Schools have so far only tentatively considered the use of (e.g.) cash fines or penalties imposed on pupils or their parents/carers as sanctions for pupils' behaviour. The most common reason is poor attendance or lateness. If pupils' daily attendance falls below 90% during an academic year, which schools typically define as 'persistent absence', they are referred to Local Authority Early Help programmes, and incur a Penalty Notice fine (£60); they then enter a Local Authority Penalty Notice Warning Monitoring period, and if their absence continues they are referred for a second Penalty Notice fine (again £60). Meanwhile, if pupils are persistently late, they not only receive a detention but are fined a small amount (e.g., £5) from their weekly payslip. Beyond this, fines are typically only applied in cases where pupils have defaced or damaged school buildings or property, and are intended less as punishment and more as redress to cover the cost of repair.

There is significant scope for the principle of these fines and penalties to be extended to cover other areas of behavioural policy. Of course, this needs to be done in a socially just, sensitive way. Such financial sanctions easily run the risk of creating a ‘two-tier’ system for pupils who exhibit poor behaviour: those who can ‘buy their way out’ of disciplinary repercussions, and those who cannot. For non-selective state schools, many of which have fairly high proportions of pupils in receipt of free school meals, any large financial penalties (e.g., of £1,000 or greater in total) may be simply impossible for parents/carers to cover. Despite this, introducing ‘foul play’ penalties at a low financial level—equivalent in value to the ‘fair play’ prizes outlined above—could be a useful tool to complement schools’/trusts’ existing sanction arsenal. **Future behavioural guidance should explore creating a legislative basis for giving fines and penalties a greater role in behavioural policies, focusing particularly on what a fair, sustainable national maximum level for such financial sanctions should be.**

## 4.4 COMMUNICATION

Schools make significant efforts to communicate their behavioural expectations to pupils and parents/carers through ethos and values statements, codes of conduct, explicit explanations of the rationale behind behaviour expectations, behavioural signals and symbols, and regular behaviour celebrations.

### 4.4.1 ETHOS AND VALUES STATEMENTS

All the schools have adopted more-or-less detailed explicit ethos and values statements that are designed to shape the general atmosphere of the school community, and inform the day-to-day conduct of pupils and staff. The statements by the most successful schools exhibit significant overlap. The values they most frequently mention as those they want to instil in pupils and expect staff to foster are:

- **Integrity:** Distinguishing right from wrong and doing the right thing; delivering on your promises; displaying courage and resilience; being truthful, open, and honest in dealings with others; holding yourself accountable.
- **Self-esteem and respect:** Being considerate, courteous, empathetic towards yourself, others, their property, nature, and your surroundings; valuing ideas on their merit; accepting constructive criticism; unfolding capacity and desire for personal growth.
- **Individuality:** Recognising that each pupil is unique, that there is rarely only one way to strengthen their creative capabilities, and that each one responds to different catalysts for change in their lives; rewarding their performance and contribution.
- **Diversity:** Accepting and integrating others’ contributions; harnessing creativity and new ideas through a wide range of thought, expertise, experience, and background; giving all pupils the opportunity to flourish and succeed regardless of identity.

- **Achievement:** Using all available resources to pursue success and wisdom; seeking competitive advantage; viewing learning within the framework of a holistic agenda; setting high standards for progress and 'value added'; enhancing one's own and others' mindsets and capabilities; performing exceptionally in examinations.
- **Responsibility:** Taking personal ownership of your behaviour and self-discipline; recognising your obligations towards the whole community; reporting incidents of misbehaviour.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and many schools raise other values core to their ethos that sit outside these values. Some schools also explicitly link these values to the requirement on schools to foster British values, such as by offering pupils choices, encouraging them to express and discuss their own ideas, and to hear and take into consideration the ideas of other pupils. **But these six values go beyond the 'British values' requirement, and are so central that they should be integrated into future values guidance more widely.**

#### **4.4.2 CODES OF CONDUCT**

All of the schools in our sample expect pupils to abide by a code of conduct that is designed to shape their behaviour within school, on the way to/from school, or when representing the school in any other way. The most basic requirements they contain are those designed to ensure that schools provide a safe environment free from disruption, violence, bullying, and harassment, such as interdictions on discrimination, illegal and criminal behaviour, or other serious offences that would normally lead to fixed-term or permanent exclusion.

But codes of conduct typically also set more ambitious, more explicitly positive requirements for the types of 'good' behaviour pupils should exhibit. They stipulate desirable behaviour that attracts rewards as well as undesirable behaviour that attracts sanctions. The most common features of these codes include expectations on pupils to:

- Be organised and self-disciplined.
- Arrive on time every day, be punctual for lessons, and bring an explanatory note if they are delayed.
- Bring all their own equipment, take it out before the lesson starts, and be prepared to learn.
- Wear the correct uniform properly.
- Avoid all distractions and disruptions, and put away anything not required for lessons.
- Carefully and quietly engage with and concentrate on the learning activities their teacher gives them.
- Value the opportunity to learn and show respect for their own learning as well as that of others.
- Listen to verbal instructions and guidance, and follow directions on school signage.
- Never deface school buildings, and never damage academic property.

- Treat everyone courteously and considerately, and never insult, undermine, or swear at anyone.
- Respect the local environment and be considerate to the local community.

These expectations essentially amount to the basic ‘good manners’ that pupils need to show for their school to be able to function effectively as a learning community for themselves and for others.

Some slightly less common features of these codes include instructions for pupils to always carry their school ID card on them, to give their name and tutor group if addressed by staff in or out of school, to always act as positive ambassadors for their school, to greet staff when they enter the school and their classroom, and to use their individual talents and skills to proactively help other pupils who are struggling and improve the school community as a whole. These are not strictly ‘baseline’ requirements for good behaviour, but they help foster in pupils a stronger sense of community towards their peers and ‘pride in place’ towards their school as a whole (e.g., Queen Elizabeth’s Girls’ School’s focus on ‘pride in belonging to the school community’). They turn codes of conduct from a set of conditions that ensure the school can function properly, to more ambitious expectations for how to help the school and its members flourish.

**Future behavioural guidance should stipulate much more precisely the content that codes of conduct should outline, and should aim for a more robust minimum standard of behaviour, to apply nationally rather than just within individual schools/trusts or LEAs. The DfE should also investigate rolling out a national mandate for School ID cards.** These would allow school and non-school authorities to hold pupils to account for their behaviour on school premises and beyond. These cards should have a ‘scanning’ facility that allows school staff, parents/carers, and pupils to easily access (and in the case of staff, make additions and modifications to) each pupil’s behavioural record and behaviour account.

Some schools (such as Bentley Wood High School for Girls and Featherstone High School) have taken the step of requiring pupils and parents/carers to sign ‘school behaviour contracts’ to better hold pupils to account for their actions at school. These schools differ mainly in whether signing such contracts is a blanket expectation for all pupils and parents/carers, or whether they are reserved as part of the sanctions framework (such as at Whitmore High School). **In line with the expectation on pupils to hold themselves accountable for their behaviour, such school behaviour contracts should be implemented across all schools and academy trusts.** This will help integrate the behavioural mentorship roles of school staff and parents/carers, and make the expectations pupils face regarding positive and negative behaviour more consistent and predictable at home and at school.

#### **4.4.3 EXPLANATIONS AND REINFORCEMENT**

In general, all schools are committed to ensuring that staff communicate clearly with pupils about their behaviour, especially where it falls short of the expectations outlined in schools’ policies and procedures. But

this tends to be quite 'one-directional': issuing instructions and reminders, warnings and praise, rewards and sanctions. Only a small number of schools at the top end of our sample go a stage further, and explicitly seek to explain the rationale behind the decisions about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (e.g., Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School's 'restorative meetings', or the 'restorative conversations' used by the schools in the United Learning multi-academy trust). They aim not only to make pupils aware of *what* the schools' policies, procedures, and expectations are, but also discuss with them *why* certain behaviours are unacceptable, and *how* they should achieve an acceptable standard of behaviour. **The greater sophistication of understanding involved in the shift from *what* to *why* and *how* is a key part of treating pupils like nascent adults, and should be included in future communication guidance for teacher training.**

Two elements of this are especially important. First, these schools also aim to include pupils' parents/carers in these explanatory processes wherever possible. This is generally the case for all instances where the school is obliged to address pupils' unacceptable behaviour, but is used especially where the school's response takes the form of restorative community action. These processes are focused on making the rationale for the decision explicit to staff, parents/carers, and pupils, and on sharing the school's professional judgments candidly and respectfully (even where parents/carers and pupils may disagree). **These three-party explanatory conversations between staff, parents/carers, and pupils should be used as a blueprint for all communications about behavioural decisions, positive as well as negative.** This will help accustom pupils to the formal procedures for behavioural sanctions and rewards they will face in later life.

Second, the same schools also aim to incorporate dedicated time for staff–pupil conversations and announcements about 'proper character' and positive values into each lesson, school day, or school week. These are designed to provide regular reinforcement of the behaviours and attitudes pupils are expected to demonstrate, with the rationale that they are necessary for the school community as a whole to be successful. **Future guidance should require all schools and trusts to include dedicated time set aside in schedules and lesson plans for these kinds of explanatory discussions.** They are a crucial way for pupils to learn how to reconcile their self-esteem and individuality with their respect and responsibility towards others, and understand why and how they should contribute to a healthy community life.

#### **4.4.4 BEHAVIOURAL SIGNALS AND SYMBOLS**

A number of schools acknowledge in their behavioural policies that much of the 'heavy lifting' of disciplinary work is done at an unspoken, implicit, intuitive level that sits 'below' even the lowest-stakes forms of intervention. Although disciplinary scales typically start with verbalised reprimands or warnings, identifying misbehaving pupils by name (e.g., Glenmoor Academy, Hurlingham Academy, or Yate Academy's policy of writing their name on the board), many situations of possible misbehaviour are averted through non-verbal and non-interventionist approaches. Staff use pauses, claps, raised hands, eye contact, proximity, and other postural or gestural strategies to bring pupils back into line with their expected behaviours, especially

in the 'prompt' stage of disciplinary decisions. **In line with the principle that staff should be able to 'start small' when addressing poor behaviour, future policy guidance should emphasise the use of behavioural signalling wherever possible, with staff 'reaching for' the appropriate formal sanction in each situation only as a final resort. To help, the DfE should investigate what teacher training can learn from (e.g.) drama or sports psychology, to help staff make more effective use of their physical presence in the classroom.**

As part of this, some schools use a system of 'yellow cards' and 'red cards' to signal to pupils that their poor behaviour has been noted, and that they are at risk of formal sanctions if they do not improve. Similarly, a system of 'green cards' is used to reward pupils for exceptional effort in meeting their school's values. **This system of 'cards' and equivalents such as 'flags' or 'strikes' has been used to great effect in several areas of social life, and future guidance should encourage all schools/trusts to develop their own easy-to-understand systems of behavioural signalling. Awards of such 'cards' should be carefully noted as part of each pupil's behavioural record, and could be integrated into their 'behaviour account' through a clear 'exchange rate' between 'cards' and 'points'.** This would help pupils grasp that, even if they do not misbehave enough to earn a formal sanction, the behaviour that incurs warnings can still disrupt their own and others' learning experience, and can incrementally lead to larger effects on their status within the wider school community.

#### **4.4.5 BEHAVIOUR CELEBRATIONS**

Several of the best-performing schools have a well-developed system of half-termly, termly, annual, or more spontaneous behaviour celebrations, which typically act as 'summary events' to capture pupils' individual and collective behaviour over the preceding period, either class-by-class or across the whole school. These can take the form of regular 'achievement weeks' or 'celebration assemblies' (as in Ealing Fields High School and Manor High School), which mark what pupils have done over the previous (half-)term. Or they can be more specific events triggered if a pupil group's aggregate behaviour has passed a certain threshold level of expectation, such as Ark King Solomon Academy's 'summit party', which only takes place if pupils have acquired enough 'summit stamps' for positive demonstration of school values every day over the previous half-term.

**These regular behaviour celebrations should be a key part of future guidance on school behaviour management, as they neatly tie together several of the other behavioural measures schools pursue.** They also help accustom pupils to the idea of regular team check-ins and progress reports—and to the fact that their granular behaviour can add up to large-scale positive (and negative) consequences.

Some schools also integrate behavioural celebrations into their annual 'speech and sports day' or commencement-style events. Crucially, parents/carers are invited to these as well as pupils, which provides an opportunity for not only public formal praise of pupils exhibiting positive behaviour, but also for informing parents about how to align their behavioural approaches with those expected by the school. **To**



strengthen both of these effects, such annual behaviour celebration events should be one of the key responsibilities of each school's Behaviour Policy Council. This will help give parents/carers and pupils more insight into the operations of school policy and procedures, and a greater stake in ensuring that they are adhered to.

## **4.5 PASTORAL CARE**

Behavioural policies focused on pastoral care include systems of staff–pupil and pupil–pupil behavioural mentorship, creating and expanding the use of individually-tailored behaviour targets, and carefully noting the behavioural components to SEND provision and other school policies.

### **4.5.1 BEHAVIOURAL MENTORSHIP**

All schools recognise that staff at all levels play an important part in pupils' lives as positive role models. This is a key premise of the Core Content Framework for Initial Teacher Training, which places behavioural role modelling at the centre of two of its 'Standards' ('S1 – Set high expectations' and 'S7 – Manage behaviour effectively').<sup>24</sup> Some schools give staff members explicit guidance to ensure that every action, and every form of physical and verbal expression, is carefully calibrated to deliver its intended meaning clearly and accurately. This is a vital for treating pupils as nascent adults and tasking them with understanding not only what is expected of them but also why.

Conversely, pupils closely watch their staff's behaviour, especially for behavioural approval or disapproval. This means that staff need to be trained to minimise ambiguity in their communications, which is as much a question of delivery as of content. **It should be investigated whether there are areas where teacher training programmes can be supplemented with insights from media, rhetorical, and communications training.**

Likewise, all schools already have ways to strengthen the relationship between specific pupils and specific staff (e.g., form teachers, personal tutors). Yet the behavioural component is only generally an implicit or secondary component of these relationships, and only 'closes the loop' to bring in pupils' parents/carers on a few occasions (e.g., parents' evenings, prizegiving days). Some of the schools in our sample have implemented a system of 'key workers' that enables staff to build strong and positive relationships with pupils and their parents/carers specifically on behaviour policy questions. Instead of giving existing teaching or administrative staff more responsibilities for behavioural mentorship, this 'key worker' system should be expanded into **a designated system of full-time Behaviour Support Staff who can act as liaisons between the school, parents/carers, and pupils on positive and negative behaviour questions.**

Many schools emphasise that parents/carers and other visitors to the school also play a part in acting as positive role models and challenging inappropriate behaviour whenever it occurs. Several schools have taken

the additional step of involving parents/carers in the development and implementation of school policies and procedures, in the form of open communication and a shared policy partnership. This recognises the fluid boundary for who holds final responsibility for pupils' behaviour: parents/carers are answerable for their children's behaviour inside and outside school; schools are accountable for their behaviour when in uniform, on the way to or from school, or in any other way acting as 'school ambassadors' in school-organised or school-related activities. This overlap of 'responsibility spheres' gives a strong reason for staff and parents/carers to work together on a number of issues:

- Identifying pupils' concerning behaviour and its causes.
- Staying apprised of situations where pupils have been either perpetrators or victims of negative behaviour.
- Being notified of incidents where physical intervention has been necessary to prevent pupils' misbehaviour.
- Reviewing behavioural support provisions to ensure negative behaviour is avoided.
- Ensuring that pupils understand why respecting policies is important for their own and others' well-being.
- Restoring pupils who have been removed or excluded to normal school life.

Following the logic of clear two-way communication between staff and pupils, some schools have created space for pupils to feedback to staff about their experiences of school policies and procedures, with the aim that their concerns be listened to and appropriately addressed. This builds on situation-specific examples of inviting inputs from pupils, such as by setting their boundaries and routines in a form setting through group agreement. These help pupils grasp the significance of their own and others' behaviour, and gives them the chance to contribute to decisions about what behaviours count as acceptable and unacceptable.

**This should be expanded into a formal Behaviour Policy Council to act as a designated forum for systematic dialogue between school staff, parents/carers, and pupils on the content and implementation of school behaviour policies.** Ultimately, the school retains the prerogative to make final behaviour policy decisions subject to its statutory requirements even in the face of parent/carer and pupil disagreement. But informing these decisions through opportunities for systematic feedback will ensure greater consistency and predictability between behavioural approaches at home versus in school, and greater buy-in from pupils.

#### **4.5.2 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR TARGETS**

In line with the commitment to individuality, the most successful schools have developed clear personal behaviour plans to help pupils modify and improve their behaviour. Based on these schools' best practice, such plans should:

- Treat pupils' behaviour differently based on their own profile of development.
- Be rooted in close observation and discussion involving staff and parents/carers.
- Outline the reasons and rationales for the school's chosen strategies for dealing with the pupil's misbehaviour, their duration, and how they will improve their behaviour.
- Outline clear steps that pupils are expected to take and targets they are expected to meet, as well as the further measures that will be taken if they fail to do so.

Such behaviour plans should be seen as a personalised supplement to the codes of conduct in force for all pupils. On that basis, **in cases of persistent poor behaviour, these plans should be integrated as addendums into the school behaviour contracts that pupils and parents/carers are expected to sign. They should also be calibrated more explicitly to take into account the contextual factors from pupils' 'home lives' that might relevantly impact their behaviour while on school premises or during school hours.**

#### **4.5.3 OVERLAP WITH OTHER POLICY AREAS**

In general, most of the schools sampled for this report acknowledge that it is important for behavioural policies and procedures to be tied into other statutory policies, such as the Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion policy, and especially Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. But even among the best-performing schools, this went only little beyond recognising the need to offer additional support to pupils with SEND or additional learning needs. This support would be targeted to ensure that pupils are capable of understanding and meeting their school's standards of positive behaviour, and of making the 'right calls' where they face a choice between a range of more positive or negative behaviour options.

**This is an area that future behavioural guidance must explore and expand significantly.** SEND provision is currently targeted above all at helping pupils who are falling behind in their educational attainment, with their behavioural performance largely an *ad hoc* afterthought. **Strengthening the close connection between behaviour and learning outcomes can mean adding an explicit behavioural needs component to SEND provision *and* increasing the sensitivity in behavioural policies to pupils' educational needs as part of their personal behaviour plans.**

#### **4.6 TRAINING**

In the case of behavioural training, the schools' policies can be divided into various ways of recording and grading pupil behaviour, formal or informal behaviour teaching, and integrating behavioural expertise into the school's policy portfolio.

#### 4.6.1 BEHAVIOURAL RECORDS AND GRADING METRICS

In general, schools keep confidential records of their pupils' behaviour, focusing especially on any negative, inappropriate, disruptive, or dangerous behaviour they have exhibited, and on any cases of physical staff interventions where these become necessary. Though these records are typically carefully collected and maintained, they are primarily a way to inform the schools' institutional memories. They are a way for staff to support each other in implementing policies and procedures consistently over time, and to keep track of the sheer volume of different pupils' individual behavioural trajectories. What they are not, however, are records that pupils themselves, parents/carers, or subsequent educational institutions and employers can have access to. There is currently no system for pupils themselves to evidence their behavioural record (consistency, excellence, growth, and improvement) in the same way as their academic trajectory.

Some of the best-performing schools have introduced a system of regular behavioural updates for parents/carers and pupils themselves to see, such as Ark King Solomon Academy's weekly 'payslips'. These provide data on pupils' merits, the effort they put into classwork and homework, punctuality, and attendance, which are given an overall score. From the school's perspective, these regular updates and scores help determine when/whether to issue behavioural rewards (including prizes and privileges). But they also allow pupils to 'offset' instances of negative behaviour by accumulating 'credit' on their behaviour record. **This behavioural update and scoring system should be significantly expanded and made a formal component of each pupil's termly and annual results, alongside their examination performance. DfE should also investigate setting a standardised 'points conversion' system to allow each pupil and their school/trust to be awarded a behavioural score for inclusion alongside the existing components of the 'Progress 8' calculations.**

#### 4.6.2 BEHAVIOURAL TEACHING

One of the less well-developed areas of behavioural policies and procedures across all schools in our sample is that of explicit behavioural education as part of the taught syllabus. In general, schools' communication of their behavioural expectations is fairly passive: formulating a code of conduct and expecting pupils and their parents/carers to be familiar with it, and invoking it only in the context of situations where misbehaviour has taken place. Even in the schools that take a more interventionist approach, especially for positive socialisation and explanations of behavioural decisions, instances of behavioural training are largely informal and situation-specific. What is missing is a dedicated component of pupils' instruction that explicitly considers questions of 'good behaviour'.

This clashes with the aspiration to encourage pupils to understand the rationale behind school expectations of proper behaviour, which are currently geared mostly towards explaining and addressing unacceptable behaviour. Where behavioural training is explicitly provided for, it tends to be offered only for staff. It also usually comes in the form of behaviour *management* training, designed to help implement policies and

procedures, including training staff to safely intervene physically if necessary. Occasionally, schools offer pupils semi-formal guidance on *emotional* management. This usually involves helping them develop non-aggressive strategies to express their feelings, to talk about them, to empathise with others, and to self- and co-regulate. But these tend to be targeted above all at early-years pupils, and never go beyond the rudiments of behavioural understanding.

**What is needed is a mandatory minimum regular presence in the curriculum of teaching that systematically considers questions of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ behaviour in theory and in practice.** This can take a number of different forms:

- *Ad hoc* space within classroom teaching for National Curriculum subjects to reflect on behavioural issues as and when they arise.
- A timetabled space within pupils’ (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) school schedule that focuses explicitly on discussion of behavioural norms and exception, routines, as well as sanctions and rewards.
- Explicit ‘behaviour classes’, equivalent to Citizenship or Critical Thinking tuition, that are a graded component of each pupil’s annual learning, with a numerical grade that can also be integrated alongside the academic components of pupils’ results into the new behavioural measure.

Whichever form this behaviour teaching takes, it should be a key part of all pupils’ curriculum from ages 11 to 18. It should use a mixture of independent and group tasks and activities, including research projects, social engagement, presentations, and school outings, to teach pupils how and why behaviour matters to collective stability, cohesiveness, and happiness in communities from school to the country as a whole.

#### **4.6.3 BEHAVIOURAL POLICY CONSULTATION AND SCRUTINY**

Many schools have recognised that it is important—and fairly inevitable—that they harness the expertise of external agencies to provide support for pupils’ behavioural needs. Typically, policies point to educational welfare, health, and social care services as the main ports of call where internal policies or engagement with parents/carers does not lead to improvements in pupils’ behaviour. The same is also true of police involvement for cases of misbehaviour that warrants permanent exclusion.

But some of the best-performing schools have also identified the benefit of working with (e.g.) educational psychologists and educational consultancies to inform their policies and procedures, and of relying on the marginal gains that can be learned from integrating the most up-to-date research data and analyses. This suggests that **all schools and trusts should be encouraged to retain a dedicated link to such external experts through their Behaviour Support Staff, to ensure that their behavioural policies are not only statutorily accurate but also in line with the latest insights.**

**To generalise the benefits of incorporating such external perspectives, the Department for Education should establish a School Behaviour Unit with a dedicated policy scrutiny function.** This should move beyond the DfE's current practice of producing guidance and support for schools through hubs and teacher training, and restore a more interventionist approach to helping schools maintain and improve their behavioural standards. This will require primary legislation, and should comprise data analytics and policy research expertise that covers not only education and skills, but also relevant parts of welfare, health, social care, and policing policy areas.

The Unit should oversee, integrate, and structure the resources for the existing system of Behaviour Hubs, and should have the necessary powers to recommend measures such as policy and leadership changes, recruitment and investment strategies, and (where needed) school dissolution or takeovers by designated academy trusts. Together with the existing scrutiny function of Ofsted, and in collaboration with LEAs, the School Behaviour Unit can act as a roving, hands-on 'think and do tank' empowered to help schools and trusts reform and revise their behavioural policies in response to their particular situational pressures.

## **4.7 SUMMARY**

Overall, the most successful schools have developed behavioural policies that strike a useful, well-judged balance between treating pupils as still impressionable children and as nascent adults. In situations of poor behaviour, staff are trained and instructed to pitch their responses in a way that is sensitive to pupils' age and stage of development as well as the motivation for their behaviour. This relies on the school clarifying its behavioural expectations and how they are communicated to staff, pupils, and parents/carers. Staff at the best-performing schools encourage pupils to develop a mature professionalism in their attitude to work and personal interactions in their school settings. They teach pupils to set clear boundaries between 'school life' and 'outside life', between themselves as pupils and themselves as people with active developing social attachments. This includes the 'twin prongs' of firmer interpersonal distance as a trade-off for firmer mutual respect between pupils themselves.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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This report has conducted a detailed analysis of the behavioural approaches of the top 20 non-selective, non-faith state schools in the most recent available Progress 8 rankings (2022), supported by a comprehensive comparison of learning outcomes and contextual factors in the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 non-selective state schools. Its findings lead to a number of specific insights and recommendations in the areas this report has evaluated. Key recommendations are underlined.

### *BEHAVIOUR IN CURRENT EDUCATION POLICY*

Intervention in state schools on behavioural and disciplinary grounds is only triggered when pupils' standards fall to a level that is 'unacceptably low', which leaves school behaviour a binary cut-off. **School behaviour should be assessed using a scalar measure so that schools' disciplinary performance can be 'graded' in a more granular way. A 'Behaviour 5' behavioural calculation should be created, modelled on the way Progress 8 criteria are calculated.**

The education policy landscape so far has overwhelmingly focused on negative behavioural issues such as exclusion, bullying, restraining, and confiscating illicit items. **Behaviour policy needs to engage in equal detail with the requirements for 'good' behaviour, via a national framework for positive standards and policies that schools are expected to implement.**

Progress 8 calculations offer a fair way to assess and compare the educational benefit that pupils gain from attending a particular school, focused specifically on the 'value added' that pupils achieve between their KS2 and GCSE academic results. **'Behaviour 5' calculations need to include the separate but equally important 'value added' by schools on behavioural improvement: compliance, absence/attendance, exclusion rates, or other criteria of pupils' behavioural 'growth' during their time at a given school.**

The new Education Investment Areas proposed by the Levelling Up White Paper, along with the proposed network of school behaviour hubs to improve school attendance, provide Government with a powerful framework to pursue place-based interventions in school procedures and policies.

**These hubs should have their remit expanded from 'best practice' guidance and support to an explicit intervention capacity in cases of behaviour management dysfunction, such as severe and sustained disruption and bullying, dangerous and risky behaviour, and infringements of pupil–pupil boundaries. Hubs should not just be centres of excellence that schools can turn to for advice on behaviour management, but conduits for proactive 'on the spot' solutions for how to deal with learning disruptions.**

The White Paper envisages schools pooling their curriculum expertise through the National Academy, as well as benefiting from external expertise through partnerships with FE and HE institutions as well as out-of-school activity providers (such as employers, community bodies, and other professional institutions). **Schools' horizontal and vertical collaboration should be given explicit behavioural content, by integrating the professional expectations and codes of conduct from external institutions into schools' value statements and the rationales for pupils' behaviour requirements.**

Government proposals for improved social care and SEND services, Family Hubs, Start for Life Services, and an Early Career Framework entitlement for teachers' professional development are important and helpful, but remain woefully underspecified.

One of the Levelling Up White Paper's main aspirations is to generate 'pride in place', boosting the sense of belonging and rootedness among local area residents. But so far, this is defined largely in terms of national, regional, or local identity, without any equivalent for other forms of collective (e.g., school) identity. **Schools should add 'pride in place values' to the 'British values' they are already expected to cultivate in their pupils. Pupils' school activities should be more explicitly linked to the resources, opportunities, and identities, of their local communities.**

The Schools White Paper has advocated a shift towards positive socialisation in behavioural expectations and disciplinary approaches, including treating behaviour as a curriculum subject and focusing more strongly on schools' reward systems. **The DfE must specify in greater detail what role behavioural teaching will play in pupils' and schools' learning outcomes. Behavioural guidance should specify more clearly how**



the operation of sanctions and rewards is joined up in each school. Future guidance must specify more precisely the boundaries and overlaps in responsibility between SEND and behavioural policies and provisions. Government must be sensitive to the burden that the growing number of statutorily required policy and procedure documents impose on schools' teaching and support staff, and instead target the formulation of intuitively joined-up policies sensitive to school context.

The Government has proposed giving school staff access to a fully-funded training scholarship to undertake a National Professional Qualification in Behaviour and Culture, and has pledged to introduce more effective continuous professional development courses for primary and secondary school teachers. **All behavioural qualifications as part of teacher training or professional development should be available to staff at all career stages, through programmes of lifelong modularised learning.**

The Schools White Paper envisages drawing on specialist support and expertise to improve the quality of pupils' education, especially the Education Endowment Foundation. **The DfE should introduce its own dedicated consultancy and intervention unit, focused on improving school behaviour and its link to learning outcomes.**

The White Paper proposes creating a national curriculum body that draws on the expertise of schools, trusts, teachers, subject associations, national centres of excellence, and educational publishers, to create adaptable and accessible curriculum resources for use across UK schools. **Behavioural skills should be included in the remit and outputs of the national curriculum body. The DfE should introduce a national behaviour policy body to work in parallel to the national curriculum body.**

The Schools White Paper proposes a range of new data-collection strategies, including a data system to understand pupils' individual attendance patterns across the UK, and a National Behaviour Survey to understand what pupils, parents/carers, and school staff think about the behavioural standards in their schools.

Data-collection on pupils' attendance needs to be sensitively recorded and differentiated by the different reasons behind their attendance patterns (e.g., health, out-of-school challenges, truancy). The National Behaviour Survey should offer scalar measures of staff perceptions of classroom stability, pupil self-discipline, job satisfaction, and personal well-being, to create a granular picture of the behavioural situation in UK schools rather than relying on a binary cut-off point.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Some of the best schools in the country under Progress 8 measures are non-selective state schools. **To find 'best practice' on educational (and behavioural) 'value added' in the state school sector, policymakers must focus on those non-selective institutions that have proven capable of 'keeping pace with the best' among the selective schools.**

Prioritising English and maths results may artificially deflate non-selective schools' Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores by downplaying their GCSE teaching in other areas. Progress 8 rankings discriminate against schools that focus on technical or vocational subjects rather than more 'academic' EBacc content.

**More detailed data is needed on the equivalent grade 5 and above proportions for EBacc and non-EBacc GCSE subjects other than English and maths. Measures of educational 'value added' must be broadened to incorporate a wider sweep of the subjects that pupils are able to take, to better understand the link between behavioural policies and not only academic/classroom but also technical/practical learning outcomes.**

Progress 8 rankings do not differentiate between either pupils staying in education and pupils entering employment, or between pupils pursuing different categories of (secondary, further, or higher) education. **Progress 8 rankings need to introduce a better disaggregation of education entry/exit data to more clearly evaluate schools' relative success at boosting pupils' learning outcomes.**

### ***PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS***

Comparing the top 50, median 50, and bottom 50 state schools' Progress 8 results does not support the idea that smaller, specialised schools are better at 'adding value' to pupils' learning outcomes than larger, generalised ones. **Learning should be integrated more deeply across schools, including pooling curriculum provision, teaching and administrative staffing, and materials to maximise pupils' access to rare or more resource-intensive subjects. This could be 'franchise-based' within a multi-academy trust, or place-based within a given LEA.**

The Progress 8 scores corroborate the idea that lowering absence and persistent absence is key to boosting individual and collective learning outcomes. **Schools and trusts should set concrete target figures to prevent absence from inhibiting learning outcomes: 5% for the percentage of possible mornings and afternoons recorded as absences, 10% for the percentage of persistently absent students.**

In a non-selective context, expanding SEND provision is linked to marginally improved learning outcomes, but the current structure of Education, Health, and Care plans do not adequately address pupils' needs, and is barely effective in overcoming individual or collective deficits in learning outcomes. **Future schools policy reforms urgently need to revisit the formulation of EHC plans to make them more explicitly focused on boosting learning outcomes.**

Pupils whose first language is not English are disproportionately highly represented in both selective and highly-performing non-selective schools. **In line with the pedagogical benefits of multilingualism, acquiring a second language should be made a prominent feature of learning outcome targets,**

including EBacc, Attainment 8, and Progress 8. Further research is needed to investigate whether school selection might have a positive role to play in wider policies of ethnic, national, and cultural integration.

The Progress 8 results corroborate the idea that there is no clear or necessary relationship between family socioeconomic status and learning attainment and progress, a relationship the OECD has described as “disadvantage is not destiny”.

### **STAFF CHARACTERISTICS**

The best-performing schools tend to have a large, diverse core of teachers at the heart of their staff body, rather than a large ‘reserve army’ of teaching assistants. Meanwhile, more work needs to be done to determine the optimal number of school support staff, as well as the right distribution of responsibilities among them across SEND support, mental and physical health provision, finances and resources, behavioural monitoring, and logistics.

DfE teaching investment should be targeted at giving schools the scope to broaden and tailor their curriculum offering, and funding targeted teacher training courses to upgrade and upskill their existing teaching assistants. The DfE should undertake a comprehensive survey of school support staff across the UK state sector, in order to develop clear national guidelines about what support roles are the most effective at boosting learning outcomes.

Schools whose teaching staff have a lower number of pupils to teach on average, and who offer salaries towards the higher end of the average teacher salary payscale, tend to come out higher in the Progress 8 rankings. **School investment must be urgently steered towards hiring and training more highly-qualified full-time teachers to increase state school’s teaching capacity. Government should commit to target schools funding at junior teachers in the lower half of their schools’ salary payscales, with the aim to raise average state school teacher salaries to £50,000 p.a. by the academic year 2025–26.**

### **DISCIPLINE**

Disciplinary policies and procedures need to be consistent, well-defined, and clear to staff as well as pupils and their parents/carers, and they must have a range of choices that allow staff to tailor their response to pupils’ behavioural profiles and the severity of their misbehaviour. **National behavioural guidelines must strike a balance between empowering staff to make immediate disciplinary decisions, and holding them to a clear standard of accountability.**

Positive socialisation is key to encouraging and increasing good behaviour among pupils, in particular to make them more thoughtful, caring, polite, and positive. **Future guidance should stress the benefits of**

public and private, formal and informal praise in making pupils want to contribute to turning their school community into a well-functioning space. Behaviour guidance should give a much greater role to clearly-defined positive reflection.

Pupil–pupil and pupil–staff accountability is a key way to ensure that the disciplinary system is fully transparent to all pupils. **Disciplinary response guidelines should be refined to ensure that staff ‘first responders’ are (wherever possible) known to the pupils involved in behaviour incidents.** National behaviour guidelines should prioritise cultivating a norm of ‘team accountability’ that encourages pupils to come forward as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators to minimise long-term damage to the school community. Schools and trust should be encouraged to explore expanding existing ‘monitor’ systems into behavioural ‘buddy’ peer support structures.

### **INTERNAL REGULATION**

Many schools prefer tangible rewards over sanctions as ways to motivate pupils to conform to expected standards of good behaviour. **Future guidance on rewards should stress the value of having both individual and collective reward schemes, to encourage pupils to pursue personal achievement while remaining aware of the need for social responsibility and respect.**

Systems of duties and sanctions often act as important mirrors to rewards and privileges. **Behavioural guidance should encourage schools to treat rewards and sanctions for pupils as a live ‘behaviour account’ that pupils can ‘pay into’ through good behaviour, and from which the school makes ‘withdrawals’ when they exhibit poor behaviour.** Systems of conferring and withholding privileges (e.g., taking part in school trips, attending school events) should sit alongside ‘behaviour accounts’, complementing them through an ‘exchange rate’, where reaching a certain ‘points deficit’ automatically triggers the removal of certain privileges, at the school/trust’s discretion.

Restorative community action is a well-established way for schools to make pupils address the impact of their negative behaviour, and understand the impact their misbehaviour can have on the quality of life and learning at their school as a whole. **Future behavioural guidance should explore ways to expand restorative duties as a way of fostering pupil–pupil accountability.**

There are a large number of items that schools have found to have a deleterious effect on their learning environment: those banned on grounds of health and safety or illegality, mobile phones and other electronic devices, accessories, jewellery, and non-school clothing. **Schools and trusts should be explicitly mandated to formulate policies that exclude anything that they deem inessential to learning from school premises.**

A major way of cutting out unnecessary distractions from learning is to put careful limits on how pupils move around school, including 'one-way systems' in corridors and restrictions on which parts of the school they are allowed to be in during and between lesson. The same is true of 'hands off' policies, which ensure that pupils limit unnecessary contact and respect each other's personal space. **National behaviour frameworks should integrate clear guidelines around pupils' use of school space and the limits of physical interaction between them while on school premises.**

## **FINANCIAL MEASURES**

'Fair play' prizes reward good behaviour by acknowledging in a tangible way the pupils who have consistently demonstrated the conduct expected of them. Where possible, these prizes should feed into a self-replicating upwards spiral, so that the prizes themselves allow pupils to more easily stick to their conduct expectations and contribute to school life in future. **Prize rewards should be calibrated to pupils' individual behaviour plans and targets. Schools should be empowered to award prizes in the form of either vouchers or a cash 'bonus' credited to pupils and their parents/carers.**

Enrichment activities are a useful and highly instructive way to reward pupils individually or collectively for good behaviour. **Schools/trusts and LEAs should partner with local businesses, Further and Higher Education institutions, cultural bodies and sites, public service providers, and LAs to provide systematic opportunities for place-based enrichment trips, which pupils would be eligible to participate in based on their behaviour records.**

Temporarily or permanently confiscating items that distract pupils from the learning process creates another self-replicating spiral, preventing pupils from disrupting school life. **Behavioural guidance should empower schools to explore using 'conditional confiscation' for items not essential to the school curriculum as 'collateral' against pupils' behaviour.**

Schools use low-level fines and other financial penalties to sanction pupils for persistent absence and lateness. **Future guidance should investigate giving fines and other financial penalties a greater role in school behaviour management, focusing on what a fair, sustainable national maximum level for such financial sanctions should be.**

## **COMMUNICATION**

School ethos and values statements commonly share commitments to **integrity, self-esteem and respect, individuality, diversity, achievement, and responsibility.** These six values should be integrated into future values guidance more widely, alongside the existing 'British values' requirement.

Pupil codes of conduct are an important and well-established way to make pupils aware in succinct and unambiguous terms what ‘good’ behaviours are expected of them. **Future behavioural guidance should stipulate much more precisely the content that codes of conduct should outline, and aim for a more robust minimum standard of behaviour, to apply nationally rather than just within individual schools/trusts or LEAs.** DfE should investigate rolling out a national mandate for school ID cards. DfE should implement mandatory school behaviour contracts to be signed by pupils and their parents/carers across all schools/trusts.

Pupils respond best not just to instructions but clear explanations of the rationale behind why certain behaviours are unacceptable and how they should achieve an acceptable behavioural standard. The greater sophistication of understanding involved in such explanations is a key part of treating pupils like nascent adults.

**Explanations of school policies and procedures should be included in future communication guidance for teacher training. Explanatory conversations should involve staff, pupils, and parents/carers wherever possible, for all communications about behavioural decisions, positive as well as negative. Future guidance should require all schools and trusts to include dedicated time set aside in schedules and lesson plans for these kinds of explanatory discussions.**

Unspoken, intuitive behavioural signals and symbols take on a large share of the disciplinary work before staff need to recourse to formal responses. **Future guidance should emphasise the use of behavioural signalling wherever possible, so that staff can ‘start small’ when addressing poor behaviour and escalate to formal sanctions only as a last resort.**

Signals such as ‘red/yellow/green cards’, ‘flags’, and ‘strikes’ are a useful tool to give pupils a clear indication that they are in line for formal sanctions or rewards. **Behavioural guidance should encourage all schools/trusts to develop their own systems of behavioural signalling. Awards of ‘cards’ should be noted as part of each pupil’s behavioural record, and integrated into their ‘behaviour account’ through a clear exchange rate between ‘cards’ and ‘points’.**

Behaviour celebrations are a powerful way to publicly summarise and acknowledge pupils’ behaviour over the course of the preceding half-term, term, year, or other period, especially if these are opened up to parents/carers as well. **Behaviour celebrations should be a key part of future guidance on behaviour management, as they tie together several of the other behavioural measures schools pursue. These celebrations should be one of the key responsibilities of each school’s Behaviour Policy Council (see below).**

## **PASTORAL CARE**

Staff members play a crucial part in pupils' lives as positive role models, and need to be trained to minimise ambiguity in their communications. **Future research should explore whether teacher training programmes can be supplemented with insights from media, rhetorical, and communications training.**

Achieving the best results in pupils' behaviour relies on a close, strong relationship between staff, pupils, and parents/carers. At the same time, it is not sustainable to keep placing further responsibilities for behavioural mentorship on existing teaching and administrative staff. **Schools/trusts should be mandated to introduce designated full-time Behaviour Support Staff to liaise between the school and pupils' families on positive and negative behaviour questions.**

There is a fluid boundary between schools and parents/carers for who holds responsibility for pupils' behaviour within and outside school, which makes it imperative for them to work together on behaviour issues to ensure that pupils face clear and consistent expectations and approaches in their 'home life' and 'school life'. **Each school should expand collaboration between staff and parents/carers into a Behaviour Policy Council, which can act as a forum for systematic dialogue between staff, parents/carers, and pupils on the content and implementation of school behaviour policies.**

Individualised personal behaviour plans are a key part of helping pupils modify and improve their behaviour by setting them meaningful, specific targets. **To increase pupil accountability, personal behaviour plans should be integrated as addendums into the school behaviour contracts that pupils and parents/carers are expected to sign. Personal behaviour plans should also more explicitly take into account contextual factors that might impact pupils' behaviour at school.**

Schools have developed informal approaches to manage overlaps between their behaviour policies and procedures and their other statutory policies, including EDI and SEND provision. **Future guidance must expand and systematise these relationships, clarifying areas of school life that are the sole and joint responsibility of different policies. An explicit behavioural needs component should be added to SEND provision, and behavioural policies must be made more sensitive to pupils' SEND requirements through their personal behaviour plans.**

## **TRAINING**

Schools typically keep records of pupils' behaviour confidential and exclusively for internal use, but some have introduced a system of regular updates and scoring systems to keep parents/carers and pupils up-to-date about their behaviour. **Behaviour update and scoring systems should be expanded and made a formal component of each pupil's termly and annual results, alongside their examination performance.**

DfE should investigate establishing a standardised 'points conversion' system to let each pupil and their school/trust be awarded a Behaviour score, which should be included as a core component of the 'Behaviour 5' measure calculations.

Schools have begun to consider the place of explicit classes and other formal training to help pupils understand the rationale behind school expectations of good behaviour. **Behaviour teaching should be expanded to form a regular part of the National Curriculum, systematically considering questions of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour in theory and practice. Behaviour Classes could be a graded component of each pupil's annual learning, giving a numerical grade that can be integrated alongside the academic component of pupils' results into the 'Behaviour 5' measure.**

Schools acknowledge the importance of drawing on the expertise of external agencies to provide optimal support for pupils' behavioural needs, including working with educational psychologists and consultancies. **All schools/trusts should maintain dedicated links with external experts via their Behaviour Support Staff to ensure that their behavioural policies are not only statutorily correct but also in line with the latest insights. To generalise the benefits of incorporating external perspectives, the DfE should establish a School Behaviour Unit with a dedicated policy scrutiny function, which can act as a 'think and do tank' empowered to help schools/trusts revise and update their behavioural policies.**

Overall, this report indicates that differences in behaviour policy matter to pupils' learning outcomes, so behaviour must lie at the heart of future education policy. Its recommendations are intended to help state schools across the UK become environments best-suited to forming flourishing persons and thereby a flourishing society. They provide an outline for how schools can create and refine their existing behavioural policies, evidenced by an examination of what works in the best-performing schools. They also offer a series of observations about the vital contextual factors that can exacerbate or mitigate problems of behaviour management in UK state schools.

These conclusions are intended as a challenge to Government, with the aim of galvanising the adoption of 'best practice' insights either in the form of national standards, or in a more place-based format through regional and local centres of educational excellence. Together, it is hoped that these will be able to achieve a true behaviour revolution in the UK's state school system.



## **STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATORS**

- **Behaviour accounts.** School rewards and sanctions systems should be joined up into a live 'behaviour account' that pupils can 'pay into' through good behaviour, and from which the school makes 'withdrawals' when they exhibit poor behaviour. Behaviour guidance should provide an indicative national 'points conversion' framework for different types of reward and sanction (such as reprimands, detentions, or suspensions for negative behaviour, as well as stickers, certificates, or commendations for positive behaviour).
- **Behaviour records and behaviour scores.** The 'running tally' of the points surplus/deficit that pupils have on their behaviour account should be converted into a termly 'behaviour score'. This should be made a formal component of each pupil's yearly school results, made available to pupils themselves and their parents/carers alongside their examination performance, to evidence either behavioural consistency, growth, or decline. This 'behaviour score' can then be provided as supplementary information for their later UCAS and job applications.
- **Behaviour 5 ranking.** The Ofsted ratings system should be supplemented by a behavioural equivalent of the Attainment 8 and Progress 8 measures for academic outcomes. Like these, the DfE should introduce a standardised points conversion system for a basket that includes: (1) schools' 'behaviour score' (as an average of its pupils' scores); (2) compliance rates; (3) rates of absence and persistent absence; (4) rates of lateness; and (5) number of temporary or permanent exclusions. Comparison of schools' Behaviour 5 scores at KS2 and KS4 would allow for a similar 'value added' assessment as Progress 8 offers for academic results.
- **'Fair play' prizes and 'foul play' penalties.** Financial rewards and sanctions should be given a greater role in school behaviour management. Schools should be further empowered to issue prizes/bonuses or penalties/fines to pupils and their parents/carers if they show instances of outstanding positive and negative behaviour. These prizes and penalties should be calibrated to pupils' individual behaviour plans and targets. National behaviour guidance should offer clear advice on what a fair, sustainable maximum level for any financial rewards and sanctions should be.
- **School ID cards.** The DfE should roll out a national mandate for school ID cards, to allow school and non-school authorities to hold pupils to account for their behaviour on school premises and beyond. These cards should be scannable, linked to a smart device app, that allows school staff, parents/carers, and pupils to easily access (and in the case of staff, amend) each pupil's behaviour record and behaviour account.
- **Behaviour contracts.** The DfE should implement a national mandate for school behaviour contracts, to be signed by pupils and their parents/carers at all schools and academy trusts. These will help hold pupils accountable for their actions at school, integrate the mentorship roles of staff and parents/carers, and make the behavioural expectations pupils face at home and at school more consistent and predictable.

- **Behaviour teaching.** The DfE should set a mandatory minimum weekly quantity of behaviour-focused teaching, where staff and pupils systematically consider key questions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviour in theory and practice. This can be conducted as separate ‘behaviour classes’, or integrated into existing curriculum provision, either within National Curriculum subjects or alongside Critical Thinking and Citizenship classes. Behaviour guidance should offer indicative teaching and testing materials to provide a minimum expectation for this learning objective.
- **Bans and interdictions.** Clearer policies are needed around the items schools are empowered to exclude as inessential to learning, such as smartphones or other electronic devices. Existing policies on staff intervention should be expanded to include clear national guidelines around pupils’ use of school space, and to better protect pupils’ personal boundaries and circumscribe the limits of physical interaction between them while on school premises.
- **Behaviour policy councils.** The DfE should mandate all schools and academy trusts to create forums for systematic dialogue between staff, pupils, and parents/carers on the content and implementation of school behaviour policies. These are vital to providing clarity and continuity for pupils about the behavioural expectations they face at home and at school.
- **School Behaviour Unit.** Government should create a dedicated consultancy and intervention unit with a policy scrutiny function that draws on the expertise of welfare, health, social care, police, and education consultancy services. This Unit should oversee, integrate, and structure the resources for the existing system of Behaviour Hubs. Accountable to Ofsted, it should play the role of a ‘think and do tank’ empowered to help schools and trusts revise and update their behaviour policies and develop strategies to improve their behaviour performance.

### ***TACTICAL ACTION POINTS FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAMS***

- **Positive socialisation.** School staff should be encouraged to give pupils clear, proportionate praise when they exhibit positive behaviour. This praise can be public or private, formal or informal, and handed out to pupils individually or in groups. It should always draw a precise link between pupils’ character and effort and the value their behaviour is embodying.
- **Positive reflection.** School leadership teams should ensure that dedicated time is set aside in schedules and lesson plans for explanatory behaviour discussions led by the staff. Whenever pupils receive a reward or sanction that is entered on their behaviour record, staff should find structured opportunities to hold explanatory conversations with pupils and parents/carers to help reinforce expectations about positive as well as negative behaviour.
- **Behaviour celebrations.** Schools should introduce half-termly, termly, and annual ‘summary events’ to mark pupils’ behaviour over the preceding period. The aim is to acknowledge pupils’ individual and collective efforts to reflect the attitudes and values the school expects of them in their actions, with praise and other rewards for ‘best behaved’ and ‘most improved’ pupils and class groups.

- **'Behaviour buddy' system.** Schools should expand the 'first responder' model of 'monitor' or 'prefect' systems beyond just reporting or issuing low-level sanctions for negative behaviour. Senior pupils should also act as sources of peer support and accountability, acting as 'ports of call' for pupils who are having trouble with behaviour expectations, or as a 'support person' who can accompany pupils to some disciplinary meetings to ensure greater transparency.
- **Reconciling behaviour and SEND policy.** Schools' personal behaviour plans should explicitly take into account contextual factors that might impact pupils' behaviour, recognising that the experiences they have outside the classroom (on or off school premises) can strongly impact their performance within it. Schools must clarify areas of separation and overlap between EHC and personal behaviour plans, add an explicit behavioural component to SEND provision, and make behavioural policies more sensitive to pupils' SEND requirements.
- **Behavioural signalling.** School leaderships should develop clear systems of pre-disciplinary, pre-intervention signalling, in the form of 'yellow cards' and 'red cards' to signal that negative behaviour has been noted, and 'green cards' to signal that pupils are making exceptional effort towards positive behaviour. Awards of 'cards' should be included as part of pupils' behavioural records, and integrated into pupils' 'behaviour account' via a clear 'exchange rate' between 'cards' and 'points'.
- **'Conditional confiscation' as a behavioural sanction.** Schools should institute policies where items that are not essential to the school curriculum can be confiscated as a form of 'collateral' against pupils' behaviour. Pupils who exhibit negative behaviour must demonstrate that they meet the attitudes and values the school expects of them to 'earn back' access to these items on school premises.
- **Enrichment trips as a behavioural reward.** Schools should provide systematic opportunities for place-based visits and outings for pupils who exhibit either consistently positive or greatly improved behaviour. These should be supplementary to the school curriculum, and schools, academy trusts, and LEAs should partner with local businesses, Further and Higher Education institutions, cultural bodies and sites, public service providers, and local authorities. This would help schools make best use of local facilities, and cultivate 'pride in place' in their pupils.
- **Behaviour support staff.** School leaderships cannot expect teaching and administrative staff to take on all current and future responsibilities for mentorship and behaviour management. Instead, they should introduce designated full-time behaviour support staff with a dedicated career path within the school and wider sector. These staff can liaise between the school and pupils' families on positive and negative behaviour questions, taking the pressure off existing teachers and administrators.
- **Expand teacher training.** Schools should provide staff with the opportunity for on-the-job or part-time continuing professional development. As well as the latest 'best practice' in course delivery, curriculum development, and behaviour management, training programmes should be supplemented with insights from media, rhetorical, and communications training. This will help staff minimise ambiguity in their communication with pupils, and play a stronger, more proactive part as positive role models.

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The ResPublica Partnership Ltd (ResPublica) is an independent non-partisan think tank. Through our research, policy innovation and programmes, we seek to establish a new economic, social and cultural settlement. In order to heal the long-term rifts in our country, we aim to combat the concentration of wealth and power by distributing ownership and agency to all, and by re-instilling culture and virtue across our economy and society.

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This report explores how effective approaches to behaviour management can lead to better learning outcomes for pupils in the English comprehensive school system. It examines the behavioural policies, learning outcomes, and contextual institutional characteristics of 150 UK non-faith, non-selective state schools, representing the best-, median-, and worst-performing comprehensive schools in the 2022 Progress 8 rankings.

The report closely analyses and compares these schools' behaviour management approaches to evaluate how differently they treat positive and negative behaviour, as well as other statutory policies that have a close bearing on how their behavioural policies operate, including codes of conduct and Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. It accompanies this with an analysis of the available Government data collected as part of the Progress 8 score rankings, including various breakdowns of academic attainment scores, and statistics related to pupil management and school staff structures.

Using these findings, the report develops a series of recommendations for reforms to schools policy in the UK, in particular for the behaviour guidelines to be implemented at the national level. Drawing on the latest best practice across the state school sector, it proposes ten strategic recommendations for future national and regional legislation around school behaviour, and ten tactical action points for school leadership teams to prioritise in their behaviour policy implementation.

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