

The Framework for Intervention: an introduction

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Summary

This article describes a system (Framework for Intervention) for dealing with behaviour problems . Problems in the current system are discussed. There is a description of the Framework and the trial of the procedures that took place in 1997. The current programme in Birmingham is outlined. The article argues that the system is both unique and possibly the only systematic hope in the fight to reduce behaviour problems and consequent exclusions and Statements.

Introduction

‘Behaviour in Schools: Framework for Intervention’ (Ali et al, 1997) is a document of guidance written as part of a Birmingham Education Department two-year project (‘New Outlooks’) which ran in 1995-7. Much of what it contains will be familiar as it covers guidance- on whole-school, classroom and community issues related to behaviour- which is based on generally accepted good practice and reflective of the many other ‘packages’ in the field.

The section on approaches to individual behaviour problems marks a departure from usual practice. Here, a ‘Code of Practice’-like staged approach is proposed (though in the Framework the ‘Stages’ are called ‘Levels’ to avoid confusion). However, the initial ‘referral’ process (at level 1) is quite different and the action taken in response marks a fundamental shift from current practice. Rather than proposing individual programmes, ‘Level 1’ is entirely based on addressing the environmental factors in which the behaviour occurs.

Before describing the detail of the process some examination of trends in current approaches to behaviour is worthwhile in order to demonstrate the radical difference the Framework system is offering.

Critique of current trends

The three-level approach in Framework for Intervention is a ‘no-blame’ system to addressing concerns over behaviour in school. However, in discussing why a no-blame approach is a radical shift from the current state of affairs it is hard to avoid being negative about much of the current environment for dealing with behavioural difficulties.

Recent years have been marked by constant change in education in Britain. While many believe that some of the change is for the good and has led to improvement (Stuart, 1994), there is no undisputed evidence that education is in a better state (Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1994). Indeed, increases in exclusion and statementing² (Parsons, 1994; Hayden 1997, Robinson, 1998)- give some cause to doubt that society is getting a better deal out of its investment in the education system than it did twenty years ago.

Almost all recent reforms in England and Wales have been based upon a centralisation of planning; National Curriculum, national standards policed by OFSTED, government control of training, National projects on literacy and numeracy: coupled with devolving responsibilities to schools; local management/ fair funding, grant maintained status, schools’ control of exclusion process (Hopkins, Ainscow and West, 1994). However, the resulting combination of standardisation of the content of education with fragmentation of responsibility for carrying it out has led to some possibly unintended outcomes (Riley and Skeltcher, 1998), with the resulting ‘educational market’ having some negative outcomes for children with special educational needs and behaviour problems.(Corbett, 1994, Housden 1993)

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² Statementing The legal process used in England and Wales for ensuring provision for children with highest level of special educational need

In many ways, behaviour in school has not been an area in which governments have interfered too directly. There is no 'National Behaviour Initiative' to match those of literacy and numeracy. There is no behavioural curriculum to supplement the National Curriculum and whilst there is description of the type of behaviour looked for by OFSTED there is no information in the guidance to inspectors for examination of the systems in schools for dealing with it.

The DFEE (1994) did attempt to clarify advice to schools in their 'six pack' of guidance 'Children with Problems' though the advice was fairly general and in places lacking in consistency. For any coherent advice from a government publication, it is necessary to go back to the excellent Elton Report (DES, 1989). More recent schemes backed by large amounts of Government money put directly into schools have been based on ideas, such as learning support units, which have little significant evidence backing them.

None of this is surprising. The area is a minefield for politicians (as seen clearly in the events at Manton and Ridings schools) and thus they have tended to avoid the dangers of prescription knowing that the chances of failure are very high.

Yet the problems, which have always existed, are growing. Exclusion in England and Wales has generally increased year on year since the current system was established in 1986 with notable increases probably linked to the effects of the institution of the 1988 Education Reform Act. Teachers' Associations have pupil behaviour at the top of their agendas (for example, Watkins, 1997). Special schools for children with EBD are high in the lists of OFSTED failures (Bull, Personal Communication, 1997) while there is a growing realisation that many children are lost completely to the education system through exclusion and non-attendance (Parsons and Howlett, 1996).

There are generally three forms of reaction to these problems. The first centres on exclusion of 'the trouble-makers' so that those pupils who want to work can do so. This view is reflected by increased exclusion rates and schools admissions procedures to limit potential problems. Parents have some ability to effect a complementary process by choosing schools which appear to contain fewest disruptive pupils.

The second approach involves redefinition of the problem in terms of special educational needs. To do this, the Education Act, 1996 requires that pupils' problems have to be re-defined in terms of disability (EA.1996, Sec 312). The solutions involve 'treating' the disability as though it were a disease through a variety of means; counselling, behaviour therapy, cognitive therapy, music therapy and so on. Facilities catering for this approach include support services, medical services and special schools. While the different methods used tend to have little in common, all such services tend to be insufficient to meet the level of demand.

The third reaction can utilise elements of the first two but differs in that it concentrates on prevention-nipping problems in the bud before they take hold. There has always been strong support for this approach and it is very much in vogue at the time of writing (DFEE, 1998, DfES, 2002). However, whilst the Government strongly advocated prevention in its circular to local authorities concerning Behaviour Support Plans (DFEE, 1997), of the examples given only 5 out of sixteen were preventative, and the recommended headings dealing with provision outweighed those dealing with prevention 4-1. Subsequent approaches in the recent Behaviour Improvement Initiative attempt to redress this imbalance but much is still based on a within child model. The notable exception- Behaviour Audits- may offer some move towards a more ecological approach but probably will look too much like a type of local Ofsted Inspection to offer long term and deep change.

Table 1 shows a typical sequence of cause and effect in the current situation for dealing with behavioural difficulties:

- **Behaviour problems are very stressful to teachers, headteachers and schools**
- **Support services have limited resource and so have to concentrate on the most severe and entrenched cases**
- **By the time support services can be involved it is often impossible to ensure the pupil's continued inclusion**
- **Schools lose faith in support services' attempts to remedy situations**
- **Support Services become, in many cases, the vehicle to get children out**
- **Separate provision is always full and under pressure**
- **Frustration increases in mainstream provision**

Table 1. Support and Provision problems for behaviour difficulties- a circular process

Because this is obvious to many headteachers they recognise that the current situation is unsatisfactory and would prefer earlier intervention (Nottinghamshire LEA, 1995). But they are also suspicious of any changes that look as though they might be designed to reduce their freedom to exclude or to request Statements.

Whilst support services support the need for early intervention they fear that under current practices they would be overwhelmed with individual casework. Thus, extremely promising preventative approaches such as the Better Behaved Schools project in Leeds (Galvin and Costa, 1994) have built-in 'wash out'. The caravan moves on and the day to day pressures remain. Added to this, heads of 'referral based' services know that preventative work offers little security in practice; is not easily accountable, and is not protected by being a statutory requirement. Thus, while prevention is advocated the current systems do not appear to be effective in supporting such work.

Meeting the needs

In Birmingham, the workers on the New Outlooks project came to the view that for success in dealing with these problems, any proposal would have to meet some exacting requirements, that is, to have:

- A systemic approach offering early support- but linked to an approach commensurate with school improvement principles and 'learning organisations' rather than 'casework' (Senge,1990)
- Applicability to the full range of schools and nurseries
- Ability to be effective quickly
- Provision of a clear basis for schools to gain support from the LEA for all behaviour difficulties
- No sense of contributing towards 'overload' in schools.

With this in mind a group of support workers from different agencies (psychologists, teachers and social workers) in consultation with headteachers and classroom teachers, wrote a comprehensive guide for schools and LEAs called the 'Framework for Intervention'. Much of this document was not new, rather it represented a summary of current good practice at School and Classroom level along with a chapter on parents and the community.

What marked it as different was that it offered guidance for all schools and support services - rather like the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice- for all behaviour problems. The crucial chapter contains a system rather than methods for changing children's behaviour. This system differs from

previous approaches in that it always starts by working on the environment and is closely linked to school improvement approaches.

Central to the system were some core principles, namely:

- Children's behaviour is central to the learning process and is an intrinsic element of education
- Problems in behaviour in educational settings are usually a product of a complex interaction between the individual, school, family, community and wider society
- Social interaction based on mutual respect is a fundamental basis of an optimal educational environment (Williams et al, 1997)

How Framework works

Level 1

The key to the 'three 'level' approach in Framework for Intervention is the use, at the earliest stage, of a 'Behavioural Audit' which is aimed at achieving an 'Optimal Behavioural Environment'. The Optimal Environment is defined as that which would exist if every environmental improvement that is reasonable to expect were made.

The trigger for Stage 1 is an 'expression of concern' by any member of staff. There are no criteria for this- staff are encouraged to trigger early- usually well before any procedures would have taken place under any current systems. Any behaviour problem is included whether felt to be due to 'naughtiness' or having a special need (a distinction found to be meaningless in local research in Birmingham). The concern may centre on one or more pupils.

The expression of concern should not be confused with a 'referral'; the concerned person normally retains responsibility for and power over the process throughout level 1- a significant departure from the Special Needs Code of Practice. In this role they are described as the 'Lead Person'.

It is recommended that all schools identify a 'Behaviour Coordinator' (or Behaviour Coordinator *Team* in secondary and large schools) to whom the member of staff will take their concern. The Behaviour Coordinator can provide advice and help during level 1 both in carrying out the Audit and the production of a 'Behavioural Environment Plan'.

The Audit will usually be carried out by the Lead Person (most often a class or subject teacher) who completes a 'Behavioural Environment Checklist'. This is a comprehensive list of 82 items covering a whole range of factors affecting the environment from whole school policies, through physical factors to the classroom organisation and personal style of the teacher. Figure 2 shows part of the checklist in use in Birmingham.

SECTION A Whole school policies

Rules and implications:

1 A behaviour policy exists and is effective	⑤	④	③	②	①
2 Staff have clear understanding of the policy	⑤	④	③	②	①
3 Rules are communicated frequently and effectively to pupils, staff (including non-teaching), parents and governors	⑤	④	③	②	①
8 Behaviour problems are dealt with effectively in the light of equal opportunity issues	⑤	④	③	②	①

Support for Staff

9 There is collective responsibility for behaviour management in school	⑤	④	③	②	①
10 Staff feel confident to acknowledge difficulties	⑤	④	③	②	①
15 Support services are used systematically, efficiently and effectively	⑤	④	③	②	①

Parents and Governors

16 Parents are involved to best effect in helping with problems	⑤	④	③	②	①
19 Governors are appropriately involved in issues relating to behaviour	⑤	④	③	②	①

SECTION B Classroom Organisation

20 Equipment is easily accessible	⑤	④	③	②	①
21 Furniture arranged to best effect	⑤	④	③	②	①
30 Pupils are placed reflecting social relationships	⑤	④	③	②	①
31 Room organisation meets differing curriculum demands	⑤	④	③	②	①
32 Chalk board/white board etc easily seen	⑤	④	③	②	①
36 Quiet external environment	⑤	④	③	②	①

SECTION D Classroom rules and routines

Rules:

52 Are few in number and clearly phrased	⑤	④	③	②	①
56 Are clearly displayed in the classroom	⑤	④	③	②	①
57 Behaviour to meet rules is taught	⑤	④	③	②	①

Rewards:

58 Are valued by pupils	⑤	④	③	②	①
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Sanctions:

63 Are related to behaviour	⑤	④	③	②	①
64 Are administered fairly and consistently	⑤	④	③	②	①

SECTION E Out of Classroom

74 Routines for movement around school site clear	⑤	④	③	②	①
75 Short break time rules understood by pupils	⑤	④	③	②	①

Table 2. A selection of items from the Behavioural Environment Checklist

The fact the Audit is carried out by the Lead Person (rather than the Behaviour Coordinator -or worse still, an outside 'expert') is a key factor in the process and reflects a fundamental principle. We believe that it is essential, that the process be seen by the 'consumer' (the person raising the concern) as enabling, blame-free and non-threatening. (See Williams and Daniels, 1999 for the basis for this view.) This allows for the system to ensure that real concerns are tackled. Maximising class teachers' control at level 1 helps with all these factors.

When the checklist is completed, if the lead teacher decides to tackle a particular area through the behavioural environment plan, this is accepted so long as it is feasible and has some connection to the behaviour causing the concern. This is the case even if the Behaviour Coordinator believes that the chosen area is not the most important or relevant.

Before implementing the environmental plan a *baseline* measure of the behaviour(s) causing concern is made. This is important as the effectiveness of the plan is measured through its effects on individuals as well as the environment.

The plan runs for at least six weeks after implementation. Individual behaviour problems occurring during this time continue to be dealt with under the school's normal disciplinary procedures.

Even at this early level, which will often happen before the teacher (or other) would have thought of referring the problem under current systems, the Behaviour Coordinator can expect external support (in Birmingham from educational psychologists and Behaviour Support Service teachers). The support has two functions; to provide help, reassurance and information to the Behaviour Coordinator, and, in certain circumstances, to offer direct input with the work around formulating and operating the Behavioural Environment Plan. However, this role has to be carried out with some subtlety; diving in with expertise and donated answers to all problems is against the fundamental principle of empowerment.

Some professionals find this hard to do in practice. The temptation to be the expert is often intense because doing so is often rewarded by the reaction of others. Framework procedures work on the assumption that, in terms of effecting long-term change in classrooms, donation of expert constructs is not important (and can be counter-productive). Success often comes from confident teachers working out their own solutions using sympathetic support. (for another example of this see Daniels, Creese and Norwich, 1998). Framework for Intervention puts the facilitation of this as the prime objective; allowing for information from others (including experts) to be used by classroom teachers as part of their own plans.

At the end of the time set for the Behavioural Environment Plan there is a review which would usually involve only the Lead Teacher and Behaviour Coordinator. Parents of the children causing the concern are most definitely not involved at Level 1- this would focus on the individual child as the problem. With the Framework the first assumption is that it is some improvement in the environment that is necessary. The school may contact parents over the child's behaviour if it would have done so before the introduction of the Framework - for example as part of the Behaviour/Discipline Policy, but not to discuss the detail of the environmental plan. The school might, of course, discuss environmental plans in general with all parents of children who would be affected.

Key differences at Level 1 from previous systems are shown in Figure 3. Experience has shown that this is a very powerful combination.

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- **earliest intervention**
 - **emphasis on environmental action rather than programmes for individual children**
 - **the teacher with the concern maintains control over the process**
 - **a comprehensive single approach to all behaviour problems whether 'disciplinary', 'EBD' or 'psychiatric'**
 - **ability to deal with individuals or groups**
 - **internal and external support from the earliest stage.**

Table 3. Innovative elements of Level 1 of Framework for Intervention

Levels 2 and 3 and beyond

The move to level 2 comes as a result of continued concern about the 'Target Behaviour(s)' even after Behavioural Environment Plans have been implemented fully. At this point, Individual Behaviour Plans are introduced. These will be familiar already to many schools (sometimes as 'Individual Education Plans') dealing as they do with behavioural interventions directed at individual pupils. This does not mean that Behavioural Environment Plans are dropped at this level, rather that the IBPs are used in addition.

The IBP will usually involve the Behaviour Coordinator and Lead Teacher in shared responsibility: sometimes the Behaviour Coordinator will be the Lead Teacher. The IBP will involve either pre-emptive work with the pupil(s) (through counselling, special sessions etc) or through particular responses to wanted and unwanted behaviour (individual reward systems etc). However, it is recommended that none of these plans involve the use of 'internal exclusion' such as being sent out of the class: such action would, of course, make evaluation of the Behavioural Environment Plan problematic.

Behavioural Environment Plans continue at Level 2 in much the same way as at Level 1- either building on Level 1 work or tackling new areas of the environment. By this time the analysis of the environment will be enhanced by the information from previous work. Assuming that the necessary trust has been built up, plans might be dealing for the first time with some contentious issues, such as the teacher's own approach to the pupils.

Level 3 is very similar to Stage 3 of the Code of Practice. It centres around an Individual Behaviour Plan and may involve direct intervention and support from outside the school. Usually, though not always, pupils on Level 3 will have some involvement with the Code Stages- sometimes at Stage 3. The Framework for Intervention system has been designed to work in tandem with the Code, so effectively Stage 3 and Level 3 can be run together.

In Birmingham, where there are tight criteria for triggering Statutory Assessments, it has been agreed that Levels 1 and 2 of the Framework for Intervention can be offered in place of Stages 1 and 2 when seeking Assessment.

Naturally, Statutory Assessment is one of the options available for post Level 3 work, but in no way do we see the Levels as 'stepping stones' to a Statement. The Framework suggests a new idea as an alternative- the Joint Action Plan. Under this idea, pupils whose behaviour problems are severe, but where special educational needs were no more than a small component, could become subject to an intervention plan which was conceived and operated jointly between appropriate services. This is a codification of the way that some Authorities are moving (DFEE, 1998(b)) and the adoption of the JAP would provide a structure for this much needed multi-disciplinary work. However, the concept is still in its infancy and may need more experience of working with the Framework before it can be developed.

Trialling

The Framework was first tried in January-May 1997 in 19 primary and two secondary schools (Daniels, 1997). There was some initial scepticism and suspicion on the part of Teachers' Associations particularly over the dangers of more bureaucracy. By the end both they and staff in the schools into which the procedure was introduced, had a general acceptance of procedures and the limited documentation required.

As the Framework for Intervention is designed as an all encompassing system intended for use by whole LEAs, the evaluation of the trial was limited to two areas; the practicability of the system in school and the effects on perceptions of those who used it. Neither of these are highly susceptible to quantitative evaluation though an attitude survey was conducted with all school staff pre- and post- the trial. Support workers and Behaviour Coordinators were encouraged to state problems and benefits through the use of questionnaire.

There was an extraordinary reaction to the process wherever it was used. Almost universally, the extensive Behavioural Environment Checklist was greeted with praise. This came as a particular

surprise; it had been thought that in times of teacher overload this part of the process might be considered the most difficult to introduce.

In post trial interviews all but one of the classroom teachers and all the Behaviour Co-ordinators rated the process as helpful or very helpful. Like the teachers, Behaviour Coordinators particularly mentioned the fact that the Framework provided a structure and the basis for a consistent approach. The clarity of 'someone to go to' was mentioned by many. All Behaviour Coordinators felt that the Framework had been helpful or very helpful in addressing behaviour difficulties in school. The Behavioural Environment Plan received a 70% approval rating. In response to information from those who found it less useful it has been made clearer that it was not essential to complete a full Level 1 programme if the problem could be solved quickly.

Wider developments were seen. 50% of Behaviour Co-ordinators reported that the school's behaviour policy had been modified in some way as a result of the school's participation in the trial scheme. One Behaviour Co-ordinator reported that the Behaviour Environment Checklist was being used to inform the re-designing of the playground. A number of Co-ordinators made reference to the fact that the Framework had opened up the debate concerning pupil behaviour. As one put it, "There is more openness between staff - people don't feel so isolated - they're willing to acknowledge problems".

Most surprisingly there was a change in general attitudes of staff shown by a survey administered at the start of the trial and end of the trial. We did not anticipate major changes in attitudes given the limited duration of the trial and indeed, since the introduction of new systems of working can initially prove quite stressful, it was even possible that there might be a negative shift in attitude. The actual results of the attitude survey were thus better than anticipated.

For six of the items there was no overall change. For the remaining six items, however, there was a shift to the positive. Comparing responses at the end with the beginning, respondents:

- felt more strongly that their school had a good system for dealing with behaviour problems
- thought their school was better at involving external agencies in planning to meet behavioural needs
- said they were more confident to be able to use a range of strategies to manage behaviour in school.
- were more inclined to believe that teacher behaviour markedly affects the conduct of children in school.
- felt more supported by teacher colleagues in meeting behaviour problems in the classroom.
- were more inclined to believe that most inappropriate behaviours that are based on non-school factors can nevertheless be changed by schools.

At the end of the trial all schools were invited to a meeting attended by Councillors, the Chief Education Officer, his three senior officer colleagues and representatives of all the Teacher Associations. The schools were invited to report their experiences and their comments reflected the general conclusions gained from the formal evaluation.

External evaluation has been conducted by the School of Education at Birmingham University. The results of this more extensive trial have confirmed the value of the approach though it is still too early to say how far the concrete measures of reduction of numbers of exclusions and EBD Statements will reflect this .

Future Work

In Birmingham the work is included in the Behaviour Support and the Education Development Plans. The Framework for Intervention was always designed to be an approach for Authority-wide implementation in the same way as The Code operates on special educational needs.

The effects of the Code on developing systems in schools for dealing with special educational needs has been extensive and in the main positive. The Local Education Authority intends to develop the Framework as the basis of its approach to early intervention across all its schools by August 2002. But even this, in the birthplace of Framework, may be overtaken by the wide-scale adoption of the process in Scotland. (Scottish Executive, 2001)

We are very confident that it will reflect the success of the Code of Practice, and in the longer term the twin key objectives of reducing the need for Statements and Exclusion will be achieved. Indeed, if Framework for Intervention does not manage this it is difficult to see what will reverse the current trend in both these measures for as far as the authors are aware this approach is the most comprehensive and systemic in this country.

The Framework could become the basis for preventative and developmental work being the nationally accepted response to behaviour problems, at last providing the optimal environment for teachers to be able to meet their own concerns with the confidence that; they will not have to wait, they will receive help and that they will remain in control.

Such predictions are based on our experience so far with the practice in Birmingham. However, we believe that the process is also theoretically well- founded. In another article (Williams and Daniels, 2000) the present authors argue that the innovation of the Framework approach is grounded in psychological, sociological, school improvement and general management theory. Further, it is proposed that the principles used might have wider applicability in other areas of education and beyond.

However we have observed that change is slow and comes up against some difficulties. Some of these difficulties were predictable because of the current climate of seeing behaviour as a problem of the individual child, and because of the general problem of :

“the stability of human behavior” “based on “quasi- stationary equilibria” supported by a large force field of driving and restraining forces” (Schein, 1995) .

Simply, we have found that ‘people do what they do for a reason’, however much what they do seems to be counter-productive or unsuccessful. (As an example see the prevalence and endurance of internal referrals by subject teachers to heads of year in secondary schools). The reasons for what people do are not trivial, they are based on reaction to pressures and constraints and are not easily changed. They have the characteristics, as Schein (1995) observes, of : *“personal psychological defenses or group norms embedded in the organizational or community culture”*. (see Lewin, 1948 for an account which reflects much of our experience).

Thus we are looking at ways to overcome barriers to change and methods to internalise a ‘learning organisation’ approach to behaviour in schools. Whether this can be done without overt governmental support in England remains to be seen. Hopefully, as current Government projects fail to show the hoped-for results as we predict they must, the understanding of the need for long term and radical change may occur. However hard it is to introduce, and however much it cannot fulfil the politician’s dream of instant success, in the end this systemic and cultural change may be the only way towards minimising behaviour problems in schools.

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