**Square Peg & Not Fine In School** evidence for behaviour consultation August 2021





#### INTRODUCTION

## Square Peg and Not Fine In School

<u>Square Peg</u> (Team Square Peg CIC) is a not-for-profit company that exists to effect change for all children and young people who face barriers to attendance. The website can be found here: www.teamsquarepeg.org

Not Fine In School (NFIS) is a social enterprise that supports the same families. It has a closed Facebook Group of 17,500+ parents, growing at a rate of approximately 800 pm. The website can be found here: www.notfineinschool.co.uk

# Evidence included in this report

Not Fine In School has run surveys in the past which touch on behaviour (May 2018, completed by 1,661 respondents, and March 2020, completed by 714 respondents). The full report comparing both surveys can be made available on request.

Square Peg and NFIS have also run a specific behaviour survey (launched on 27 July) to collate evidence on the impact of behaviour policies for the families of children who face barriers to attendance. This remains open, but the survey results are drawn from the period 27 July – 5 August. To date there have been 239 responses. All parent comments from the behaviour survey, and any relating to behaviour from the previous surveys, are included in an Appendix.

The survey can be seen here: https://s.surveyplanet.com/5Y89JPG7H

Some of the comments have been lifted to support the evidence in this report. Quotes in purple are taken from the NFIS surveys, quotes in red are taken from the recent behaviour survey.

Of the 239 respondents in the behaviour survey, 46.4% had children at mainstream secondary school, 30.1% at mainstream primary school, 7.9% at a special school and the rest were receiving other forms of education, were NEET or were without a school place. 74.5% of the children had identified SEND. Another 18.4% had either suspected SEND or were struggling at school.

Throughout this report SEND refers to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and SEMH refers to Social, Emotional and Mental Health.

For more information, please contact hello@teamsquarepeg.org





#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Three overriding themes emerge from our survey. We have expanded on these, drawing from our knowledge and experience of working with children who face barriers to attendance. That can include both exclusion (and other behaviour sanctions) and non-attendance.

# 1. Behaviour is communication. We must identify the underlying drivers

One of the key messages from the survey is that all behaviour is a form of communication – whether disruptive, masking or non-attendance – and a signal of underlying need.

However, there was a general feeling that this is not widely accepted, that policies are insufficiently flexible, and that not enough attention is given to identifying the underlying drivers behind these behaviours. For children with SEND/SEMH this can be a particular problem, & many feel that consistency is prioritized over individual needs.

Parents of these children and informed professionals understand that behaviour is communication and not enough is being done at a whole school, indeed policy level, to identify the child's underlying needs; one-size-fits-all is not inclusive or equitable.

This came across very strongly in our survey and is a particular issue for children with SEND/SEMH, who may struggle to comply with rules unless adjustments are made in response to their individual needs. Many reported multiple and repeated sanctions, which failed to change behaviour.

It seems commonplace to prioritise standard behaviour policies over individual need. Not enough is done to identify the drivers behind disruptive behaviour; even the schools who try to do this, do so inconsistently with too much dependent on individual staff.

### 2. Strict behaviour policies can cause trauma, and aren't effective

There are undeniable links between behaviour policies, exclusion, non-attendance, SEND and mental health.

In many cases, parents cited examples of where their child's mental health and attendance had been negatively affected by strict and inflexible policies. This often led to repeated sanctions (clearly not resolving the behaviour issues) and/or non-attendance.

Where schools made their policies more punitive following the pandemic, this tended to worsen their child's mental health.

There is an inextricable link between persistent absence and behaviour policies. Most persistent absence is triggered by disabling anxiety, although the underlying causes are varied and multi-faceted. Many of the 916,000+ persistent absentees have undiagnosed or unsupported SEND and/or SEMH as primary need. Students who are struggling to cope will either mask and become invisible until they can no longer attend, or their stress will manifest in disruptive behaviour (particularly if there is underlying SEND). Our behaviour survey evidences this.

Zero tolerance (and even 'warm, strict') behaviour management policies are outdated and out of step with the latest research on neuroscience, trauma, and attachment. Standardised behaviour management frameworks rooted in behaviourism are unable to easily flex or adapt. They create tension with the recommendation for personalised, supportive structures and the existing legislative duty which promotes independence, resilience, and better outcomes long term.

They're also ineffective for many, often escalating cycles of reduced educational outcomes, anti-social behaviour, and increased mental health difficulties, which in turn place increasing numbers at risk of becoming persistently absent, NEET and/or in a cycle of Tier 3 and 4 CAMHS dependency.





The trauma caused by prioritising consistent, disciplinarian behaviour policies is evident in the many parent comments (see Appendix). In many cases it impacted negatively on a child's mental health and exacerbated attendance difficulties. Where policies have been made more punitive, there has been a corresponding worsening of these issues.

In terms of a mobile phone ban, parents generally felt that this was a distraction from more important issues, that schools already had effective policies in place, and that it is important to maintain a fair and flexible policy. This included allowing phones for children travelling to and from school, and for those children whose anxiety could be alleviated by knowing they had their phone and were able to reach a parent if necessary.

## 3. Parents want trauma-informed practice, and better training for staff

It is very clear that parents have serious concerns about punitive approaches to behaviour, that these have a negative (and often very serious) impact on their child's mental health, and that, in their view, disciplinarian policies don't work.

Almost without exception, parents asked for a more compassionate, trauma-informed approach, with improved training for staff, in terms of trauma, attachment and SEND.

There were several examples of schools who had taken this approach, with positive outcomes.

Parents were very clear about what they would like to see. They almost universally had concerns about policies rooted in behaviourism, didn't believe they were effective, and wanted to see a more flexible, compassion-focused approach to behaviour.

Children and young people with SEND/SEMH (and arguably all children) respond well to relational, individual frameworks, where they can build trust, experience psychological safety, and feel understood. Strict, standardised behaviour management policies nearly always have a negative impact.

They exacerbate attendance difficulties and ignore the neuroscience of child development and the importance of secure attachments. They also ignore what we now know about working with vulnerable learners, the impact of childhood adversity and our understanding of trauma, both in terms of prevention and healing.

Parents are asking for trauma-informed, attachment-aware policy and practice, built on secure foundations of continuous CPD and training for all professionals working with children and families, and in particular schools, to reduce the reliance on strict, rigid, zero tolerance policies. Effective modelling from these professionals, combined with a strong local offer in the community for families and services, will ensure greater synergy, parity of support and increased resilience.



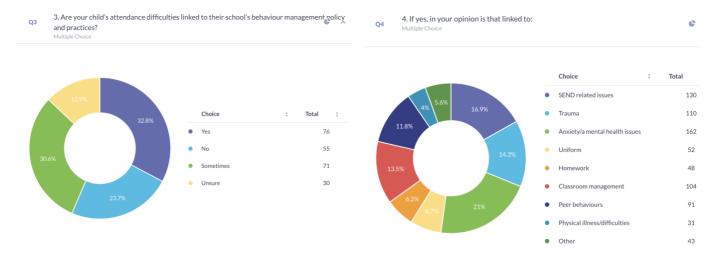


#### **SURVEY FINDINGS**

1. We need to acknowledge the correlation between unmet need, behaviour, persistent absence, exclusion, and deregistration

Many persistent absentees have exhibited 'unacceptable' or 'disruptive' behaviours at school alongside, or leading to, an inability to attend and are therefore impacted by behaviour policies. NFIS surveys have evidenced high numbers of pupils with anxiety leading to non-attendance. In the 2020 survey a staggering 84% (595 pupils) had a suspected or confirmed anxiety disorder diagnosis. Many of the parents in the NFIS closed Facebook group will testify that unmet need has led to anxiety and 'disruptive' behaviours, and that the sanctions were not only ineffective, but damaging and often traumatising.

In our behaviour survey, 63.6% of respondents said that their child's attendance difficulties were linked to the school's behaviour management policy and practices. 13.4% were unsure and 23% said they were not linked. In 52.3% of cases this was linked to anxiety or mental health issues, SEND or trauma. Classroom management and peer behaviour also contributed. Many parents ticked multiple reasons. The 'other' category included staff behaviour and attitude, lack of training, sensory overload, and attachment issues. Excessive use of restraint was also mentioned twice.



"Zero tolerance policies added to my child's school anxiety and caused him trauma. This in turn led to barriers to attendance and the trauma and anxiety increased therefore creating a vicious circle of nonattendance and mental ill health. This was only resolved by changing schools to a specialist setting with more trauma informed policies and practice."

"The adversarial style is really scary. The go to style is shout and shame by many of the staff. My child is extremely sensitive and lives in fear of this happening not necessarily to him but anyone. He's been absent since March 21 because he's too scared to be in school."

# 2. Behaviour is communication; we need to understand the drivers and unmet needs behind it

Behaviour is a form of communication. Rather than punishing the behaviour, we should be looking to understand the underlying issue(s). Strict policies tend to levy out consequences, without sufficient, timely investment in identifying the underlying needs.

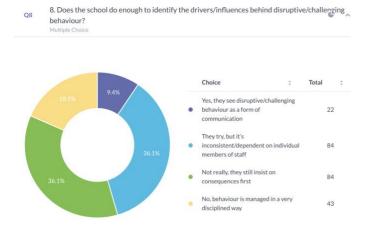
The response to attendance difficulties is a case in point. Many of these children find getting into school extremely difficult, but rather than praise them when they manage to arrive, they are reprimanded for being late which only serves to increase their anxiety. The lack of understanding, not only of the inability to attend but of the drivers behind this behaviour, significantly impacts our ability to resolve these problems. Strict behaviour policies exacerbate the problem and reinforce the lack of understanding amongst individual school staff and other professionals.





In our survey we asked if school was doing enough to identify the drivers behind disruptive or challenging behaviour. Only 9.2% parents said it was, 36.8% said they tried, but it was inconsistent and depended on individual staff, and 36% said that the school still insisted on consequences first.

If the underlying drivers and needs are not identified, the solutions will be inappropriate, potentially putting students in the wrong setting. A highly anxious child will not do well in Alternative Provision, alongside children with other drivers underlying their behaviour. Another consequence of not identifying the underlying drivers is that behaviour management is prioritised over support.



"They are looking at behaviour in a vacuum without looking at the cause"

"Behaviour is a form of communication. Schools must explore why etc before applying 'Behaviour' policies. E.g., you can't ignore a child's Autism when looking into their behaviour/communication. Usually support and education is warranted NOT punishment"

"Underlying behaviour there are always other issue. They are the tip of the iceberg. This behaviour needs exploration not punitive measures."

Impeccable behaviour can also be a sign of a child who isn't coping. This is where an understanding of masking is crucial, as is trusted relationship with both pupils and their families. Parents need to be able to raise concerns and be heard.

"Schools are not considering masking in autistic girls where their needs are not being met in school. They will probably be impeccably behaved at school. This is a barrier in the system for identifying Sen. Bad behaviour in school is not the only sign that children are not fine in school."

"Good behaviour when actually masking is just as much of an issue. Strict behaviour policies encourage this in vulnerable children causing trauma."

### 3. A one-size-fits all approach is not equal or inclusive for all students

Only 14.2% of our respondents thought the school's behaviour policy was fair and appropriate. 44.8% agreed with some of it, 31.4% agreed with very little of it and 9.6% did not agree with any of it.

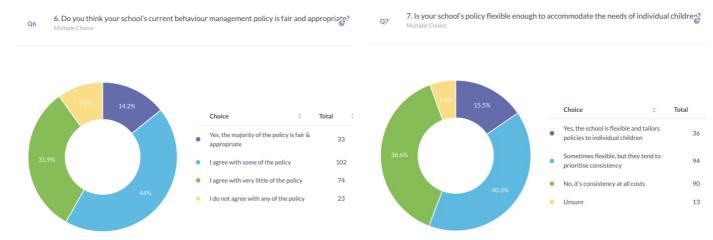
There's a misnomer that consistent behaviour policies necessitate the same sanctions for every child, despite their individual circumstances. This is not equality, just as inclusivity does not mean squeezing all children into the same one-size-fits-all provision. As one parent rightly pointed out "if a child was blind, they wouldn't get into trouble for not looking at a teacher". We are all individual, and it is even more important for children that we don't strip away this individuality by treating them all the same. We should be teaching children to accept and allow for each other's differences.





Behaviour management policies therefore need flex to accommodate the needs of individual students. A whole school approach to behaviour does not have to mean an inflexible system, where consistency of sanctions is applied above all else (although sadly it often does). A small number of pupils will prefer stricter rules around discipline, for the feeling of safety it gives them (although in our behaviour survey only 1.3% of respondents said this was true of their child), but this does not have to be excessively strict/zero-tolerance. Compassionate approaches are also not in conflict with all children and staff being kept safe; there still need to be consequences for poor behaviour but this must be rooted in a recognition of the drivers behind that behaviour and coming from a place of compassion. Many schools prove that this approach is effective.

We must also be wary of those children who respond to discipline because they equate discipline with love, due to underlying trauma/negative childhood experiences.



"It is important that neurodivergent children's behaviour is not measured against that of neurotypical children. There should not be the expectation on them to change / to fawn to do things they can't do, like sit still, sit in a crowded assembly, remain regulated in a crowded noisy classroom."

"It's impossible to apply a one-size-fits-all policy. We're dealing with young people who all present differently. One may have so much anxiety that they miss school. One may become violent out of anxiety or not being able to cope. Unless one addresses the root cause of the problem, the behaviour will not change. School are still too focused on consequences..."

"I have a lot to say about the lack of accountability of schools' failures in fulfilling their duty of care towards SEMH SEN children. Absolutely shocking. Many teaching practices and settings are completed unsuitable and staff knowledge and attitude shocking and cause emotional harm. Parents are blamed. Families destroyed through school trauma on top of the primary SEN."

And yet "In mainstream secondary [there was] very careful management to ensure the appearance of sanctions was given to other students without ever imposing anything that felt like a sanction to my son (as acceptance that behaviour was due to SEND)"

### 4. Strict behaviour policies don't work; they do not fit the neuroscience and often cause trauma

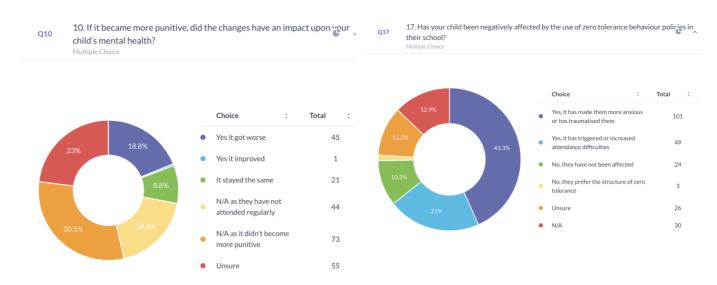
43.5% of respondents said that their child had become more anxious or were traumatised by the use of zero tolerance behaviour policies, and another 20.9% said it had triggered or increased their attendance difficulties. However, discounting those who were unsure, or for whom the question wasn't applicable, these figures rose to 57.5% and 27.6% respectively, versus 13.3% who claimed their child hadn't been negatively affected and 1.7% who said they preferred the structure of zero tolerance.





We know a lot more about neuroscience and the causes and impact of trauma than we did years ago, when current behaviour and attendance policies were introduced. Research over the past 20-30 years into child development and the neuroscience of the causes and impact of trauma and adversity has led to huge advancements in underdstanding behaviour and caring for our children and young people. This research is often beyond current behaviour and attendance policies. Few psychologists and parenting experts would endorse traditional behaviourist approaches these days. We must start to recognise that our inflexible, overly academic, and behavioural education system is causing trauma in many children and young people. As one parent said, "Due to these policies being rooted in Behaviourism (a theory developed via the study of animals which is not conducive to child development, neuroscience or protecting mental health), I am extremely concerned about the impact of current policy and agenda on our children and young people."

SEND/SEMH is a particular issue when it comes to inflexible policies, or where consistency is deemed necessary. Autistic children, those with ADHD or sensory issues all fall foul of strict policies, and no amount of punishment is going to change their behaviour. It's clear that these children simply become anxious, and potentially absent. Other children who are anxious or with mental health issues often live in fear of these behaviour policies. It is unlikely they are open to learning whilst in a highly stressed state.



A significant proportion of the parent comments in our survey focused on the trauma caused by strict behaviour policies and a lack of understanding of their child's underlying needs. This was particularly prevalent for children with identified SEND/SEMH and those with high anxiety.

"Our son wasn't diagnosed until age 8 with ASD so he was forced to go through first school and nursery with no support and on behaviour plans for being labelled a naughty boy. He was restrained pretty much every day of his school life and we now feel he has PTSD as a result, which is impacting his teenage experience of school. His behaviours are communicating that his needs are not being met. I don't think they ever have been during his whole school life, and I don't think they ever will be sadly."

"My daughter's 'obedience' was clearly valued more highly than her self identify and mental health. School hasn't just failed in providing her with a suitable education, it has been a traumatic and harmful experience."

"Both current supportive setting and previous setting with rigid behaviour policies were recently judged outstanding for behaviour by Foster but previous settings approach contributed to my child's trauma and current setting is working to heal the damage caused."





"[No sanctions himself, but] spent each day every day trying to be prefect and not get into any trouble. Would be anxious even observing other children being told off or getting anything wrong. Which eventually led to burnout."

# 5. Staff need better training, then they wouldn't have to resort to strict behaviour management policies

Our understanding of trauma and neuroscience has moved on in leaps and bounds in recent years, and the education system and its behaviour policies have failed to keep up. A large number of parents (particularly those whose children struggle in the school environment, for whatever reason) would like to see improved training for staff. This needs to be incorporated both at teacher training level and within consistent, mandatory CPD programmes.

Staff also need their own support, in order to support their students. We recommend that all school staff have clinical supervision, as happens in other sectors. Their own levels of stress and mental health will undoubtedly impact the children and young people in their care.



"Teachers need more training across the board on trauma, connection, attachment difficulties, FASD (and other needs) and the effect that trauma has on development Punitive behavioural policies are not suitable and, like other punitive measures like smacking, should be put out to pasture as a thing of the past. In addition, more understanding of the development of sensory processing."

"The SEND system and CAMHS are not fit for purpose. Children are misunderstood, misrepresented and reasonable, educated adjustments are not made. There is a massive lack of understanding and appropriate training regarding SEND diagnoses and challenges."

"I am worried about the effects on both staff and students when they are being asked to comply with policies that go against what is known about in restorative, compassionate, relational, trauma informed approaches and the resulting behaviours if those needs are not met."

"Inexperienced and unempathetic teachers giving arbitrary punishments multiple times a day pushes my son to his limit. There is no de-escalation - in fact teachers regularly escalate my son's distress, something for which he will be further punished."

# 6. Parents want relational, trauma-informed behaviour policies; they are extremely concerned about zero-tolerance

There was almost universal agreement that behaviour policies should be trauma-informed and that zero-tolerance (or even 'warm strict') policies don't work. 96% of parents are concerned about the existing guidance for school-wide punitive approaches to address behaviour and discipline within education settings and 97% don't think it's the right approach. 57% don't think it helps to improve behaviour.



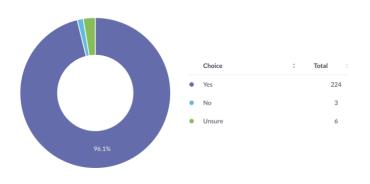


51% want to see trauma-informed, compassionate policies to improve behaviour 'management' in schools (and a further 34% want improved training for teachers). Many feel this is particularly important post-pandemic.

With nearly 1m persistent absentees (13% of the school population), and particular cohorts of children adversely affected (those on Free School Meals, those with SEND and certain ethnic minorities) it is important that the needs of these children and the views of their parents are considered in any new guidance on behaviour management.

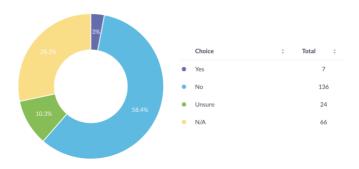


Q16 16. Do you think zero tolerance is the right approach to manage discipline in schools? Multiple Choice





18. If your child's school has a zero tolerance behaviour policy, do you/does your child think it helps to improve behaviour?



"Trauma-informed neuroscience built on attachment and inter-relational methodologies will lead to better outcomes, improved health and wellbeing, satisfaction, attainment and progress - a hat-trick of positive results for everyone, especially our CYPs."

"My son's school is fantastic. They have trauma informed and attachment trained approaches with a school psychotherapy service, willingness to work with the LEA and offer flexibility around attendance where needed and have cultivated a warm and compassionate approach which has filtered through to children and parents alike. It is fantastic."

"[We need] more trauma training and trauma-led policies, but also monitoring and power of those outside school (i.e., local authorities and Ofsted) to ensure heads don't go against the real trauma informed advice of experts and put their results and attendance figures above the needs of the children. Heads need to be accountable for this and for the use of isolation, exclusion and non-attendance."





"The ability to learn is affected by Mental wellbeing. Different options for learning should be available and teachers need to truly understand how much trauma is out there in the children's life, ESPECIALLY AFTER COVID."

"After the year everyone has had, such measures are unhelpful at best and extremely damaging at worst"

# 7. Challenging behaviour and non-attendance are often regarded as parenting issues

Parent blame is almost universal around persistent absence, since the traditional narrative dictates that the only explanation for absence is physical illness, truancy or (in the most severe cases) a parent who deliberately prevents their child from attending. Unbelievably some LA literature still perpetuates this myth. There is zero recognition of the role played by CYP mental health and severe anxiety and the fact that this is rising exponentially (ironically due to a large extent by the pressures of the system).

Children are also blamed for difficulties beyond their control.

## Taken from the NFIS May 2020 survey:

"My son was 11 when he was taken from me due to me being unable to get him to school. I have not seen him for 5 years. Everything was blamed on me. I was later identified as Autistic which I thought my son had, but I was according to them making up signs no one else saw. My son is now 16 been in a unit and is leaving with no qualifications as he could not sit in mainstream class due to behaviour. My son tells me it's not your fault it is the schools that have let me down."

"[The way my son's behaviour is treated at school] has affected my confidence and my mental health and also my son who has missed out on so much education. I just don't know how they get away with it. I don't challenge them as I want to keep a good relationship with them as my son is still there."

"Parent blaming is first response to a child who masks heavily at school (sent on a parenting course). My concerns for my daughter, I am recently diagnosed autistic, not considered at all or believed."

"The bullying and abuse parents and children receive through the school system needs to stop. A tick on a register does not ensure the delivery of best education to any child. I do not trust the school to care appropriately fir my child and this does not nurture a good relationship. Communication needs to be both ways not just me justifying and explaining and sharing information."

"Better support is needed and advice on who to turn to for help. Parents are left feeling alone or to blame for their children who may have additional needs which have not been addressed or looked into. I have been asking for help with my son for over a year to be brushed off or empty promises made. His EHCP was supposed to be done last year but it was an outside agency not the school that have started the process."

## 8. Behaviour hasn't got worse

In the case of our survey respondents, it seems that few schools changed their policies as a result of the pandemic, either post lockdown or returning from school holidays. Whether they changed their policies or not, it seems that behaviour hasn't got worse, with 43% saying that behaviour has stayed the same and only 11% saying it had become worse. Where policies were changed, 7% said that behaviour got worse

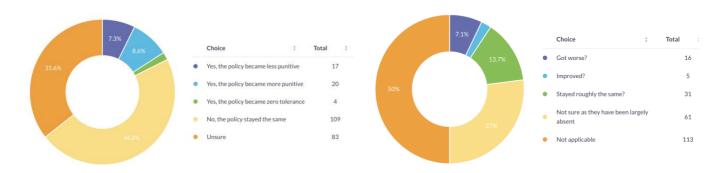
However, where policies did change and became more punitive (in 9% of cases), 67% of respondents said it made their child's mental health worse, 1% said their mental health improved and for 31% it stayed the same.



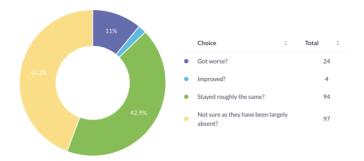


## for 14/25 respondents (56%), this had a negative impact on their child's mental health.





11. If the school's behaviour management policy DID NOT change, does your child thing that behaviour in school is now any different? Do they think it has...



"This is a waste of money as there isn't an overall problem with children's behaviour. You should be throwing money to support children's mental health. As always throwing money at the wrong area. Maybe try going into a school to look at the reality?"

# 9. Sanctions include toxic shaming and humiliation; restraint is a particular issue in some specialist settings

The most common sanction used is a verbal reprimand, followed by the loss of privileges and detentions. Many children had received multiple sanctions (some everything on the list). In terms of 'other' sanctions, these included internal isolations (x11, one for 4 months), being taken to older children's classroom or the headteacher's office for 'thinking time' or to be 'questioned'. Restraint was mentioned by 7 respondents, several of whom had a child in a specialist setting. Illegal exclusions were also mentioned several times. Shaming, including staff comments in public, a public apology and a whole class punishment were also cited, alongside behaviour ladder and 'concern' points.





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5. What behaviour management penalties has your child experienced? It hese sanctions are taken from the DfE's current guidance for schools)

Multiple Choice



"That is can shame, does address the cause. Also, we do not always know what has gone on in a timely manner."

"Punitive measures serve little other than to shame and ingrain a lack of understanding."

"Most policies are shaming to all children and particularly to those with trauma."

"Behaviourism has no place in education. Punishments and rewards do not work. Check in with child development neuroscience to understand the harm toxic shame does and the impact it has across a lifetime. It's catastrophic, ultimately shortening life expectancy and increasing needs."

"Shame-based punishments just make things worse."

"Use of traditional reward and punishment systems. Using shaming punishments."

## 10. Sanctions are often used for petty misdemeanours

Sanctions are often given for very trivial misdemeanours, and parents cite a lack of communication across the school (e.g., SENDCO agrees child can wear trainers, teacher says they must be removed). Many anxious children in schools with strict behaviour policies live in perpetual fear which is unlikely to foster learning.

"But getting isolation for petty things like not having a shirt tucked in, looking at a phone to see the time, losing a pencil when you have organisational issues which escalate when teachers chastise him, and he gets removal from class in my view is wrong. Teachers should be like parents in that they should gently remind and enforce, but not hand out punishments for every single misdemeanour."

## "The nonsense of v strict uniform constraints"

"There have been issues with one member of staff giving unwarranted late and absence marks and threats of detention because she wore black trainers not shoes, but SENCO had previously agreed due to sensory issues"





## 11. Mobile phone policies are already adequate

Parents feel the emphasis on a mobile phone ban is a distraction. There were concerns that a total ban would adversely affect children who needed a phone for the journey to and from school, or to alleviate high levels of anxiety. Many felt that schools already had appropriate policies.

One school "allows phones and even gets students to download useful apps to use in class or at home. The students aren't allowed to use phones at school unless a teacher says they can for educational reasons" which seems a very reasonable approach.

"Mobile phones can be a medical device, see type 1 diabetes. There are more useful ways to engage children. Rigid boring curriculums will result in worsening behaviour."

"Banning mobile phones can have a huge impact on those with SEND. A portable device which can support with so many aspects of school, my dyslexic child uses her phone for memory prompts, spelling, organising and screenshots instead of notes."

"Mobile phones should not be used during school time, but kids allowed to bring them to school and contact parents in situations of need!"

"The point on mobile phones is also a distraction. Most schools already have a perfectly good policy on this. It's like government doesn't trust them. Plus, with a child who has anxiety a mobile phone can be a lifeline to ensuring they are ok. And many schools allow their use for research in class."



## 12. Change is needed

We asked parents for any additional comments, and many focused on an education system that appears outdated, broken and does not meet the needs of all children. The increase in absence and exclusion was raised as evidence that current policies aren't working.

Many parents feel the system is compounding the rise in mental health issues amongst children and young people. Both SEND and CAMHS systems were flagged as being not fit for purpose, given the long delays and high thresholds which make access extremely difficult, and contribute to difficulties at school.

Social issues were also seen as part of the problem in education. Also 'inclusion' as a means of reducing costs, and a lack of appropriate support for children with SEND/SEMH, which was a recurring theme throughout the survey.





"Schools aren't working in their current set up. Attendance isn't working - I say that as a parent whose children achieved 92 & 98% attendance. There's no creativity and joy in education. 21st century schools should be embracing technology, online projects - both solo and collaborative, part time attendance on premises with the rest online learning/project work. If a child doesn't have access to technology at home space could be made in the school for attendance during those learning times. Children need more art and creativity or practical skills, more critical thinking and less rule following, more debating to learn how to put a point across. There needs to be less emphasis on uniform, conformity and appearances."

"It is unbelievable that in 2021 these questions are even needing to be asked, that's how messed up our education system is. My child has not attended school for years and the LA educational psychologist put it in writing its due to the negative impact from educational experiences! What does that say about our schools and it's about to get a whole lot tougher. We are killing our kids."

"It's getting more about teaching kids to be little robotic clones, rather than actually teaching/educating them. It shouldn't matter what colour hair you have, or what length your skirt is, whether you want to learn should be the important thing."

"The education system is outdated and not fit for purpose. Children are not seen as individuals but as marks for statistics."

"Smaller classes, greater resources in school and access to other professionals (Ed Psychs etc.), building cultures of mutual respect, clothes people feel comfortable in (for teachers and pupils), good food and enough water (water is a privilege in my child's school). Governments say they don't have the money. They choose not to fund education, it is not a lack of money, it is a political choice. Equally this won't work if families don't have a secure place to live, good food, time to spend with their children, respect from their peers, secure and flexible work."

"Applying punishment is an old-fashioned approach to coercion and control that has been proven time and again not to work or provide positive long-term outcomes. In many cases this creates long term negatives outcomes, which then create huge distress and financial cost to put right. Rather than moving with the times and the developing world, this entrenched approach seems rooted in an out of date and archaic view."

"Class sizes, authoritarianism, exams and 'uniform' expectations of behaviour drive a one size fits all approach to behaviour policies. The fact is that mainstream education driven by these factors is not fit for purpose in a post-industrial society. We no longer all have to be at the factory at 8am, so why do we treat education like an assembly line and our children as the products coming off that line? There should be much more flexibility in when, where and how children access their learning, which as we know from COVID is entirely possible. Govt should be brave and wave a teary goodbye to our colonial era education system which restricts and traumatises children."

"Schools are obsessed by targets and my son's school in maintaining their Ofsted rating. No support or recognition that behaviour a cry for help. He is now 18 years old, depressed, suicidal and feels worthless as a result of the school system. I was told to drag him to school, told he needed to toughen up /be more resilient and his needs blamed as poor parenting, despite his autism & ADHD diagnosis. I trusted the school and the system and that was my biggest mistake. It nearly broke my son and our family. I fear he will never fully recover - and we are one the lucky families with the money, resources, and education to fight for his rights. I can only imagine the horror for so many less fortunate families."

"There is a systemic failure caused by years of cost cutting. Pushing for 'inclusion' because it's cheaper, then removing any kind of funding for those pupils by making EHCP's impossible to get, overstretched SENCos suffering with mental health and leaving the profession."





#### **APPENDIX**

Q15 If you are concerned [about the existing guidance for school-wide punitive approaches to address behaviour and discipline within education settings] what are your concerns?

## 184 responses

Parent blaming is first response to a child who masks heavily at school.(sent on a parenting course). My concerns for my daughter, I am recently diagnosed autistic, not considered at all or believed

Punitive systems increase anxiety in those already struggling - leading to more distressed behaviour

It seems to be what happens in school stays in school. Our rights to parent our children isn't acceptable and school attempts to 'parent' the parents with threats and removal of child's property where not even parents can collect

That shame tactics are used which is deeply hurtful for a child

They don't consider my foster child who had traumaand acts younger than actual age

Most policies are shaming to all children and particularly to those with trauma.

Punitive measures do not address causes of behaviour, they are shaming, can cause already traumatised children to experience additional trauma and, quite frankly, do not work.

Carrot and stick policies do not work. Stop coercing and bullying CYPs and their families! It is inhumane, removes dignity and disempowers. My child's school has a SEND nurture hub where tolerance and kindness, understanding and acceptance are the go to tools.

Behaviourism has no place in education. Punishments and rewards do not work. Check in with child development neuroscience to understand the harm toxic shame does and the impact it has across a lifetime. It's catastrophic, ultimately shortening life expectancy and increasing needs.

Due to these policies being rooted in Behaviourism (a theory developed via the study of animals which is not conducive to child development, neuroscience or protecting mental health), I am extremely concerned about the impact of current policy and agenda on our CYPs. A systems of sanctions, punishments and rewards simply erodes self-esteem, impacts self-efficacy and drives gaps in good outcomes for both our CYPs and the adults working in education. Advocating such measures exacerbates disruption and disconnect in relationships both on a micro and macro scale. It must stop. Becoming more rigid and inflexible is an understandable response in an attempt to regain and maintain control but it is ineffective and inefficient. Put simply, it is a waste of time and only serves to set everyone up to fail. There is another way - trauma-informed neuroscience built on attachment and inter-relational methodologies will lead to better outcomes, improved health and wellbeing, satisfaction, attainment and progress - a hat-trick of positive results for everyone, especially our CYPs.

Shame-based punishments just make things worse

I believe before addressing behaviour or reaction a consideration should be given to way. This immediate reaction and dealing with parents and children as non conformist and difficult only increases anxieties and makes collaborative partnership between home and school almost impossible.





Punitive approaches never work. I'd like to see relationship policies so schools can focus on the child and not the behaviour.

My concern is that behaviour is prioritised over everything else, including learning, and at my son's school and I've said as much to the head. The school has 1600 pupils and the head has admitted that they have to have the behaviour policy to keep control. But getting isolation for petty things like not having a shirt tucked in, looking at a phone to see the time, losing a pencil when you have organisational issues which escalate when teachers chastise him and he gets removal from class in my view is wrong. Teachers should be like parents in that they should gently remind and enforce, but not hand out punishments for every single misdemeanour. Luckily, I have been able to get punishments for him toned down after speaking to the school. For example he was expected to spend a whole day in isolation after a group of boys and girls - including him - did not move away from the school quickly enough one afternoon and were backchatting a teacher. A day in isolation for a child with adhd is too much. After explaining that he did not hurt anyone or steal anything, and so therefore the punishment did not meet the crime, they commuted it to just one lesson. These types of policies are just a way to instil fear in pupils. This does not work with my son who has diagnosed opposition defiance disorder. At the moment he is anxious to attend school in case he has to go into isolation which he refuses to do. He does his best to conform but cannot always do what the school behaviour policy wants him to do because he has a behavioural disorder.

### Lack of therapeutic support

Behaviour issues often stem from his disabilities - FASD & sensory processing needs. Lack of sensory input to keep him regulated impacts behaviour and learning. Lack of positive role models are a concern. He is vulnerable and easily led.

That they are using correction before connection & they are not trauma informed & therapeutic in their approach

Rarely any consideration of what drives behaviour, staff often appear unaware of additional needs. Very limited consideration of the impact of trauma on learning, policy takes a wholly neuro-typical approach.

Sanction systems do not address underlying issues and are therefore very unlikely to change behaviour. They re enforce children's poor views of themselves. They rely on fear to change behaviour when the issue needs to be looked at more holistically. It will be particularly damaging to those who have had or have disruptive home lives and experience trauma.

Punitive policies are not trauma informed. All research points to a therapeutic approach being more successful than a behaviourist approach for all children, especially ones with semh issues.

One size doesn't fit all. Concerned about school refusal

There is a lack of understanding between challenging behaviour and trauma. And the techniques used do not work for these children. Behaviours indicate an underlying reason in the main and if this understood and addressed in early days, rather than punitive consequences there is time to address. PACE, therapeutic consequences, and positivity will address issues in amore positive way. Building a trust between child and adult with real understanding from the adult that ot is there to job to turn around ir connect with the child who challenge them or trigger them the most. The ability to learn is affected by Mental wellbeing. Different options for learning should be available and teachers need to truly understand how much trauma is out there in the children's life, ESPECIALLY AFTER COVID





There is little understanding of behaviour as communication, test results driven with little flexibility. Very little training or recognition of mental health needs or that there are no quick fixes

lack of understanding. use of team teach. lack of accountability

I dont think suspending a child from school with SEND is good for them in any way.

I am concerned that there is no flexibility. There is a central focus on a reward chart in every classroom and the school does not seem to understand how detrimental this can be for children who have experienced trauma

Relevance of punishment to situation, timing of consequence, staffing approach different and anti support staff who in our case had more idea of young person's wellbeing than teachers

My son cannot respond to punitive punishment due to his history of trauma. He is constantly sanctioned for behaviours of which he has no cognitive control and has a formal diagnosis. The idea of this system being introduced is frightening - it will very likely lead to my son disengaging totally and being excluded from school. There should be an empathetic approach to young people with Sen/trauma history and there isn't. It's absolutely discriminatory.

My lo operates at a much younger level than his peers. School have to provide him with a 121 full time cover as he can't work independently.

Not understanding the reasons for childrens behaviour and inability to manage fairly behaviour.

punitive measures do not deal with the problem-- but they are great for ticking boxes and looking like we are dealing with the problem. My child rarely has punitive measures because she is part time. She is part time due to early child hood trauma - this means she is disregulated on many occasions. She holds it together at school but cannot cope with a whole day in general. If she fell foul of regulations I would not allow the school to take punitive measures as these rarely deal with the real problem. Detention for example is the last thing a traumatised child needs. They need empathy and a chance to try again

These behaviour policies do not use the most up to date neuroscience research or educational research, they eliminate relationships as an important component of behaviour management

Zero tolerance Failure to make reasonable adjustments Failure to recognise antecedents to behaviour Failure to recognise behaviour as communication Increase in use of restraint

Physical restraint and no understanding of trauma or attachment disorder

Behaviour is not seen as communication

No consideration for SEN or addressing what the behaviour is communicating, eg by child has little impulse control, emotionally is younger and absences himself from lessons when he can't cope.

That they are inclined not to investigate bouts of behaviour thoroughly ie what came before my child was caught doing what he did. There is always a reason but he is never asked or listened to

Many children have backgrounds that are troubled and have suffered trauma. The behaviour management charts to little but shame them further. They are often triggered by experiences and





unable to control their eomotions, fears and behaviours. I worry that techniques that follow this pattern cause more emotional damage to vulnerable children.

That is can shame, does address the cause. Also we do not always know what has gone on in a timely manner

Exclusions where behaviour preventable with support in place

Punishment is not an effective tool for changing any child's behaviour in a positive way, SEN children even more so.

Ineffective, increases anxiety, emotional harm.

My child's behaviour is linked to his emotional state and the school are already giving FTE - he will end up permanently excluded at the rate it is going

They have not take in to account his Trauma back ground ,leaving him with hyper vigilant .so he get a behaviour point for stupid thing like turning if someone says his name ,or if he drops his glue stick lid .He is trying but it's hard

The adversarial style is really scary. The go to style is shout and shame by many of the staff. My child is extremely sensitive and lives in fear of this happening not necessarily to him but anyone. He's been absent since March 21 because he's too scared to be in school.

Children in main stream schools with trauma and Send are still subject to the one size fits all approach... this is damaging to our young people's mental health.

Punitive measures do not improve standards of behaviour

While I sympathise with the pupils who are finding things difficult, they take it out on my children who have needs of their own. The school staff forgive a lot, so it means that my children endure being shoved, pinched, shouted at, sworn at by other pupils, because they themselves are trying to be good. When they are too well behaved they get picked on by the other pupils. Then, they cannot tell staff as it's obviously them telling so they get picked in again. School staff are trying to be understanding for all, however my children have their own trauma & undiagnosed needs, they get overlooked in favour of these huge voices and massive acting out. While I would not advocate for zero tolerance as an educator myself, I'm having to deal with the upset when my children get home.

Everyone has to fit the policy, there is no individual adjustment.

The tenor seems to be to control students at all costs rather than teach students to control themselves and teach them to raise any issues in an appropriate manner. Teachers get (understandably) wrapped up in this approach as they feel over-controlled themselves (in my experience). The actual purpose of education either gets lost or is unclear - there is a lot of debate to be had around this. Education in this country seems about learning to obey rules rather than to think independently.

A child with ACE's will not respond well to traditional behaviour management in schools.

I've yet to see any evidence that schools will be look ing at the causes of behaviour. So far it sounds like they will just be punishing children





My concerns are with the govt focus on zero tolerance and lack of space for relationship based sanction free/minimal sanction behaviour policies. I also have huge concerns for the number of young people who are essentially being off-rolled because of thier SEN and the lack of govt support for schools to manage the levels of interventions and support required for them to access school. There is a systemic failure caused by years of cost cutting. Pushing for 'inclusion' because it's cheaper, then removing any kind of funding for those pupils by making EHCP's impossible to get, overstretched SENCos suffering with mental health and leaving the profession.

As a foster Carer behaviour policies do not account for trauma and lack of trust in adults for our children. Even SEND schools struggle to use basic interventions that prevent situations escalating as they do not understand or cater for the fight, flight/ fawn or flop states our children reactive experience in relation to the demands placed on them on a daily basis. A one size fits all approach for these children will see them marginalised and disadvantaged further.

Not understanding the impacts of trauma

Zero tolerance does not work...if it did there would be less exclusion, isolation and school refusal. Too many chdren are not in the education system and are not school attending for above reasons incly too many SEN children esp with hidden disabilities, lac and plac status.

Use of traditional reward and punishment systems. Using shaming punishments.

SEN children need flexibility, but also need to see justification for behaviour management approaches. There needs to be flexibility to make sure that it is understood that all behaviour is communication and May been the child reacting to unmet needs.

Punitive measures serve little other than to shame and ingrain a lack of understanding. They do not address the inherent need for education to accept that we have a diverse learner population, and that neurological physical or other differences do not equate to a reason to treat someone differently, nor is it legal. Applying punishment is an old fashioned approach to coercion and control that has been proven time and again not to work or provide positive long term outcomes. In many case this creates long term negatives outcomes, which then create huge distress and financial cost to put right. Rather than moving with the times and the developing world, this entrenched approach seems rooted in an out of date and archaic view.

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No allowance made for difficulties at home which are beyond his control

The rules discriminate against non neurotypical children are they are often less able to regulate their behaviours and may suffer uncontrolled melt downs and bad behaviours when overwhelmed. You cannot punish ADHD/ODD or Autism/PDA type behaviours out of a child.





I am concerned that children with additional needs will not be supported properly and will suffer trauma and anxiety as a result.

Punitive measures do not have any effect

**Exclusion** 

Punishments for those who should have reasonable adjustments. Not all teachers get it and SEN do not get involved in your child's behalf

Doesn't look into the reasons for behaviour that challenges or see as communication

If punishment worked out prisons would be empty. Harsh behaviour policies do not work.

Not enough is done to protect the victims of bullying, poor behaviour and disruption to other learning- instead the focus is on the right of the child who is displaying poor behaviour - large class sizes and a completely inappropriate boring curriculum means that it is impossible for a teacher to meet the needs of each individual child, and with tight budgets many are left with no additional adult support. If this government were at all serious about the education of young people and assisting with behaviour and mental health they would reduce content of the curriculum, do away with pointless tests and reduce class sizes

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#### **Exclusion**

Punishments for those who should have reasonable adjustments. Not all teachers get it and SEN do not get involved in your child's behalf

Doesn't look into the reasons for behaviour that challenges or see as communication

If punishment worked out prisons would be empty. Harsh behaviour policies do not work.

Not enough is done to protect the victims of bullying, poor behaviour and disruption to other learning- instead the focus is on the right of the child who is displaying poor behaviour - large class sizes and a completely inappropriate boring curriculum means that it is impossible for a teacher to meet the needs of each individual child, and with tight budgets many are left with no additional adult support. If this government were at all serious about the education of young people and assisting with behaviour and mental health they would reduce content of the curriculum, do away with pointless tests and reduce class sizes

The current behaviour rules and punishments mean that a child with different needs is likely to fail from the start. We are currently on a managed move and already, without appropriate adjustments from the start, we are now getting detentions and fixed term inclusions. Really unimpressed at how little understanding of SEND there is.

A dangerous tool in the hands of inexpert staff and in the current SEND identification and support climate. My son would not have lasted at many mainstream schools. Am keenly aware of how much on a knife edge these things can be in any setting. Mainstream FE College failed to make full EHCP mandated adjustments and decided to discontinue him.

New guidance is incredibly rigid anc unhelpful. It does not take into consideration kids with sen kids with extra medical needs etc. The whole school system has become rigid and unimaginative.





Every child is different and I do not think that punitive behaviour management works for all.

Some children take longer than others to grasp something, they are not robots. They all have individual thoughts, talents and ways of expressing themselves and this should be accommodating

That schools are missing the point about implementing behaviour modification. It seems to be more about compliance than actual change of behaviour. Children are being failed, especially those at the margins.

They are a barrier for children with nay kind of SEND, MH difficulties, anxiety or learning differences.

That it's not based on actual behaviour research. That it can damage children.

Behaviour is a form of communication for many children . Also in our previous setting my daughter appeared 'fine in school' but the behaviour policy was so punitive that she was terrified of school but the 'perfect child' She has an anxiety driven profile of ASC (PDA) that was not acknowledged by school - we were not listened to , managed as parents - the behaviour at home was huge as a result of the fall out of the day and the need to keep it all together , we have school based trauma due to mis managment and acknowledgement of the profile despite us asking for help , the school initially took a parent blaming approach and it wasn't until following formal complaints to the CCg re thresholds that we were able to access tier 3 CAMHS that she was signed off from school because of the impact the environment was having on her mental health and risk . We had to fight for two years to get the right support and go to tribunal to appeal B, F, I and social care and health and we now have a new school that understands . Behaviour policies are usually punitive , do not take into account SENd or whether SEND maybe underlying , are unable to be flexible .

No flexibility for children with SEND, told that no safe place is without consequences. Sanctioned for things out of his control. School was reactive not proactive, not interested in what was triggering behaviour

It's getting more about teaching kids to be little robotic clones, rather than actually teaching/educating them. It shouldn't matter what colour hair you have, or what length your skirt is, whether you want to learn should be the important thing.

Autistic children are being traumatised at school by all of the screaming/yelling, threats and punishments. Often they aren't even being punished for anything they did wrong (just harmlessly stimming, showing signs of the distress school is causing like crying or covering their ears, or just not understanding what the teacher wants). It's ruining their mental health. They are ill every day because of the anxiety it causes them, and want to die rather than go to school. The harm to their mental health is destroying their cognitive abilities, their memory is degrading, they can't think as clearly, their visual imagery is almost non-existent now. They are rapidly getting less and less enjoyment out of anything, and spend most of their time spaced/zoned out or daydreaming or sleeping. They can't explain themselves to teachers or stand up for themselves or they'll be punished for that too.

That the education system is outdated and not fit for purpose. Children are not seen as individuals but as marks for statistics.

I'm sure there are good schools out there. However my child experienced a school, Ofsted rated good who had little understanding of the challenges faced by being autistic. Even when they





employee an independent autistic specialist teacher (ex la) when he reached burnout and couldn't attend who pulled them up on their admission of a restraint approach when my child was in overwhelming shutdown. They treated him as misbehaving, dispite it highlighted by a professional that he was diagnosed with a recognised disability, that the specialist could help schools make reasonable adjustments and also made suggestions including small step to returning, updating childs ed psych report. Their approach was problematic before the pandemic, it remained unchanged after which in turn caused more problems. Unmet need with no understanding of disability or the impact of a pandemic on a child (any child).

That school ignore all we know from neuroscience and instead stick with old fashioned behaviour management strategies that don't work

Lack of individuality public shaming methods

Puts too much emphasis on children to confirm and not enough on staff/teachers to adapt their teaching methods to suit the children.

Behaviour is communication. Applying blanket sanctions to disabled children is abhorrent, traumatising and unacceptable

Childrens needs are ignored by such policies. No weight is given to understanding children's behaviour and the reasons for it. Children are blamed - this can mean they are punished for behaviour caused by anxiety or overwhelm for instance- rather than anyone addressing underlying problems for the individual or within the school, with teachers approaches etc and ultimately nothing will change as a result

All behaviour is communication and each case needs to be looked at individually. In a small village primary this is largely not an issue and my child is not disruptive. However there is simply not the staff, capacity or training to offer individualized support to all children who need it. Overall the pastoral care in my child's school is very good now that there is a new headmaster. However knowledge of SEN is lacking and school needs more staff and better training to actually implement the SEN plans they put in place

Children who do not misbehave but who have anxiety issues become traumatised by an aggressive consequences approach even if they are not the target. Every lesson becomes stressful.

The lack of teachers understanding as to what triggers certain behaviours and recognition of children's different lived experiences

Schools do not have adequate training in neurodiversity - school avoidance workshops / parent support in Bucks comes from in experienced trainers who don't see the links between SEN. There are already too many kids home Ed/ eotas due to inadequate schools Pupils voices are not heard or recorded or accurately depicted - Hunan rights issues Restraint/ trauma caused by school not called out There should be autistic/ neurodiverse student and adults led audits of schools - they should talk to the kids in schools and get the real picture Also visit those at home. Behaviour isn't a world used in business We talk about employee engagement How's about we call about Diane game to and relationship breakdowns Counsellors and EMHP don't necessarily have adequate Austim and ADHD understanding there could make situations worse / invalidate. We should define who a professional is in terms of competence and skills to really understand SEN and behaviour. SENCO's should be it but aren't. The mental health lead is an opportunity wasted because it should be prescriptive and not just done to one person to have quality information Perhaps an autistic / ND led online course must be completed and updated each term?





Invisible disabilities not recognised and with a large environment it is impossible for staff to be aware of needs

That it is a child protection issue and we were lucky to get specialist provision and the issue greatly stopped many children are not that lucky

I have some though limited sympathy with schools falling back on authoritarian 'discipline' methods as they have too few too poorly trained and qualified teachers to manage too many children in schools that are way to big. However, this is damaging to education and runs contrary to what we understand about healthy child development. It is going to be terribly frightened for children with SEND as this is going to worsen the present situation where SEND is assumed to be behavioural and children are not only denied assessment & support but have expectations placed on them that are damaging and may be impossible for them to meet if they are related to deficits in areas like executive function, sensory differences, motor skills etc

One size fits all, blanket policies tend to discriminate against those students who are already suffering. In a mainstream setting and with the high number of students, flexibility and time to understand the reason for behaviour is missing. Children with anxiety/mental health issues whether on their own or as a result of unmet SEN will suffer even more than they are already if the planned behavioural policies are implemented.

Our son's ASC and sensory issues result in him using behaviour that helps him cope, but which would be picked up as poor behaviour. He is very sensitive to how the adults behave. He has no awareness of tone of voice and his permanent panic mode leads to him sounding and acting quite rude to a NT.

Concerns send children and their plans are avoided blaming covid, routines stopped and children left with sensory overload, trauma and not being able to go to school or extreme behaviour to communicate they are not ok. But met with discipline or protecting staff instead of the right support measures from professional that help with trauma social anxiety etc put in place to help the child.

Blanket zero tolerance behaviour policies are discriminatory re send pupils. There is no room to understand what is driving behaviour, no allowances made for kids who cannot cope, its as if disabled kids' education does not matter!

Root causes of behaviour are not addressed

whole school approaches with zero tolerance are discriminatory, they do not look at the underlying reasons for the behaviour - they dont treat the cause; they just focus on the symptom. if a child was blind they would not get into trouble for not looking at a teacher, but children with Autism are often told off for not looking at staff or not seeming to pay attention, there are lots of examples where CYP with additional needs CANNOT follow certain rules, its not a choice for them, they arent choosing to disobey.

Punitive consequences for an anxiety-driven behaviour only worsen that anxiety and increase incidents of the behaviour. Behaviour is communication; an overwhelmed response to intolerable conditions. The reason for the behaviour needs to be addressed

Punishing behaviour without looking at the causes doesn't work. My autistic child has been diagnosed with PTSD as a result of previous mainstream behaviour management- shouting, detention, loss of privileges. He is literally terrified of doing/saying the wrong thing. He should have been provided with more flexibility and nurture and understanding. He was punished for





having a disability. School did not pick up that he had ASD, ADHD and language disorder and he suffered a breakdown as a result.

It is attendance ticks only that are important. An automatic blame parent and gaslight approach with refusal to assess for underlying SEN

If a child misbehaves in classes they can attend pastoral care, there is a dedicated place for naughty kids to still attend school, however, if a child does not misbehave but cannot attend classes, the only place there available is pastoral care for naughty kids, yiou can't even access work there, the pastoral care manager is not trained in issues pertaining to anxiety nor panic attacks.

It's impossible to apply one size fit all policy. We're dealing with young people who all present differently. One may have so much anxiety that they miss school. One may become violent out of anxiety or not being able to cope. Unless one address the root cause of the problem, the behaviour will not change. School are still too much focus on consequences...

Too little resources given to schools to get to the root causes. Too much emphasis on attendance rather than individuals. No tailored learning - group progress only. No flexibility in the curriculum to enable part time attendance. Need more kindness not more regulation.

Young people need to be supported and treated as individuals.

The new culture lays blame on children & yp & removes the onus on adults & institutions to make adjustments to support and enable positive behaviour. Most worryingly of all, blanket policies are becoming acceptable again which is a concerning direction of travel.

Teaching staff are lacking in Send and mental health training and do not above enough staff within a class to effectively deescalate and deal with a child's individual need before crisis. Many schools do not have the space or funding for quiet areas or movement areas to help children regain their calm to progress and reingage with the school activities. Children get labeled as disruptive, incapable or badly behaved as a result of the lack of training and facilities.

You can't help kids with mental health issues with punishment, or behavioural models. It just doesn't work and will cause ptsd about school. Positivity praise and support is the way ahead always. They won't get any positive behaviours from this new strategy only rebellion

Inflexible behaviour policies contributed to my child's anxiety at her previous school. Strict and rigid rules did nothing to tackle the bullying behaviors of other students which left my child suicidal. All the children involved were let down by a system which ceased to see them as individuals and did not make the time to investigate the causes of each child's behavior.

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The government started off being concerned for children's mental well-being but have since decided post pandemic to focus on behaviour. Firstly I am not aware of any noticeable increase in bad behaviour so am unsure why they are focused on this to start with. More importantly they aren't linking it to mental health and the detrimental affects the pandemic has had on the children. They aren't using behaviour as a clue that something is wrong, they are simply recommended zero tolerance which in my experience and in a lot of studies leads to worsening mental health.

SEND CHILDREN ARE PENALISED





My son has high school anxiety and needs connections with adults at school to make him feel safe there. Stricter behaviour policies will make it harder for him to attend as they will make him more anxious

That the needs of individual children, with SEN and also those with needs such as living with abuse, ill parents and or living in poverty are punished for behaviour deemed inappropriate by the school with the needs of the child being explored and supported

That they are looking at behaviour I'm a vacuum without looking at the cause

Letters about fines when children struggle to attend. Isolation booths are in humane and don't work. Baffling routes to get support if child stops attending

My child has ASD and PDA which was diagnosed in year 6. Punitive behaviour policies do not work with him and lead to a race to the top and who will break first. If a behaviour policy invokes worse behaviour it is not fit for purpose. His ehcp now explicitly says poor behaviour should be dealt with he next day, not when it is happening

I am concerned that there is a one size fits all basis of dealing with behaviour and by and large behaviour is usually happens for a reason. If they identified the reason the behaviour would not occur or occur less. Punitive measures I believe do not succeed and only strike fear into children.

Special need children have neurodiverse brain and they don't respond well or at all to rewards and punishments. Especially when consequences are not related to their acts of behaviour. Also, they should not be punished for behaviour as it's communication of their needs. My son is traumatised by abuse and is very sensitive even to unjust things happening to others too. The school can be a scary place when being afraid of consequences all the time.

One size does not fit all. Schools often breach the equality act 2010 by failing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

Staff are largely unaware of mental health driven behaviours, ie, anxiety and panic attacks and frequently interpret this as the child being disruptive or inattentive.

There are no reasonable adjustments for SEN. It's one rule for all. This is not inclusivity.

Flexibility and context should be taken into account, and aren't

Needs to address the individual and its circumstances

The one-size fits all approach. The nonsense of v strict uniform constraints.

Use of restraint. Ignoring masking and behaviour at home when assessing sen

My concerns are with the traffic light system for behaviour. My son is well behaved as he doesn't like confrontation or being told off. But if a child makes him laugh he will laugh a lot and get told off and be moved down. I feel that this system is not helpful, my son gets embarrassed moving down and it has an effect on him going to school as he's now scared of being bad in class even though he is not.

That specialist schools are able to use force and restraints that are not monitored. Not communicated to parents. That are lied about. No 12 Yr old should have 5 adults on them





My concern mainly lies with secondary as my daughter is going into her last year of primary in September and this last year she's struggled massively with attendance , hasn't took part in class tests ( academic ) and has been in full non uniform , I know secondary schools are so so strict and punish for the slightest silliest thing and I'm worried this is going to have a negative further impact on her well being / attendance / education etc

It seems to be about clamping down on behaviour in a draconian way and not trying to understand. Current rewards and consequences don't work. Large proportion scared stiff of consequences but then they wouldn't get them anyway, those that get the consequences often makes no difference as no understanding of behaviour. Oh and same people always get rewarded. Normally those that do well anyway.

Sets up semh children to fail

Send is not taken into account at all

They are marking my autistic, EBSA child as truant even if in late with staff actually trying to get my child into school, giving detentions for late attendance and blaming me for her not attending rather than realising my child is masking in school and her attendance issues are in relation to this

Underlying behaviour there are always other issue. They are the tip of the iceberg. This behaviour needs exploration not punitive measures.

No reasonable adjustments and very little understanding of our child's send and 'triggers' actually very little acceptance of our child's needs whatsoever and that of many others with SEND

Will lead to trauma and increase mental health issues, no support as it is. Not appropriate learning environment. No account of SEN needs if child is undiagnosed.

I feel schools are to quick to permanently exclude children with behavioural issues my son since starting in year 7 of secondary school has been to two mainstream schools three pupil referral units this in itself coursed him more stress constantly being moved around and made his anxiety and low self asteem worse to the point he just got used to being excluded

Schools behaviour policies have no room for reasonable adjustments. I have to shout out at the roof tops at all times.

Behaviour is a form of communication. Schools must explore why etc before applying 'Behaviour' policies. Eg you can't ignore a childs Autism when looking into their behaviour/communication. Usually support and education is warranted NOT punishment

Not meeting my child's individual needs

Punishment is largely unhelpful and can be damaging to an autistic child or one with other SEN recognised or not. It can have a very detrimental impact on mental health

That behaviours in line with child's diagnosis are punished

That schools only need to tick attendance boxes not really concerned if a child has mental health problems





Doesn't seem to recognise that behaviour = communication. My children's neurodevelopmental disabilities mean they are reliant upon adults recognising differences in how they communicate distress. They cannot consistently calmly verbalise things as their brains are simply not structured to do so. Impossible for them. According to government intention, children like mine will be punished for this sort of brain difference. Even more concerning for so many children for whom parents are still fighting for diagnosis (it took us years)

My son is autistic with high anxiety and selective mutism. He has been supported in a Nurture class but as he transitions into mainstream classes he is exposed to the same rules as all students yet he does not have the understanding and he cannot communicate when there is a problem. There is not enough flexibility or support for him to manage in mainstream without falling foul of the behaviour rules

I think they seem to do more to punish than to find out if it's due to anxiety and/or send.

Children with send are being set up to fail. They struggle to meet the behaviour standard because of their emotional delay and challenging behaviour. Add to that the lack of support and understanding for sen needs particularly asd and adhd in mainstream schools and our children are left unsupported managing constant triggers and then blamed for their reaction. All school has taught my son is that he is naughty and no good

My daughters 'obedience' was clearly valued more highly than her self identify and mental health. School hasn't just failed in providing her with a suitable education, it has been a traumatic and harmful experience.

I am concerned that the varying effects of covid on an already rigid school behaviour system will continue to impact my child. The school relaxed then tightened the behaviour policy informally which made it difficult for my child to understand the boundaries they were expected to work within. I also feel that not enough differentiation is given to behaviour policy as is given to learning policy to meet the needs of all students.

Concerned my child's school may be one more punitive

Children who can not be in classrooms because of anxiety, whether this causes disruptive behaviour, masked fear or obvious terror are not given any alternative other than getting back to the classroom, even the SEN centre is just another classroom, there needs to be alternative education, not classroom or school based.

That more children will suffer the level of trauma my child has. SEND pupils are often not understood so receive a higher level of sanctions as their needs are not properly understood

I feel it does not meet the needs of many children. We are creating a false environment where children are required to cope with conditions adults would not tolerate

Response is to the behaviour without looking at possible causes.

There's little understanding of the root of the behaviour. It's all conditioning which seems to be repeated regardless of outcome.

There will be no adjustments for those with SEN. Especially as the pastoral team admitted that they have no formal training in SEND and have no understanding of ASC or anxiety





Schools are not flexible concerning children with additional needs. No support is given and the time to get an ehcp or camhs help is way too long. My sons school have not given him any support with work this year due to him not attending

that behaviour is not dealt with appropriately, that needs are not met and staff don't look at why certain behaviours are happening - especially masking and voilence

No flexibility. Focus on conforming. Not trauma informed.

Schools do not care about mental health, or any illness if I'm honest its all about bums on seats. Attendance figures!!

They are one size fits all, no account taken of individual differences. They rely on outdated practices which have been proved to be unsuccessful, particularly with SEND children, such as isolation and exclusion. Happy, engaged children don't misbehave - but this requires effort from staff and for schools not to be shackled to the dreadful National Curriculum and performance data!

Need to address unmet needs & causes for behaviours BEFORE imposing pinishments

SEND is so poorly supported, and SEND children already experience a disproportionate amount of punishment, this just seems like another way to discriminate against disabled kids.

SEN is not considered. Children will get into trouble without the cause for behaviour being investigated

This is the last thing kids need right now. The Govt is really out of touch here about the (and many other things). A pandemic is not the time to start throwing their weight around re discipline!

I am concerned that my son will effectively be punished for his disability (being autistic) e.g. making involuntary noises in class is a stim - he can't help that, having difficulty sitting still - he can't help that, becoming so anxious and distressed in school that he has a meltdown - where is the compassion in punishing a child who is displaying that they are struggling to cope with a situation? Being autistic, having anxiety or being an ADHDer in the tough unsupportive world of mainstream school is incredibly hard for a child. Punishing children for low level infringements of behaviour policies makes children feel ashamed and reduces self-esteem to what purpose? It creates a negative cycle for the child. This can be incredibly damaging for the child's mental health. Shame on the government for introducing a policy which will disproportionately damage and punish children with less visible disabilities.

After the year everyone has had, such measures are unhelpful at best and extremely damaging at worst.

I feel like my survey answers aren't a reflection of our circumstances. My child attended mainstream primary and struggled to attend because of a failure to make reasonable adjustments for autism and also because of very poor teaching/classroom management that affected lots of children very negatively, but was left untackled for a whole year. On transferring to a special school, my child happily goes to school every single day, even after the confusion and stress of lockdown. This is a testament to how the environment and not the child drives school refusal. And the magic of her current school? Listening to children, prioritising relationships, being kind and decent and honest. Not really rocket science.





The potential of discrimination against SEND children to rise, causing significant mental health problems and barriers to education.

I'm concerned that the behaviour policy only talks about behaviour as a choice. There is no regard to behaviour as a means of communication. Staff lack empathy and kindness. They fail to act with any curiosity about drivers for behaviour. The policy does not include staff behaviour or the role of staff in modelling appropriate behaviour. Do as I say not as I do.

When attending mainstream school the behaviour policy was a one size fits all and didn't take into account of individuals social and communication difficulties or disabilities. This simply caused trauma for my ASD child who was expected to follow the policy with no support or flexibility in place.

That there is a real culture of inappropriate physical restraint in some SEN schools. Our child never experienced this in mainstream, but we have been shocked at how this almost seemed a first action in SEN school.

Behaviour policies are not implemented consistently so some children are punished and others are not punished for the same misdemeanour.

Lack of flexibility and poor consistency when it comes to reasonable adjustments. E.g. daughters best friend (dyslexic and possible ASD) has been repeatedly given detention for missed homework and poor organisation My child was able to attend but only wearing trainers due to sensory. SENCO ok'd this but then on arrival daughter was reprimanded by Pastoral Care Assistant and asked to remove trainers after I left

measures proposed do not allow for SEND or for the procedures to be flexible to meet the needs of the child. Punishment for a child being unable to meet the standards due to neurodevelopmental differences is counter productive, will impact self esteem and lead to more SEND children out of school/without placement.

Too harsh consequences instead of talking to child to address behaviours

Consequences for things a child cant do anything about or behaviours made worse by classroom set up/ attitude of staff.

Child uses a mobile phone to curb anxiety. This will not be allowed.

Teachers have very little SEN training and see behaviours as a choice and not communication of underlying needs and difficulties. This is unrealistic and irrational, given all of the knowledge professionals claim to have children are already being written off by corrupt schools and this will only increase.

No thought is given to behaviours as a consequence of the actions of others. They know it is possible for the words of a child to impact behaviours of another yet only punish the behaviour. They allow verbal bullying but see any form of aggression as punishable. Attendance is all, they refer for non attendance, but they don't fully address the reasons the child doesn't feel able to attend





## Q22 Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

#### 103 responses

Whilst rules and consistency gives structure and boundaries- it shouldn't involve threats and fear. It needs respect, understanding and discussion

Teachers need support themselves. They are often triggered by their own patterns and beliefs which should not be happening. They need to understand the importance of being more heart centered. And the impact they have on children.

My foster child spent most of his primary school years excluded from class - is now 2 years behind peers academically and struggling in secondary school

Schools should use pace and emotion coaching to understand difficulties and understand why things happen through emotions.

Teachers need more training across the board on trauma, connection, attachment difficulties, FASD (and other needs) and the effect that trauma has on development Punitive behavioural policies are not suitable and, like other punitive measures like smacking, should be put out to pasture as a thing of the past. In addition more understanding of the development of sensory processing

The bullying and abuse parents and children receive through the school system needs to stop. A tick on a register does not ensure the delivery of best education to any child. I do not trust the school to care appropriately fir my child and this does not nurture a good relationship. Communication needs to be both ways not just me justifying and explaining and sharing information.

Need more understanding of mental health issues in schools

More understanding of sensory processing needs is needed in all schools . When sensory needs aren't met you see an impact on behaviour. Also need more attachment aware, therapeutic provision.

Teachers need training on the effects of adverse childhood experiences on behaviour and using the connection before correction approach.

I would be very interested in being involved with change in schools around challenging behaviour. I was a civil engineer and had many employees who did not excel in the mainstream school, yet had more skills than were being promoted. I then had young adults in a supported lodgings environment and then became a Foster carer, now for 7 years. I work as a therapeutic parent but school is one of the main triggers, they're struggles, because they have no label, are misunderstood and therefore reactions inappropriate. Nurture, boundaries, routine amd understanding and never not to allow a child not to have a dinner ir break time not to run and be free is not acceptable.

There needs to be more relationship building, training and understanding. Authorities need to be more flexible in recording of attendance for those who are u able to attend due to anxiety

The school system is absolutely failing our children. Inexperienced and unempathetic teachers giving arbitrary punishments multiple times a day pushes my son to his limit. There is no de escalation - in fact teachers regularly escalate my sons distress, something for which he will be further punished. If I had a choice I would not send any of my children to mainstream schools.





Schools do not have the resources to provide 121 care for our children. After school and before school provision is nonexistent for those of us who were working.

yes-mobile phones should be banned or left at reception. My child does not have internet access in order to prevent her being exposed to things on the internet. However, other kids are consistently on the internet in breaks and she looks at their phones. Considering the fact that you are only a few clicks away from hard core porn at any time I find this horrifying. Why are we allowing our children to have this access? Is it not in effect a form of neglect? Parents allow it because of social pressure and it is easier. Phones should not be allowed- there are other things children can do in break time !!!! We as a society and parents are failing our children in this case.

My child has lost 3 years of education with an EHCP in place, disability discrimination in maintained mainstream upheld, now in special school and the physical and emotional abuse and discrimination is continuing with full awareness of LA

Punishing children for their disabilities is harassment

There should not be a one size fits all policy. The policy should support all children.

While my son is in a PRU facility at the moment my answers regarding disaplines are his experience in mainstream since primary he is now nearly 13. Attending PRU since October last year

My son's school is fantastic. They have trauma informed and attachment trained approaches with a school psychotherapy service, willingness to work with the LEA and offer flexibility around attendance where needed and have cultivated a warm and compassionate approach which has filtered through to children and parents alike. It is fantastic

Class sizes, authoritarianism, exams and 'uniform' expectations of behaviour drive a one size fits all approach to behaviour policies. The fact is that mainstream education driven by these factors is not fit for purpose in a post industrial society. We no longer all have to be at the factory at 8am, so why do we treat education like an assembly line and our children as the products coming off that line? There should be much more flexibility in when, where and how children access their learning, which as we know from COVID is entirely possible. Govt should be brave and wave a teary goodbye to our colonial era education system which restricts and traumatises children.

I have a lot to say about the lack of accountability of schools' failures in fulfilling their duty of care towards SEMH SEN children. Absolutely shocking. Many teaching practices and settings are completed unsuitable and staff knowledge and attitude shocking and cause emotional harm. Parents are blamed. Families destroyed through school trauma on top of the primary SEN.

The school, says it is doing everything as set out in the EHCP, but my child still gets FTE, during a period of bereavementand having been advised of end of year changes and moving up a year? Not much tolerance there

The school has no knowledge of trauma. They told me my son was clowning about in class and talking nonsense. I explained he was showing stress and how he was unsure where to start they respond with nonsense he was excluded and taken to work on his own he was scared

Schools should be nurturing and supportive. They actually resemble prisons. Overcrowded, you're a number, not a person. If you have special needs, you are expected to largely get in with it or learn to be neurotypical / mask. There is desperate need for schools to change their approach from this power led bullying approach. My son is very intelligent and highly sensitive. Mainstream school is





not suitable but neither is SEN schools as he would be bored, disturbed by behaviour and would not have suitable peer group.

I would never have sent either of my children to a zero tolerance school but I'm beginning to think that it might be better. They are picked on by disruptive children for trying to get on with their work. They have learning difficulties and trauma of their own which doesn't measure up to the kinds of things that are going on for those other pupils. It makes it very difficult for my children to learn when there's very little mental health support and teachers are supposed to do it all. It's obvious that teachers cannot and are under immense pressure. There should be more support staff, and funding for specific mental health support practitioners such as ELSAs.

Without being very rude about our current Government and it's attitude to child poverty/ ACE's / diversity and SEND.... No!

As an experienced birth and professional parent I know how all children respond differently to the dynamics between themselves, teachers and policies. A zero tolerance policy I fear is punitively targeted towards the children whom mostly urgently require our unconditional love, understanding and tolerance.

More trauma training, led policies but also monitoring and power of outside sch ie LA and OFsted to ensure heads don't go against real trauma informed advice of experts and put their results and attendance figures above the priority of the needs of the chdren. Heads need to be accountable for this and for use of isolation, exclusion and non attendance

Smaller classes, greater resources in school and access to other professionals (Ed psychs etc), building cultures of mutual respect, clothes people feel comfortable in (for teachers and pupils), good food and enough water (water is a privilege in my child's school). Governments say they don't have the money. They choose not to fund education, it is not a lack of money, it is a political choice. Equally this won't work if families don't have a secure place to live, good food, time to spend with their children, respect from their peers, secure and flexible work.

Staff need to be trained more in these areas, more than just an hour staff meeting. They need to learn how to respond and not just react to behaviours. To not walk out with your child on to the playground at the end of the day for the whole school to see and hear that your child has "had a bad day". Schools need to take on a more therapeutic approach, nurturing and non-shaming for all children to benefit from.

This is a waste of money as there isn't an overall problem with childrens behaviour. You should be throwing money to support children's mental health. As always throwing money at the wrong area. Maybe try going into a school to look at the reality?

Nearly all schools ban mobiles from being on or make students leave them in lockers - this is fine, silly politician statements about their bans are just posturing. This is the least of the problem. Kids with medical conditions, illnesses and disabilities are so vulnerable yet being punished for their conditions. Patents threatened by fines till they have no option but to remove kids from schools. I can't imagine a teacher calling in to work sick with anxiety and the headteacher telling them they will come to get them if They dont come & to toughen up. But this is what schools do to and expect from our children, threatening families with fines and even prison if we do not comply. What am earth has happened to the system and our humanity?

These answers reflect the time she was still in her secondary school (non academy at the time). My child was 'managed' out of her school as they could not meet her needs, she has ADHD (undiagnosed while she was in school) and became overwhelmed and mentally ill age 13 and could no longer cope in school. We were forced to home educate as a result of the school driving





us out wth threats re attendence whilst offering no support or suitable alternative provision for over 18 months. In addition our child was refused help from CAMHS, after five referals by the school, her GP and YES. As we had no access to CAMHS we only has the word of our GP to convince the school she was actaully ill. We had to seek help privately as she was suicidal and self harming, this private help resulted in her diagnosis. All in all a deeply angering, costly and tramatic hjourney, the system that should help against us all the way. It has left our child feeling abandoned and alienated. We are not alone, there are thousands of us.

My child has been broken

Teachers still do not understand ASD and ADHD. And sensory overload. That children do not want to reactive or feel anxious they way they do

More training for teachers re trauma

There needs to be a closer look at how bullying is handled in all schools. Financial consequences fir head teachers who do not deal first time when bullying is reported. It's horrific in my child's school and why they are out of school not getting an education

This government sucks

There needs to be a better understanding, in senior leadership too, of pupils with SEND. The current school rules and policies are set up to mean discrimination for many pupils. It has been a battle with 2 academys so far, both with similar behaviour policies. They don't seem to care much about wellbeing.

Consequences as a euphemism for punishment is a term that needs to go. Many students will understand natural consequences (which may be negative) but too many are artificial constructions and all the students remember is resentment. Am not opposed to zero tolerance per se but the manner in which the 'intolerance' is manifested and the very clear link with other attitudes in education (esp amongst prominent headteachers) which seems to involve a lot of posturing and focus on trappings rather than the fundamentals which need to be in place for students to learn and feel secure.

Mobile phones can be a medical device, see type 1 diabetes. There are more useful ways to engage children. Rigid boring curriculums will result in worsening behaviour.

That banning mobile phones can have a huge impact on those with SEND. A portable device which can support with so many aspects of school, my dyslexic child uses her phone for memory prompts, spelling, organising and screenshots instead of notes.

My autistic child is still affected by behaviour management at the hands of the various schools she tried over the years. These have resulted in lasting trauma and avoidable severe mental ill-health because she was unable to understand what was required and comply consistently enough for them, although she tried so hard. The environment of school and issues such as having to wear uniform she couldn't tolerate due to sensory disorder, has made her feel like a failure because she so desperately wants to be in school and learning. She is unlikely to ever be able to go back and school has impacted how independent she will be in adult life and how mentally healthy she will be. Schools and policy makers need to be aware of the severe, long-term damage they are inflicting on so many just because they happen to be unable to cope with their rigid policies.

That my sons trauma was in infant school. It's had a life long impact, he's nearly 18 and still lives with ptsd. He's now at college.





Local authorities need to follow the law SENcOs roles need to ensure appropriate qualifications before starting the role and this role needs to be part of the SLT and without a timetable Education, health and care need joined up working, CCGs need to be held accountable for their funding for CAMhS Camhs is neither robust or adequately resourced

Uniform and appearance (hair etc) does not indicate a child's ability (or lack of) to learn. Many other countries don't have uniform, their children still learn! Constant punishment for tiny mistakes (forgetting homework, dropping a pencil etc) are using a hammer to crack a nut - over reacting.

My child is constantly begging me to let them be homeschooled, but I am unable to provide that even though it is what is best for them. They can't learn in the classroom environment, they teach themselves everything at home after school. They work best alone at home. School isn't accessible or accepting.

My child is primary aged and under mental health due to schools impact on him. He is autistic, anxiety is not a diagnostic criteria of asd. It comes about due to unmet need. In this instance cause by school.

That teachers need to know more about the impact they have in. Hold tens emotional well being. That some teachers damage children, rather than help them grow. All teachers should have significant training in send and trauma and what children need to feel safe abs grow.

Good behaviour when actually masking is just as much of an issue. Strict behaviour policies encourage this in vulnerable children causing trauma.

Thank you for doing this. If you want to join and share to my Facebook page AutismandADHDJourneyBucks (SEND info share) I try and collect people in organisations who can share and influence the teachers/SENCO's / counsillors I have in my page (a) its content share only so a safe zone! https://www.facebook.com/groups/340494690727672/?ref=share

I have responded to this survey based on the problems my son experienced within an independent mainstream setting where his needs were misunderstood and unmet. He is now at an independent specialist and the difference is night and day in terms of their understanding and support. I would also like to say that it is important that neurodivergent children's behaviour is not measured against that of neurotypicsl children. There should not be the expectation on them to change / to fawn to do things they can't do like sit still, sit in a crowded assembly, remain regulated in a crowded noisy classroom

When a child wants to attend and learn but is unable to due to their need for routine and structure being an obstacle as a result of destructive behaviour of others this needs to be addressed promptly.

The system needs to change soon

Teachers need knowledge and compassion and to be held to account more for their words, attitudes and behaviour.

The government said schools need to let vulnerable children go to school but no one monitored schools to show they would put in force anything that would support sen children.





Schools seem intent on getting SEND kids out of their schools because they do not have the resources nor understanding of how to support correctly. It has become a 2 tier system. This impacts on their life chances.

If they assessed and understood the underlying issue, eg autistic burnout after years of masking, appropriate support could be given and further school based trauma and anxiety avoided. That would facilitate attendance

schools need to be more consistent and trained in issues pertaining to anxiety and panic attacks, how many parents with these issues have been forced into home education? this is unfair to the child and the parent. schools care more about attendance policy than individual issues, every child matters framework is not actually working.

Schools aren't working in their current set up. Attendance isn't working - I say that as a parent whose children achieved 92 & 98% attendance. There's no creativity and joy in education. 21st century schools should be embracing technology, online projects - both solo and collaborative, part time attendance on premises with the rest online learning/project work. If a child doesn't have access to technology at home space could be made in the school for attendance during those learning times. Children need more art and creativity or practical skills, more critical thinking and less rule following, more debating to learn how to put a point across. There needs to be less emphasis on uniform, conformity and appearances.

We need a paradigm shift in the way we respond to behaviour from toddler hood upwards. Bribes, rewards, naughty steps, missing playtime, shaming, isolation booths, detentions, exclusion, etc etc do not teach children how to regulate their behaviour and do not set them up to thrive as adults.

The whole school system is out of date from what and how subjects are taught to how discipline is administered. Teachers are fairly consistent at punishment but never on reward which again is academic result driven rather than looking at everything eduction entails such as development of a well rounded and confident young person who can best use their own individual abilities in a community and in employment.

The current educational system is shocking. I have had 4 children, all have some mental health issues, 3 eldest all went to school whatever. My last one has rarely been in school for the last 5 years or so. The thing that sticks out for us is my daughter is waiting adhd diagnosis although all teachers are ignorant that she has it! The attendance/ threat of fines system is punishment for parents this isn't on, as parents often have no support to access to help with their child's issues. The stress on parents gets passed onto the child making life unbearable for all . I know this isn't just us, my sisters have same age kids, all three born in same year 2004 have all school refused, different authorities. The problem is systemic and needs changing before any more families whole mental health are destroyed. My daughter was put on antipsychotic meds just to stop the anxiety caused by school refusal, threats and now ptsd about the school environment. It's ruined her future and mine! Wake up Gavin Williamson now!

Both current supportive setting and previous setting with rigid behaviour policies were recently judged outstanding for behaviour by Foster but previous settings approach contributed to my child's trauma and current setting is working to heal the damage caused.

It feels like Gavin Williamson and the government are using this as a chance to look like they are doing something. Making it seem there is a big problem that needs fixing (no one I know has seen an increase in behavioural issues), and looking like they are doing something useful (individual schools are best left to determine the right approach for their school). The point on mobile phones is also a distraction. Most schools already have a perfectly good policy on this. It's like government





doesn't trust them. Plus with a child who has anxiety a mobile phone can be a lifeline to ensuring they are ok. And many schools allow their use for research in class.

Positive behaviour management and restorative works best in schools

Behind every behaviour is a need. If you don't address that need by connecting with those pupils, you will drive those pupils away. Behaviour policies when students just need help will destroy the education system further. You want to keep students in school then spend on qualified mental health professionals in schools, train teachers more than a few days on SEN needs. This is what will help disadvantaged children not behavioural policies. I couldn't feel more strongly about it. Look at the educational systems around the world that work, move forwards with policies, don't move back in the past to something that isn't progressive and will cause more students to need EHCPs and more families being let down.

My daughter is starting a new school in September. She will go into year 5 within an inclusive with a class of 15. She is attending a free summer camp at the school to allow her to get used to the new surroundings, to get to know her teacher and to make friends before term starts. This school has a strict behaviour policy that is flexible enough to provide support for a child's individual needs

Thank you for the info and support . It's a baffling and exhausting thing to go through trying to support your child when everything centres around the school they won't go to or is making them ill.

All behaviour is communication. Teachers should remember this and act accordingly

Trauma informed and trained practices/ policies would be crucial in all schools. That's the only way to help children and it cannot be pressed enough. Thank you for your great work!

Behaviour should be unlocked and sanctions levied based on the reason. Else wise they become ineffective

Despite the LA claiming mainstream school would be supportive of my son's needs we were threatened with fines, custodial sentence etc... They seemed to know very little about ASD instead blamed bad parenting.

Mobile phones should not be used during school time, but kids allowed to bring them to school and contact parents in situations of need!

Schools are not considering masking in autistic girls where their needs are not being met in school. They will probably be impeccably behaved at school. This is a barrier in the system for identifying Sen. Bad behaviour in school is not the only sign that children are not fine in school.

I think all schools need to mark absences due to anxiety/EBSA as authorised and should realise that parents are doing everything they can for their child and sometimes, when a plan isn't fully set up for the child, that can mean days off school. They should also then allow the parent to do their own version of learning as parents are not teachers and chances are, if the child is too anxious to go to school, they will also be too anxious to do school work at home.

There are so many kids off school because of trauma from bullying, schools say there is zero tolerance but clearly that's not the case. Too busy handing out detentions for forgetting a pencil case to focus on the real issues.





It is unbelievable that in 2021 these questions are even needing to be asked, that's how messed up our education system is. My child has not attended school for years and the LA educational psychologist put it in writing its due to the negative impact from educational experiences! What does that say about our schools and its about to get a whole lot tougher. We are killing our kids.

Fund sen, hold school accountable for failing to identify sen, hold school accountable for failure to provide provision in ehcp. Hold LA accountable for refusal to assess sen. Ring-fencesen fundingfor sen children not fancy barristers for the LA.

More awareness and acceptance amongst teachers. Enhanced further training once qualified teacher.

The SEND system and CAMHS are not fit for purpose. Children are misunderstood, misrepresented and reasonable, educated adjustments are not made. There is a massive lack of understanding and appropriate training regarding SEND diagnoses and challenges

I removed my daughter from school partly because of the way her behaviour (due to anxiety) was dealt with. Detention was given for leaving the school building when she was in a state of panic and she got another detention for non compliance when she didn't go with a teacher when asked.

Current school excellent, previous school(s!) horrendous. Needs to be some sort of school peer support to ensure the good schools support the struggling schools so that best practice is shared and children benefit

The children can carry their phones but they are not allowed out of their bags at anytime in the school day unless there is an emergency and a teacher gives permission that they can use it. The consequences are applied consistently and the children follow this rule. It is a good compromise as they have their phones for travelling to and from school but they do not cause problems in school

I feel that schools shouldn't treat absence as behaviouralways, as there is a reason why cholden are absent. Usually illness, and or unmet need to trauma of some sort

After asking and begging for help for 3- 4 years my 9yr old is now out of school. The help is there now, but it was too little too late. He is traumatised by failing in a system that failed to identify his needs and support them in an appropriate and timely manner. I have lost my job, my family's income has halved, I have had to have support from the mental health team and was pushed to an attempt on my life because the parent blame left me feeling my sons would be better without me there as no one could any longer blame me. My 9 year old told me he no longer wants to live because his whole life goes wrong and he didnt think he would ever be happy again. He is so traumatised he now has an EOTAS package of support and will be looking at specialist education if he can return to school. This is costing the taxpayer far more money than if he had had the assessments and support when I first starting raising concerns. We can never know but I think he could have managed in mainstream if the support had been correct and timely. Now the damage done to him and to our whole family means we are taking benefits and services rather than contributing by earning and paying taxes. Prevention is always better and cheaper than cure!

I am worried about the effects on both staff and students when they are being asked to comply with policies that go against what is known about in restorative, compassionate, relational, trauma informed approaches and the resulting behaviours if those needs are not met.

My daughters life and our whole family's lives have been through 3 years of heartbreak, stress, struggle and frustration on top of our daughters anxiety the extra pressures school caused with no alternative education offered has pushed us to breaking point. My daughter although very capable





leaves school with no GCSEs not only because there were no GCSEs because of covid but because there was no teacher input for 3 years, although I pleaded and begged for an education for her, she could not be assessed which equals no qualifications and difficulty getting a college place.

My child will not attend until the government implements scientifically recognised mitigation's against covid including co2 monitors to assess ventilation with a system to address if ventilation reaches warning levels , natural ventilation, HEPA filters and a return to school identifying close contacts. Covid is associated with cognitive deficits and multiple organ damage INCLUDING in children. These mitigations are what other some other countries are implementing even where children are vaccinated. If these mitigations aren't implemented then school can not be classed as safe. I cannot send my child to an unsafe place.

Schools don't seem to understand that relational policies and practices should replace punitive ones. Some try to use them both but they are conflicting

My child is no longer the happy confident child he was prior to starting school. Schools have a duty of care. They need to listen to parents concerns. Earlier than crisis point.

Better support is needed and advice on who to turn to for help. Parents are left feeling alone or to blame for their children who may have additional needs which have not been addressed or looked into. I have been asking for help with my son for over a year to be brushed off or empty promises made. His ehcp was supposed to be done last year but it was an outside agency not the school that have started the process.

schools need to be more aware of behaviour communicating a need. i did youthwork for 20 eyars and ws shocked at how schools were once my daughter started. The only time I'd been into schools was to run creative or well being projects, but seeing schools as a whole is horrible.

Staff training is crucial for send children Policies with team teach and pbs do not work Schools should include low arousal techniques in their settings

Let children have a voice. I thought every child matters and has a right to be heard, just a shame that doesn't apply to schools!!!

I was sick of hearing the same excuses of lack of resources / money / staff being used to justify a poorly thought out behaviour policy and untrained teachers and especially TAs traumatising the children at my son's primary. The number who had no idea how to cope with SEND was shocking, and even worse was the school closing ranks when staff were abusive to my Autistic child and other children.

Our school allows phones and even gets students to download useful apps to use in class or at home. The students aren't allowed to use phones at school unless a teacher says they can for educational reasons. I agree with this.

Currently primary schools nurture and support children in low arousal and minimal transition settings. Secondary schools tend to zero tolerance, multiple teachers, transitions, poorly SEND trained staff with little or no experience. SEND children are punished for there disability. Often staff allow situations to escalate then punish the child. It's too easy to blame the child or the parents. Staff fail to reflect on their actions and believe they hold all the knowledge and answers. Children are damaged as a result, leading to anxiety, depression, sleep issues, placing them at greater risks of grooming, alcohol and drug abuse. The policies punish children for fidgetting, lack of concentration, being distracted, etc with no regard to SEND needs. Thus is exacerbated by long waiting lists for diagnosis and mental health support.





Zero tolerance policies added to my child's school anxiety and caused him trauma. This in turn led to barriers to attendance and the trauma and anxiety increased therefore creating a vicious circle of non attendance and mental ill health. This was only resolved by changing schools to a specialist setting with more trauma informed policies and practice.

Behaviour policies adversely affect Neurodiverse students and those with other disabilities and mental health problems. Compassion is what is required in school, not zero tolerance.

That the issues in SEN school with behaviour management may be different to mainstream school, but are equally concerning. They should also be trauma informed. Physical restraint is not a first line action. Low arousal approaches are much more effective and ethical - especially as the behaviour is about unmet needs. Behaviour management must not cause trauma.

Schools make it impossible to ask for reasonable adjustments to their policies by not providing access them by emails, and then remove access rights when you try to make it clear that behaviours are linked to SEND





## Parent comments relating to behaviour, from previous NFIS surveys (March 2018 and May 2020)

"Our son wasn't diagnosed until age 8 with ASD so he was forced to go through first school and nursery with no support and on behaviour plans for being labelled a naughty boy. He was restrained pretty much every day of his school life and we now feel he has PTSD as a result, which is impacting his teenage experience of school. His behaviours are communicating that his needs are not being met. I don't think they ever have been during his whole school life and I don't think they ever will be sadly."

"The school have treated my son so badly. They punish him for behaviour that he cannot help. There is no understanding of how to help him. They send him home formally and informally as they say he is not coping when it is clear they are not coping."

"My son started experiencing high levels of anxiety and depression towards the end of year 10. The pressure of his GCSEs and lack of understanding in school really damaged his mental health... they permanently excluded him in January and he didn't receive any education until 12th March 2020 when he was finally given online tutoring! This has affected our immediate family in all aspects of our lives...to the point that my own mental health has started to deteriorate!"

"My child is only in Year 1 and has already faced numerous exclusions and a permanent exclusion. He has even attended a support base for children with social and emotional needs and still schools struggle to support children who struggle in a school setting but want to attend school."