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Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2016



CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS



Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2016

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Contents

1	Executive summary	3
2	Introduction.....	8
3	Methodology	11
4	Overall perceptions of behaviour.....	17
5	Changes over time.....	20
6	Factors which bet experiences of behaviour.....	41
7	Pupil engagement in teaching and learning	43
8	Support for pupils.....	47
9	Digital technologies.....	50
10	Approaches used in schools.....	55
11	School ethos and support	70
12	Parents' perspectives.....	91
13	Conclusions and implications.....	95

1 Executive summary

Background and aims

- 1.1 The Scottish Government commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a fourth wave of the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research which was first undertaken in 2006. The research explored staff, pupils' and parents' experiences of relationships and behaviour in publicly-funded mainstream schools.
- 1.2 The overall aim was to inform the development of policy, guidance and support by providing a clear and robust picture of current relationships and behaviour, and of policy and practice in this area.

Methods

- 1.3 The research involved a quantitative survey (of headteachers, teachers and support staff) and a programme of qualitative research (with headteachers, teachers, support staff, pupils and parents).

Quantitative survey

- 1.4 For the first time, the survey was conducted online rather than on paper (although, unless the headteacher was confident that all support staff would have confidential access to a computer during their normal working day, support staff were also given the option of completing the survey on paper).
- 1.5 All 362 secondary schools and a randomly selected sample of 508 primary schools were invited to participate. At each school, the headteacher and a randomly selected sample of teachers and support staff were invited to participate.
- 1.6 Fieldwork was conducted between 9 February and 18 March 2016. In total, 4157 members of staff participated and the overall response rate was 48%.

Qualitative research

- 1.7 Between November 2016 and February 2017, a programme of qualitative research was conducted to explore and build on elements of the quantitative survey findings. This took place at 11 primary schools and 12 secondary schools (purposely selected to provide a range in terms of size, area deprivation and geographical spread across Scotland) and involved in-depth interviews with 11 headteachers and five deputy headteachers, 15 focus groups with teachers, 14 focus groups with support staff, 12 focus groups with pupils and 12 focus groups with parents.

Main findings

Overall perceptions

- 1.8 Overall, the majority of staff report that they encounter positive behaviour from pupils all or most of the time. Headteachers were particularly likely to report this.

- 1.9 As in previous waves of the survey, the results from headteachers tend to be more positive than the results from teachers (e.g. headteachers report they experience more good behaviour and less low-level disruptive behaviour), and the results from teachers are more positive than the results from support staff.
- 1.10 When support staff and teachers were asked about the behaviours that had the greatest negative impact on their experience during the last week, they identified the most common low-level disruptive behaviours¹ (rather than more serious disruptive behaviours, which are much rarer) as having the greatest impact.

Changes over time

- 1.11 The biggest change relates to low-level disruptive behaviour in the primary classroom (e.g. hindering other pupils, work avoidance and making unnecessary noise). Reports of this have increased between 2012 and 2016.
- 1.12 Primary staff were asked what they thought the reasons for this increase might be. They suggested reasons relating to societal changes (including the increased use of digital technologies), their perception of some approaches to parenting, and a reduction in the availability of ASN resources (support staff, on- and off-site provision, and expert advice).
- 1.13 Overall, there has been little change in low-level disruptive behaviour in secondary schools.
- 1.14 Overall, looking at the whole range of behaviours in this category, there has been little change in serious disruptive behaviour in either primary or secondary schools. However, primary support staff report that they have experienced slightly higher levels of general verbal abuse, physical aggression and physical violence towards them personally.

Factors which predict experiences of negative behaviours

- 1.15 Analysis of a range of school and teacher variables showed that by far the strongest predictor of experiences of negative behaviours, for teachers and support staff in both sectors, was perceptions of school ethos: those who gave a poorer rating when asked to rate 'the overall ethos of your school' reported that they experienced negative behaviours more often. This demonstrates the strong link between ethos and behaviour.
- 1.16 Among secondary teachers, after perceptions of ethos, the next best predictors were working in a school with a higher proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas and being a less experienced teacher.

Pupil engagement in learning

- 1.17 The qualitative research with staff and pupils suggests a strong interaction between engagement in learning and behaviour in the classroom. Rather than

¹ Talking out of turn, hindering other pupils, work avoidance, using/looking at mobiles phones when they shouldn't (secondary pupils only) and making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise e.g. by scraping chairs, banging objects (mainly primary pupils).

specific teaching methods being more or less effective, what matters most is how they are delivered and how well they engage pupils.

- 1.18 Staff and pupils agreed that teachers taking an interest in, and getting to know pupils as individuals, was key to developing relationships and managing behaviour.
- 1.19 The following aspects of teachers' manner and demeanour were important to pupils: being happy/smiling, being enthusiastic, using humour, being calm and not shouting.
- 1.20 Both pupils and staff agreed that using a variety of different teaching methods was one of the most important ways to engage pupils.

Approaches used in schools to support relationships and behaviour

- 1.21 As in 2012, whole-school strategies and supportive approaches, rather than the exclusion of pupils or other punishments, were identified by headteachers and teachers in the survey as the most frequently used approaches to encourage positive relationships and behaviour and manage disruptive behaviour.
- 1.22 The use of restorative approaches and solution oriented approaches increased between 2012 and 2016. Although changes to the wording of the question mean that the results for 'nurture approaches' cannot accurately be compared over time, the qualitative research suggested that the use of nurture approaches may also have increased. The use of detention and punishment exercises decreased.
- 1.23 Regardless of the specific approaches or interventions used, staff and pupils agreed it was important to: be clear about expectations; regularly reinforce these expectations; be clear about the consequences if expectations are not met; follow through on the consequences.
- 1.24 There was a consensus among staff that approaches need to be adapted on the basis of what works for individual pupils.
- 1.25 Among all groups of staff, there was a widely held view that a lack of both internal and external resources was having a negative effect on the management of behaviour.

School ethos and support for staff

- 1.26 Staff ratings of school ethos were positive and were broadly the same as in 2012. Staff, pupils and parents felt that a positive ethos was characterised by: a school feeling like a community; shared values (including, above all, respect,); strong leadership from the SMT (Senior Management Team); communication and openness among staff; and 'everyone's voice' – particularly the pupil voice – being heard.
- 1.27 Most teachers were confident of their abilities to promote positive relationships and behaviour and respond to indiscipline in their classrooms.

- 1.28 Most teachers and support staff were confident that senior members of staff would help them if they experienced difficulties with behaviour management.
- 1.29 The experiences of support staff were mixed in relation to their role and the support they receive. Primary support staff tended to be more positive than secondary support staff.

Conclusions and implications

- 1.30 The 2016 wave of the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research shows that positive behaviour and relationships continue to be the norm in Scottish schools:
- most staff report that they encounter positive behaviour from pupils all or most of the time
 - most staff give a high rating to the overall ethos of their school
 - most teachers are confident in their ability to promote positive behaviour in their classrooms and to respond to indiscipline
 - where there are problems, these are more likely to relate low-level disruptive behaviour than serious disruptive behaviour. Serious violent incidents are rare.
- 1.31 Nonetheless, there are challenges. While the most common problems might be classed as 'low-level' (e.g. talking out of turn, hindering other pupils and work avoidance), this kind of disruption impacts on the learning of all pupils. Moreover, low-level disruptive behaviour in primary schools increased between 2012 and 2016.

The role of parents

- 1.32 A number of staff in the qualitative research identified that parents have a key role to play in supporting the development of their children's relationships and behaviour and mitigating against the potential negative impacts of societal change.

The role of support staff

- 1.33 Headteachers, teachers, support staff and pupils commented on the link between positive behaviour and having sufficient numbers of support staff in class. Staff felt that a reduction in numbers of support staff, alongside an increased number of pupils with ASN (as a result of inclusion policies), had resulted in a lack of one-to-one support for pupils who need it and a wider negative impact on behaviour.
- 1.34 The research with support staff also indicated a need to allow them more time for discussions with class teachers about individual pupils and classroom planning, and time for involvement in whole-school discussions about approaches to behaviour and relationships. There is also scope for improvement in relation to: ensuring support staff feel valued, communication and training.

Resource issues

- 1.35 Headteachers and teachers talked about the problems of reduced external support for pupils with additional support needs. They identified a need for additional support staff as well as more specialist input and advice.
- 1.36 They also indicated that, more generally, resources within schools have been stretched – and this has had a knock-on impact on aspects which help promote positive relationships and behaviour such as SMT visibility around the school; time for class planning; and time for peer observations and sharing experiences with colleagues.

The links between behaviour and ethos, relationships and engagement

- 1.37 Both the quantitative and qualitative research confirms that behaviour in schools cannot be seen in isolation and it is inherently bound up with the ethos of a school, with relationships in the classroom and around school, and with engagement in learning. This reinforces the emphasis placed on these aspects in recent years by a range of policies and guidance².

Engagement in learning

- 1.38 In the qualitative research, both pupils and teachers identified the pupil-teacher relationship as the most important element of engagement. This includes teachers taking an interest in pupils and getting to know them as individuals.

² Including, for example, Curriculum for Excellence; Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour; How Good is Our School 4.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 On behalf of the Learning Directorate Health and Wellbeing Unit, the Scottish Government Education Analytical Services Division commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a fourth wave of the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research. Previous waves took place in 2006, 2009 and 2012. The research explored staff, pupils' and parents' experiences of relationships and behaviour in Scottish schools.
- 2.2 The purpose of the research was to inform the development of policy, guidance and support on relationships and behaviour in schools. Ultimately, this will contribute to the following national outcomes:
- our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
 - our children are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
 - the life chances for children, young people, and families at risk have been improved.

Policy context

- 2.3 This research sits within the domain of national policy priorities and initiatives to support the wellbeing of children and young people. The *Early Years Framework 2009* sets out Scottish Government policy to ensure that children and young people get the most positive start in life through an early intervention and prevention strategy. The approach focusses on securing high quality relationships for children and young people to support early learning and development. The *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* reinforces the early years strategy to ensure that the provision of early learning and childcare supports the personal development, social integration and lifelong learning of children and young people.
- 2.4 *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE) is designed to support the wellbeing of children and young people through a coherent approach to curriculum development to ensure that children have the best opportunities in life, learning and work. Central to the delivery of CfE is the development of good relations and behaviour in the school community. The attributes and capabilities approach of CfE emphasises developing positive relationships in the school community to ensure that children and young people have a supportive learning environment. Policy in learning instils the idea that an ethos of mutual respect and trust has the most positive impact on the learning and development of children and young people.
- 2.5 The importance of health and wellbeing is reflected in its position at the centre of the curriculum and at the heart of children's learning – as well as being a central focus of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework for Education. Wellbeing is also at the heart of Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) which recognises that every child and young person has the right to expect appropriate support from adults to allow them to grow and develop their full potential. This is now enshrined in legislation in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

- 2.6 *'Included, Engaged and Involved Part 2: A positive approach to preventing and managing school exclusions'* emphasises the need for learning establishments to place a greater importance on inclusion through effective learning and teaching; promoting positive relationships and behaviour; and employment of preventative approaches which reduce the need to consider exclusion.
- 2.7 The policy guidance *Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour* 2013 provides policy guidance on key priority areas to improve the relationships and behaviour in schools. The Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools (SAGRABIS) is developing priority actions to improve relationships and behaviour of children and young people by:
- continuing to develop and embed policies to support relationships, behaviour and wellbeing
 - developing the ethos of the school community, focussing on the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of staff and pupils
 - supporting and training support staff to promote positive behaviour
 - developing guidance on mobile technology, social networking and internet safety
 - ensuring consistency of positive relationships in the home and learning environments.

Aims and objectives

- 2.8 The overall aim of the research was to provide a clear and robust picture of relationships and behaviour in publicly-funded mainstream schools and of current policy and practice in relation to supporting relationships and behaviour.
- 2.9 The 2016 wave of the research built on previous waves by providing an analysis of:
- the nature and extent of positive and negative behaviours in schools, including trends over time (2006-2016): what has improved, become worse and stayed the same
 - the factors linked to positive/negative behaviours including school factors (such as size); the demographic profile of the pupils (such as levels of deprivation and the proportion of pupils with Additional Support Needs); and the profile of teachers (such as length of service)
 - the range of different approaches used in schools to support relationships and behaviour and staff perceptions of which are most effective in different circumstances
 - the impact of the use of digital technologies in learning and teaching on behaviour
 - staff perceptions of school ethos and culture with regard to the promotion of positive relationships and behaviour, including the effectiveness of support given to staff in their work to encourage positive relationships and manage negative behaviour; the confidence of staff in their ability to do so; and the ways in which incidents of serious disruptive behaviour are followed up.

- pupil perspectives on what engages them in their learning and how schools can support them in their learning and wider school experience
- parent perspectives on the approachability and accessibility of schools in relation to their children's behaviour and relationships at school.

Report structure

- 2.10 The next chapter provides details of the research methodology, and in the following chapters we discuss the findings. Each of the latter chapters contains a summary of key findings at the start and, to help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and the qualitative research, sections discussing the latter have a pale pink background. The report ends with conclusions and implications for policy and practice.
- 2.11 It should be noted that, because the survey has been running for a number of years, some of the language in the questionnaire (and therefore the reporting of the findings) may seem a little out of date. However, it was important to keep the language consistent with previous waves in order to ensure robust trend data.

3 Methodology

- 3.1 The research comprised a quantitative survey and a programme of qualitative research. The quantitative survey provides data on how frequently different behaviours are experienced and allows changes over time to be tracked while the qualitative research allows issues to be explored in more depth, adding context to, and aiding understanding of, the quantitative findings.

Quantitative survey of headteachers, teachers and support staff

Questionnaire development

- 3.2 The questionnaire was largely based on that used in the 2012 survey (which, in turn, was largely based on the questionnaires used in previous waves). A number of new questions were added including new questions on the impact of digital technologies, questions on the impact of behaviour on the overall atmosphere/ethos of the school and questions on verbal abuse related to specific equalities characteristics (religion, disability and additional support needs). Some other questions and response categories were updated.
- 3.3 A small scale cognitive testing exercise was conducted (to test new and amended questions) with staff in primary and secondary schools in January 2016 (17 members of support staff (11 online and 6 with the paper version of the questionnaire), fourteen teachers, and seven headteachers). Following this exercise, further amendments were made to the questionnaire. The final version of the online script and the paper version of the support staff questionnaire are attached at Annex C and D.

Survey mode

- 3.4 For the first time, the survey was conducted online rather than on paper. Respondents could choose to complete the survey on a device (PC, laptop or tablet) at school, at home or elsewhere. Sampled staff were provided with a web link and a unique log-in code with which to access the survey.
- 3.5 The advantages of online completion include ease and speed of completion for respondents; higher quality data due to the greater control over routing and automatic checks where respondents miss out a response or enter an impossible/implausible response; cost savings on printing and postage; and environmental benefits through the reduced use of paper.
- 3.6 However, it was anticipated that some support staff may not have confidential access to a school computer within their normal working day and so, unless the headteacher (or survey liaison point nominated by the headteacher) was confident that all support staff would have such access, support staff were also provided with a paper version of the questionnaire and given the choice of which mode they preferred.
- 3.7 It was also recognised that the move to online may have an impact on response rates (since staff would have to take the 'extra' step of logging on to the survey,

rather than simply completing the paper questionnaire they had been given) and so every effort was made to publicise the survey in advance and encourage participation (e.g. through all the teaching unions).

Sampling and recruitment

- 3.8 All publicly funded, mainstream schools in Scotland were included in the sampling frame.
- 3.9 All secondary schools were sampled and invited to participate. Within each school, the headteacher was selected and the number of teachers and support staff to be sampled in each school was proportionate to the number of teachers in the school.
- 3.10 508 primary schools were sampled and invited to participate. To ensure that the sampled schools were representative, a stratified random sampling approach was used to select schools (stratification was by local authority, size of school, urban/rural category and the proportion of the school roll living in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland).
- 3.11 Within each sampled primary, the headteacher was selected and the number of teachers and support staff to be sampled in each school was proportionate to the number of teachers in the school.
- 3.12 Secondary headteachers and primary headteachers in selected schools were sent an advance letter informing them about the survey and encouraging them to take part. They were then contacted by telephone (by Ipsos MORI telephone interviewers) to confirm their agreement to participate and obtain the name and contact details of the member of staff they wished to nominate as a liaison point for the survey. The liaison point was then sent full instructions on how to randomly select the appropriate number of teachers and support staff, together with survey invitation letters and (where required) paper versions of the questionnaires for support staff. The instructions are attached at Annex F and an example of an invitation letter is at Annex G.
- 3.13 Fieldwork was conducted between 9 February and 18 March 2016. Many of the questions ask about respondents' experiences over the last full teaching week. The experiences of individual respondents will, to a greater or lesser extent, vary from week to week (e.g. in some weeks they may experience more positive behaviours than in others). However, the large sample size means that these variations should, in effect, cancel each other out – those respondents who experienced *more* positive behaviours than they usually do in the previous week are balanced by those who experienced *fewer* positive behaviours than they usually do. So, while the reports from some respondents will be 'atypical' for them as individuals, the overall picture of behaviour in schools across Scotland will be accurate. There may be some seasonal fluctuation in behaviours (e.g. relating to the weather, the timing of exams, or whether it is towards the beginning or end of a term). However, any such fluctuations will not impact on trends over time as the fieldwork for this wave was conducted around the same time of year as for previous waves.

Response rates

- 3.14 The response rates are shown in Table 3.1 below. There had been a notable increase in response rates between 2009 and 2012 which may have been due to a combination of pre-survey publicity and the efforts of local contacts to encourage schools in their area to take part (particularly from Positive Behaviour Team link officers); the introduction of telephone calls to headteachers at the recruitment stage; and the introduction of key contacts in schools. The overall response rate in 2016 was 48%. While this is still a healthy response rate – similar to the 2009 rate and higher than many other surveys of this nature, it represents a considerable drop from 2012. This may be due in part to the switch to online but may also be due to competing demands among school staff (school headteachers frequently cited this as a reason for their school being unable to participate for both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research – and a common theme among staff who took part in the qualitative research was that they had experienced an increase in workloads) and reduced capacity (including the loss of some posts) at the LA level which resulted in fewer LA staff acting as survey ‘champions’.
- 3.15 The profile of respondents was compared with the known profile of all staff (using Scottish Government data on size of school, proportion of pupils who live in the 20% most deprived datazones in Scotland, staff gender, and whether their role was full-time/part-time and permanent/temporary). The profiles were very similar. This indicates that the achieved sample was representative of all staff - at least in terms of those variables. The data were weighted to take account of the slight differences.

Table 3.1: Response rates

Staff category	2016 selected sample	2016 achieved sample	2016 response rate	2012 response rate	2009 response rate
Primary teachers	1503	707	47%	69%	43%
Primary headteachers	508	295	58%	73%	57%
Primary support staff	1022	480	47%	69%	45%
Secondary teachers	3907	1797	46%	61%	43%
Secondary headteachers	362	193	53%	70%	65%
Secondary support staff	1443	685	47%	60%	52%
Total	8745	4157	48%	64%	47%

Statistical significance

- 3.16 Where differences over time or between sub-groups are reported, they are statistically significant at the 5% level.

Qualitative research with headteachers, teachers, support staff, pupils and parents

- 3.17 Between November 2016 and February 2017, a programme of qualitative research was conducted to explore and build on elements of the quantitative survey findings.
- 3.18 It was agreed by the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP) that Educational Psychologists (EPs) would be involved in the qualitative research: this would be mutually beneficial in that the expert input of the EPs would enhance the research and that undertaking the research would contribute towards the EPs' professional development. Eight EPs, from eight different local authorities across Scotland, volunteered.
- 3.19 The qualitative research comprised visits to 11 primary schools (four schools visited by EPs and seven by Ipsos MORI) and 12 secondary schools (four schools visited by EPs and eight by Ipsos MORI). Each EP undertook a focus group with parents and a focus group with pupils at one school in their area. Ipsos MORI researchers undertook, at seven primary schools and eight secondary school, an in-depth interview with the headteacher, a focus group with teachers and a focus group with support staff³. At two of primary schools and two secondary schools, visited by Ipsos MORI researchers, we also undertook a focus group with pupils and a focus group with parents (Table 3.2). The number of participants who took part in the qualitative research is shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2: Fieldwork conducted at schools

	Primary	Secondary	Total
Schools at which EPs conducted one focus group with parents and one with pupils	4	4	8
Schools at which Ipsos MORI researchers conducted research with parents and pupils and with staff (headteacher, teachers and support staff)	2	2	4
Schools at which Ipsos MORI researchers conducted research with staff (headteacher, teachers and support staff) only	5	6	11
Total number of schools visited	11	12	23
Total number of focus groups with pupils and parents	6	6	12
Total number of depth interviews with headteachers and focus groups with teachers	7	8	15
Total number of focus groups with support staff	7	7	14

³ In one secondary school, it was not possible to undertake a focus group with support staff as the school was unable to release them from their classroom duties.

Table 3.3: number of participants in the qualitative research

	Number
Headteachers	15
Depute headteachers	5
Teachers	73
Support staff	53
Pupils	57
Parents	60
Total	263

Year group/school selection and recruitment

3.20 Three year groups were selected for the research with pupils and parents⁴:

- P5 (6 focus groups in total)
- S1 (3 focus groups in total) (in order to explore the transition from primary to secondary school)
- S4 (3 focus groups in total) (support with exams was one of the topics covered and, while S5 or S6 would be able to offer greater perspective in relation to national exams, S4 was selected on the basis that there are likely to be fewer behaviour issues in S5 or S6 as the pupils have chosen to stay on at school).

3.21 EPs were assigned either the primary or secondary sector. They then selected a school from their caseload schools and approached them to participate. They did not know prior to selecting a school whether or not the school had taken part in the quantitative survey.

3.22 The schools visited by Ipsos MORI researchers were sampled from those which had taken part in the quantitative survey and had agreed to be recontacted about further research on the subject. Sampling was conducted with the aim of achieving a spread of schools in terms of school size, deprivation (FSM eligibility), rurality and local authority.

3.23 Selected schools were recruited via an initial letter and follow-up phone calls and emails from the Ipsos MORI project team. The recruitment proved significantly more challenging than anticipated with large numbers of schools feeling unable to take part. When schools gave a reason, it tended to be linked to staff shortages – they were either too busy to release staff and/or did not want to ask staff to do anything else as they were already overstretched.

3.24 It is possible that the recruitment difficulties resulted in a sample of schools skewed towards those which were managing well, despite whatever pressures they were under. Indeed, it emerged during visits to schools as part of the qualitative research that, even in those schools reporting challenges in relation to behaviour and resources, staff tended to feel that the school itself had a positive ethos and was coping well in spite of these challenges. This was in contrast to the more

⁴ Although they had children in the relevant year, the parents who took part were not necessarily the parents of the pupils who had participated.

negative experiences that some staff described in relation to other schools that they had worked in.

Fieldwork

- 3.25 All research was undertaken at the school over the course of a day. Each interview or focus group lasted around an hour and was structured around discussion guides (see Annex E), designed by Ipsos MORI in consultation with the Research Advisory Group. EPs also had input into the discussion guides for parents and pupils. In order that all of the desired topics could be covered in the research, some topics were only covered with a proportion of each audience.
- 3.26 Interviews were audio-recorded (with participants' permission). The transcripts of recordings and researcher notes were then analysed by the research team through use of an analysis template and a series of analysis meetings in order to identify the substantive themes which emerged in relation to each section in the discussion guides.

Interpreting the findings

- 3.27 Unlike survey research, qualitative social research does not aim to produce a quantifiable summary of population experiences or attitudes, but to identify and explore the different issues and themes relating to the subject being researched. The assumption is that issues and themes affecting participants are a reflection of issues and themes in the wider population concerned. Although the extent to which they apply to the wider population, or specific sub-groups, cannot be quantified, the value of qualitative research is in identifying the range of different issues involved and the way in which these impact on people.

4 Overall perceptions of behaviour

- 4.1 This chapter sets the scene by providing an overview of the survey findings relating to staff perceptions of behaviour in general; the impact of different behaviours on the overall ethos/atmosphere of the school and on the experience of staff; and the differing patterns of response among categories of staff.

Key findings

- 4.2 **Overall, the majority of staff report that they encounter positive behaviour from pupils all or most of the time. Headteachers were particularly likely to report this (99% did so).**
- 4.3 **Serious disruptive behaviour, low-level disruptive behaviour and disengagement were viewed as having a broadly similar level of impact on the overall ethos/atmosphere of a school.**
- 4.4 **However, when asked to choose from a list of specific behaviours, support staff and teachers identified the most common low-level disruptive behaviours as having the greatest impact on their experience – because they experience them more frequently than serious disruptive behaviours, which are much rarer.**
- 4.5 **As in previous waves of the survey, the results from headteachers tend to be more positive than the results from teachers (e.g. headteachers experience more good behaviour and less low-level disruptive behaviour), and the results from teachers are more positive than the results from support staff.**

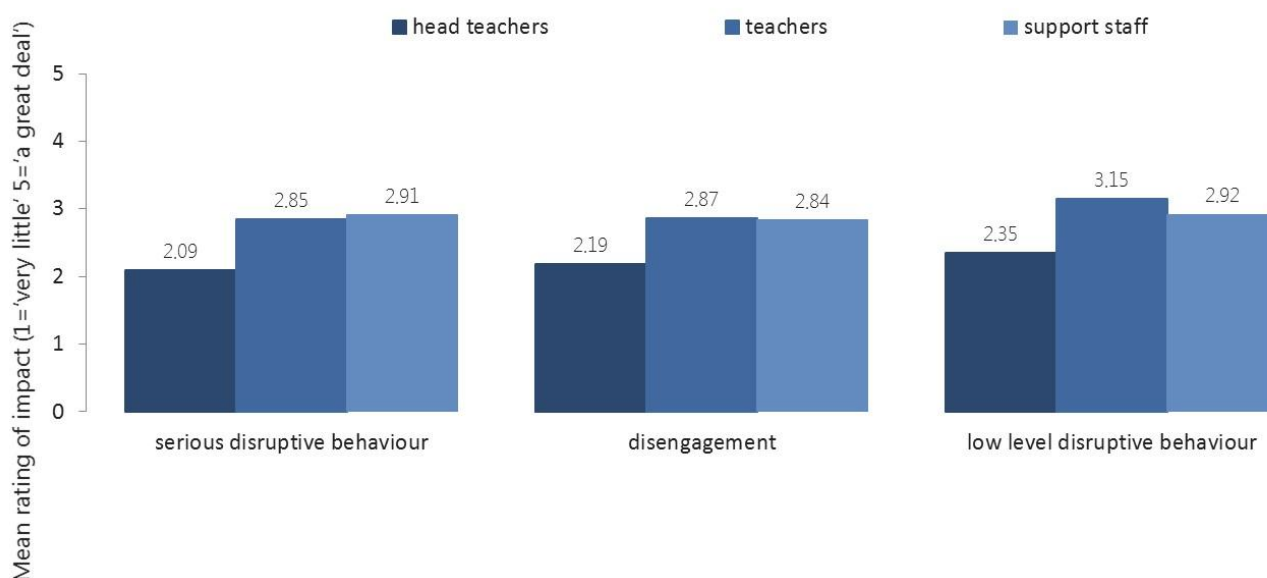
Overall perceptions of behaviour

- 4.6 Overall, the majority of staff report that they encounter positive behaviour from pupils all or most of the time.
- 4.7 In the primary sector, 99% of headteachers, 87% of teachers and 79% of support staff say that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons and almost all (96% or more) feel that all or most pupils are generally well behaved around the school.
- 4.8 Similarly, in secondary schools, 100% of headteachers and 86% of teachers say that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons. Secondary support staff are somewhat less positive, but nonetheless, 54% report that all or most are generally well behaved. Secondary staff are also positive about pupils behaviour around the school: 99% of headteachers, 94% of teachers and 89% of support staff say that all or most pupils are generally well behaved.

The impact of disruptive behaviour and disengagement

- 4.9 Staff were asked to rate the impact of serious disruptive behaviour, of low-level disruptive behaviour, and of disengagement by pupils on the 'overall ethos/atmosphere' of their school. The scale ran from 1 (very little impact) to 5 (a great deal of impact). The mean scores are shown in Figure 4.1 below. In most cases, the mean ranged between 2 and 3 out of 5
- 4.10 Within each category of staff, there was relatively little difference in the mean score for each type of behaviour: in other words, they felt that serious disruptive behaviour, low-level disruptive behaviour and disengagement all had similar levels of impact.
- 4.11 Support staff and teachers felt the behaviours had more impact than headteachers did. Secondary support staff and teachers felt the behaviours had more impact than primary support staff and teachers.

Figure 4.1: Perceptions of the impact of disruptive behaviour and disengagement on the overall ethos/atmosphere of the school



Bases: combined primary and secondary support staff n=1061; primary and secondary teachers n=2495; primary and secondary headteachers n=486.

- 4.12 When support staff and teachers⁵ were asked about the behaviours that had the greatest negative impact on their experience during the last week, they identified the most common low-level disruptive behaviours⁶ (rather than more serious disruptive behaviours, which are much rarer) as having the greatest impact:.

⁵ Headteachers were not asked this question in the survey.

⁶ Talking out of turn, hindering other pupils, work avoidance, using/looking at mobiles phones when they shouldn't (secondary pupils only) and making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise e.g. by scraping chairs, banging objects (mainly primary pupils).

Differences between staff groups

- 4.13 Overall, the results from headteachers tend to be more positive than the results from teachers (e.g. they experience more good behaviour and less low-level disruptive behaviour), and the results from teachers are more positive than the results from support staff.
- 4.14 There are a number of possible reasons for this. Different staff groups have different perspectives on behaviour in the school - although that is not to say that the perspective of any one group is more 'true' than any other. Headteachers probably have a broader overview of behaviour in their school but will have to manage more serious cases of disruptive behaviour than low-level disruptive behaviour. Managing serious disruptive behaviour more frequently may mean that headteachers have a higher threshold for the types of behaviour they consider disruptive. On the other hand, teachers have a class level focus and have to manage with low-level disruptive behaviour more often. Support staff often work with the most challenging individuals or small groups within the whole class. Differences between staff groups may also reflect levels of training and support received to manage relationships and behaviour as well as different levels of involvement in meetings and discussions around behaviour. For example, support staff, in particular, may feel less involved in meetings where behaviour is discussed and may, as a result, feel less well equipped to effectively support relationships and behaviours (see paragraphs 11.47 to 11.66 for support staff views on the support they receive).
- 4.15 In terms of serious disruptive behaviour, there was a different pattern. Headteachers encountered this type of behaviour more often than teachers. Headteachers were asked not only about their personal experience of serious disruptive behaviour but also about behaviour that had been referred on to them. For this reason we would expect them to have encountered more than teachers who were asked to think of their own experience only. However, support staff were also more likely to encounter serious disruptive behaviour than teachers and were asked only about their own experience. The most likely reason for this is that they have more one-to-one contact with pupils who display challenging behaviour.

5 Changes over time

5.1 This section looks first at changes between 2012 and 2016 in relation to a long list of specific positive behaviours, low-level disruptive behaviours and serious disruptive behaviours. It then describes the longer term changes over time (since the first wave of the survey in 2006) for some key measures.

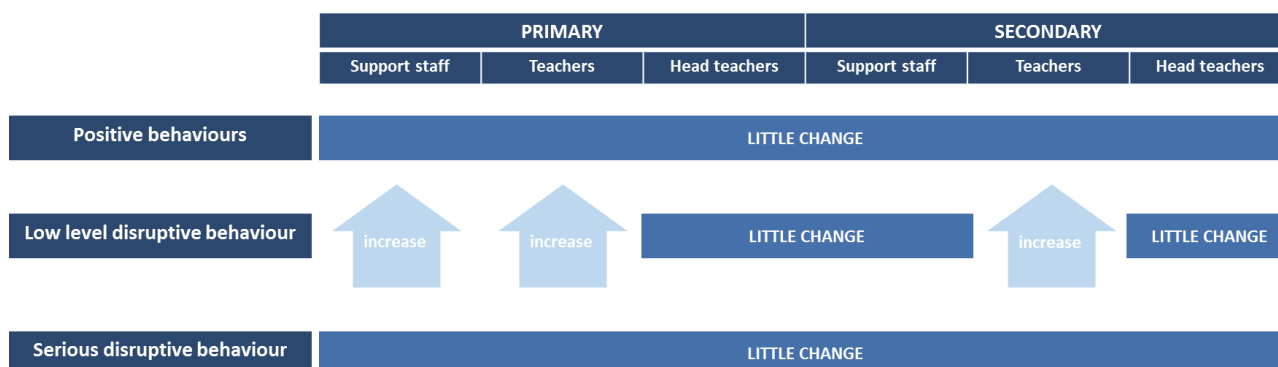
Key findings

- 5.2 **The biggest change relates to low-level disruptive behaviour in the primary classroom (e.g. hindering other pupils, work avoidance and making unnecessary noise). This increased between 2012 and 2016.**
- 5.3 **Primary staff were asked what they thought the reasons for this increase might be. They suggested reasons relating to societal changes (including the increased use of digital technologies), their perceived approaches to parenting, and a reduction in the availability of ASN resources (support staff, on- and off-site provision, and expert advice).**
- 5.4 **Overall, there has been little change in low-level disruptive behaviour in secondary schools.**
- 5.5 **Overall, looking at the whole range of behaviours in this category, there has been little change in serious disruptive behaviour in either primary or secondary schools. However, primary support staff have experienced slightly higher levels of general verbal abuse, physical aggression and physical violence towards them personally. The increase in experiences of these three behaviours occurred between 2012 and 2016.**

Changes in behaviours between 2012 and 2016

5.6 Table A1 in Annex A shows where there have been changes between 2012 and 2016 in the proportion of staff reporting experience of specific behaviours. Figure 5.1 below provides a high-level summary.

Figure 5.1 Summary of changes between 2012 and 2016



The overall picture in primary schools

- 5.7 There were very few changes in relation to positive behaviours between 2012 and 2016: support staff, teachers and headteachers continue to report that pupils were exhibiting positive behaviours most of the time.
- 5.8 There was also little change, overall, in relation to serious disruptive behaviours. There were very few changes in the levels reported by teachers and headteachers. However, there is evidence of a slight increase in general verbal abuse, physical aggression and physical violence towards support staff: while there was no statistically significant difference in the levels they reported over the previous week, there was an increase in the number reporting one or more incidents over the previous 12 months.
- 5.9 The biggest changes relate to low-level disruptive behaviour in the classroom (e.g. hindering other pupils, work avoidance and making unnecessary noise). Support staff and teachers⁷ reported having to deal with all these behaviours more frequently than had been the case in 2012. Teachers also encountered slightly more low-level disruption around the school – although there was no difference in the levels reported by headteachers⁸.
- 5.10 The potential reasons for this increase in low-level disruptive behaviour were explored in the qualitative research with primary school staff and are discussed in paragraphs 5.27 to 5.47 below.

The overall picture in secondary schools

- 5.11 Overall, there was relatively little change in behaviour in secondary schools between 2012 and 2016. A table showing changes in individual behaviours can be found in Annex A.
- 5.12 In relation to some of the positive behaviours in the classroom (e.g. pupils contributing to class discussions and enthusiastically participating in classroom activities), there was a slight decrease in the levels reported by teachers. However, there was little change in the experiences of support staff or headteachers. There was also little difference in relation to positive behaviours around the school.
- 5.13 There were very few differences in relation to serious disruptive behaviour.
- 5.14 Teachers indicated that they had to deal with the low-level disruptive behaviours in the classroom somewhat more frequently than in 2012. However, there was no change in the experience of support staff. Teachers also reported slightly higher levels of some low-level disruptive behaviours around the school but headteachers did not.

⁷ Headteachers were not asked about specific low-level behaviours in the classroom.

⁸ Support staff were not asked about low-level disruption around the school.

Longer term trends over time

5.15 Figures 5.2 to 5.11 below show the trends for some key measures since the first Behaviour in Scottish Schools survey in 2006. Personal experience of serious disruptive behaviour over the past 12 months was first asked about in the 2009 survey and Figures 5.12 to 5.14 show the trends since then. 'No change' indicates that there was no statistically significant change in the measure.⁹

Longer term trends in positive behaviour

- 5.16 There has been a decrease since 2012 in the proportion of primary support staff and teachers who think that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons (Figure 5.2). This is in line with the finding that they are encountering more low-level disruptive behaviour in the classroom (discussed at 5.9 above). However, there has been no change over time in the proportions of primary staff who find that all or most pupils are generally well behaved *around* the school (Figure 5.4).
- 5.17 Although there was no change in their experience of specific behaviours, there has been a slight decrease since 2012 in the number of secondary support staff who feel that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons (Figure 5.3), with levels now similar to 2006. In contrast, the proportion of secondary teachers who feel that pupils are generally well behaved during lessons has increased slightly since 2006.
- 5.18 Secondary support staff and teachers' perceptions of pupil behaviour *around* the school have improved somewhat since 2006. The perceptions of secondary headteachers were already extremely positive and have remained so (Figure 5.5).

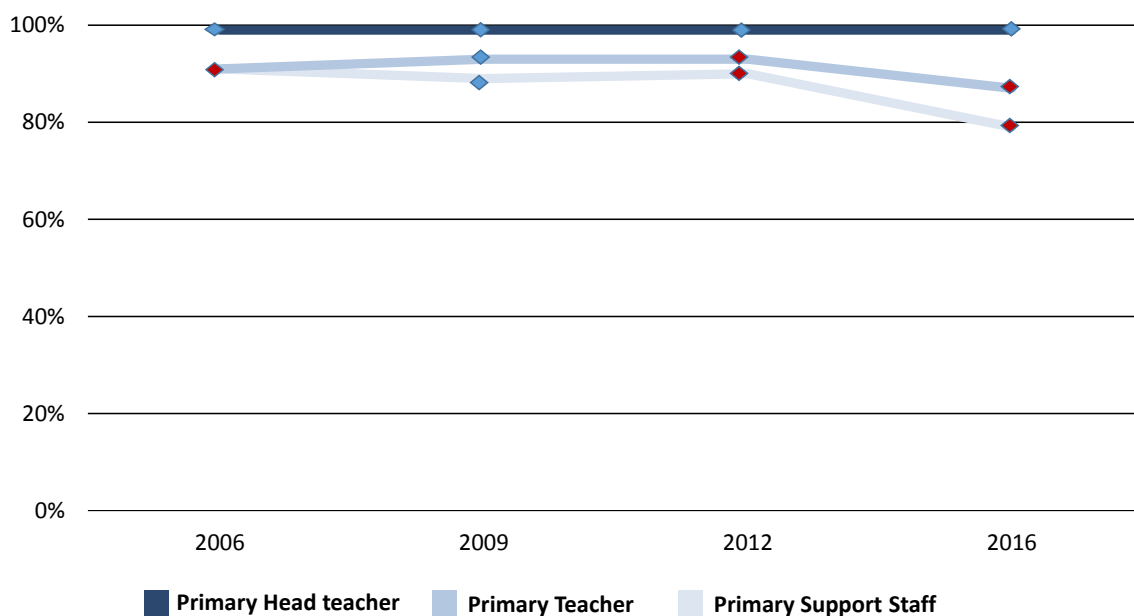
⁹ Where a trend line appears to show an increase or a decrease but the text indicates 'no change', this is because the difference is small enough to have occurred by chance (i.e. there is less than a 95% chance that it represents a real change).

Figure 5.2: Proportion of staff reporting that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons (primary)

- ◆ Data point
- ◆ Data point where there has been a statistically significant change between 2006 and 2016 or between 2012 and 2016

No change among primary headteachers

Decrease among primary support staff and teachers between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)



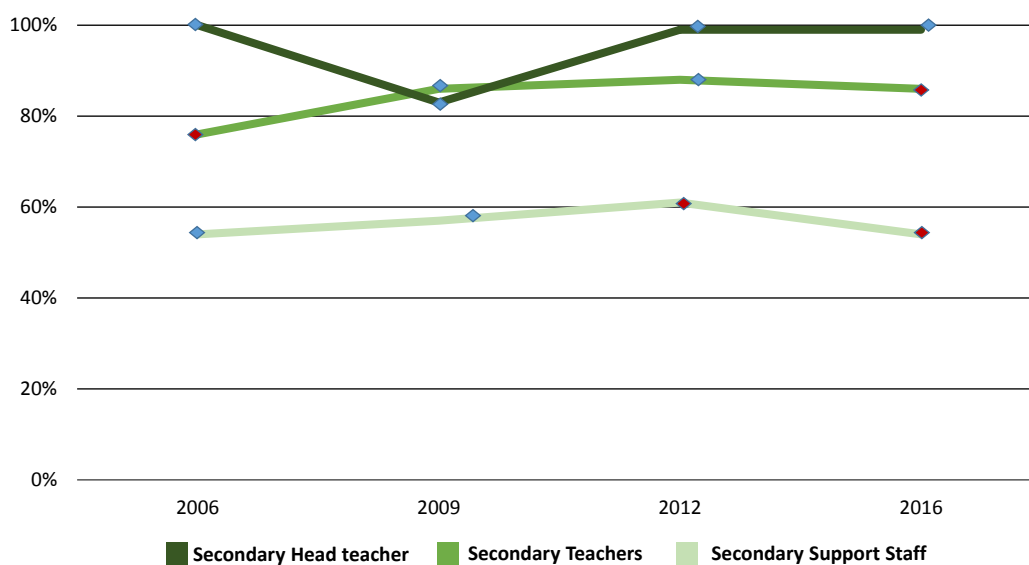
Bases: primary headteachers 295 (2016), 304 (2012), 244 (2009), 215 (2006); primary teachers 707 (2016), 879 (2012), 547 (2009), 529 (2006); primary support staff 472 (2016), 588 (2012), 382 (2009), 187 (2006)

Figure 5.3: Proportion of staff reporting that all or most pupils are generally well behaved during lessons (secondary)

No change among secondary headteachers between 2012 and 2016 (or between 2006 and 2016)

No change among secondary teachers between 2012 and 2016 (but an increase between 2006 and 2016)

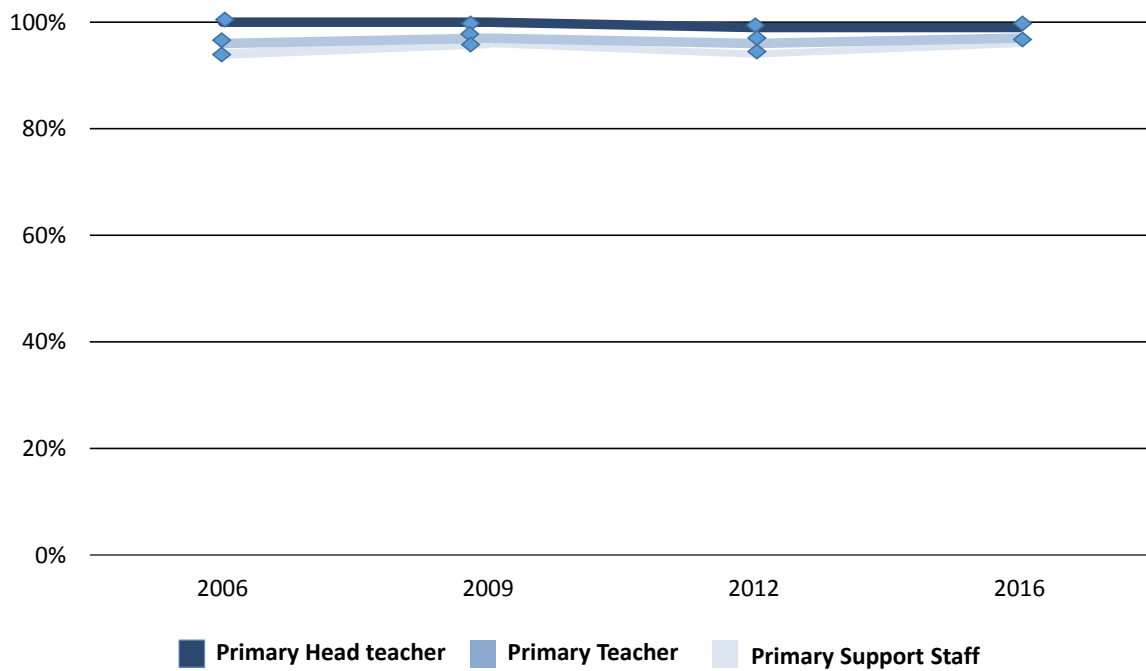
Decrease among secondary support staff between 2012 and 2016 (but no change between 2006 and 2016)



Bases: secondary headteachers 193 (2016), 266 (2012), 246 (2009), 169 (2006): secondary teachers 1795 (2016), 1994 (2012), 1460 (2009), 547 (2006): secondary support staff 658 (2016), 774 (2012), 657 (2009), 312 (2006)

Figure 5.4: Proportion of staff reporting that all or most pupils are generally well behaved around the school (primary)

No change



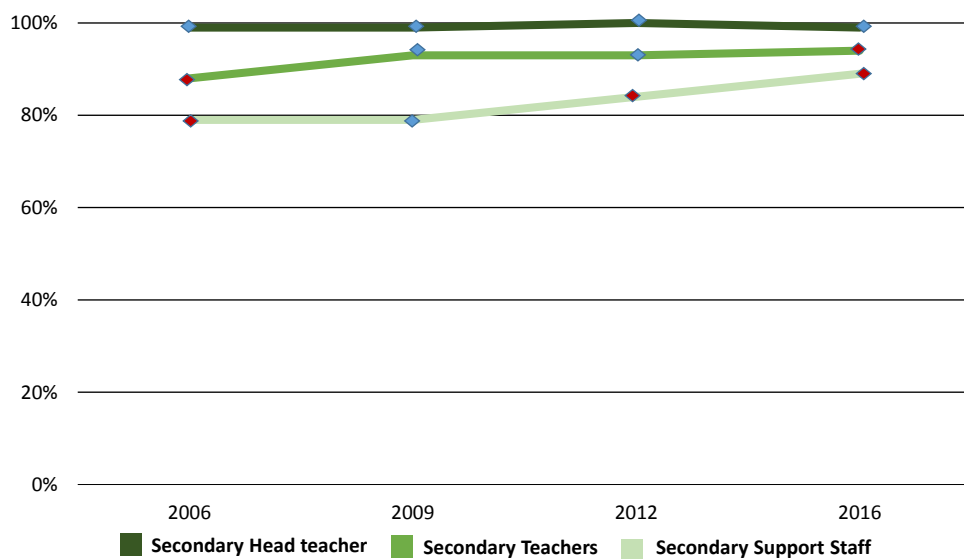
Bases: primary headteachers 295 (2016), 304 (2012), 244 (2009), 215 (2006); primary teachers 704 (2016), 884 (2012), 556 (2009), 529 (2006); primary support staff 476 (2016), 589 (2012), 382 (2009), 187 (2006)

Figure 5.5: Proportion of staff reporting that all or most pupils are generally well behaved around the school (secondary)

No change among secondary headteachers

No change among secondary teachers between 2012 and 2016 but an increase between 2006 and 2016

Increase among secondary support staff between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)



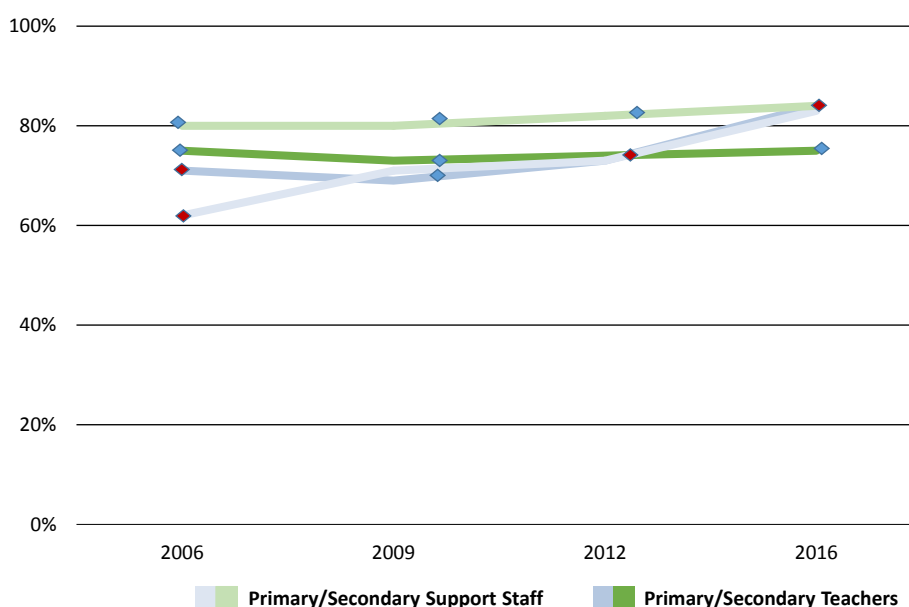
Bases: secondary headteachers 193 (2016), 266 (2012), 246 (2009), 169 (2006): secondary teachers 1776 (2016), 2017 (2012), 1460 (2009), 547 (2006): secondary support staff 656 (2016), 784 (2012), 678 (2009), 312 (2006)

Longer term trends in low-level disruptive behaviour

- 5.19 Figures 5.6 to 5.9 show the trends for some of the most common low-level disruptive behaviours and those which support staff and teachers have consistently identified – in 2016 as they did in 2006 – as the behaviours which have the most impact on their experience: talking out of turn; hindering other pupils and work avoidance.
- 5.20 Since 2006, primary support staff and teachers have encountered all three behaviours more often. For teachers, most of the change occurred between 2012 and 2016. For support staff, there has been a steadier increase over time (Figures 5.6 to 5.8).
- 5.21 There has been less change over time in secondary schools. Among support staff, there have been no changes since 2006 in their experiences of these behaviours. Among teachers, there have been no changes in relation to talking out of turn. The proportion of secondary teachers having to deal with pupils hindering other pupils and work avoidance had dropped between 2006 and 2012, but it has increased again and the levels are now back to what they were in 2006 (Figures 5.6 5.8).
- 5.22 One key measure of disengagement is ‘pupils withdrawing from interaction with others/you’. As Figure 4.8 shows, reported levels have increased since 2006 (in both primary and secondary and for both support staff and teachers). The potential reasons for this were explored in the qualitative research with staff and are discussed in paragraphs 5.48 to 5.55 below.

Figure 5.6: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘talking out of turn (e.g. by making remarks, calling out, distracting others by chattering)’ once a day or more in the previous week

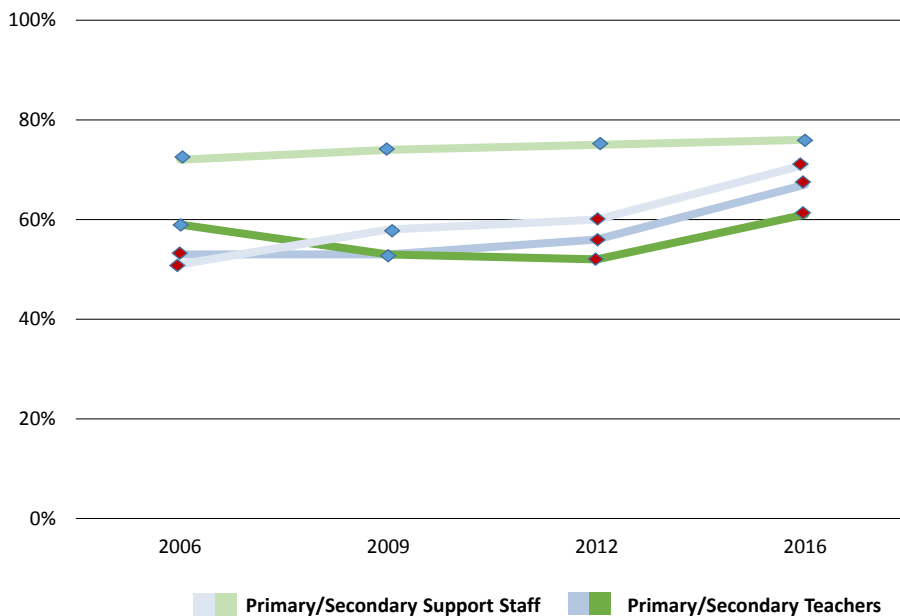
*Increase among primary support staff and teachers between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)
No change among secondary support staff or teachers*



Bases: secondary teachers 1786 (2016), 2014 (2012), 1460 (2009), 547 (2006); primary teachers 706 (2016), 890 (2012), 556 (2009), 529 (2006); secondary support staff 650 (2016), 781 (2012), 657 (2009), 312 (2006); primary support staff 465 (2016), 585 (2012), 382 (2009), 187 (2006)

Figure 5.7: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘hindering other pupils (e.g. by distracting them from work, interfering with materials)’ once a day or more in the previous week

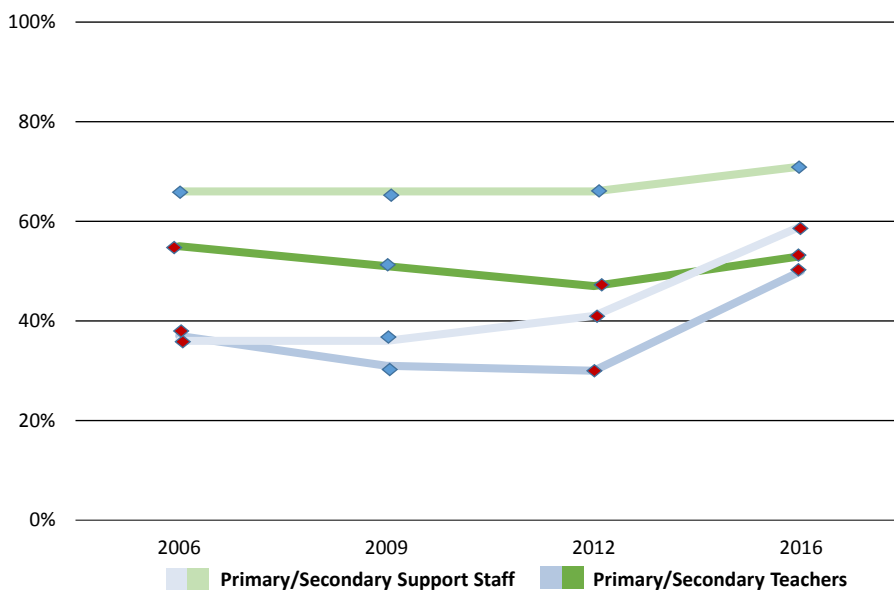
*Increase among primary support staff and teachers between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)
 Increase among secondary teachers between 2012 and 2016 (but no change between 2006 and 2016)
 No change among secondary support staff*



Bases: secondary teachers 1786 (2016), 2014 (2012), 1460 (2009), 547 (2006): primary teachers 706 (2016), 890 (2012), 556 (2009), 529 (2006): secondary support staff 650 (2016), 781 (2012), 657 (2009), 312 (2006): primary support staff 465 (2016), 585 (2012), 382 (2009), 187 (2006)

Figure 5.8: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘work avoidance (e.g. by delaying start to work set)’ once a day or more in the previous week

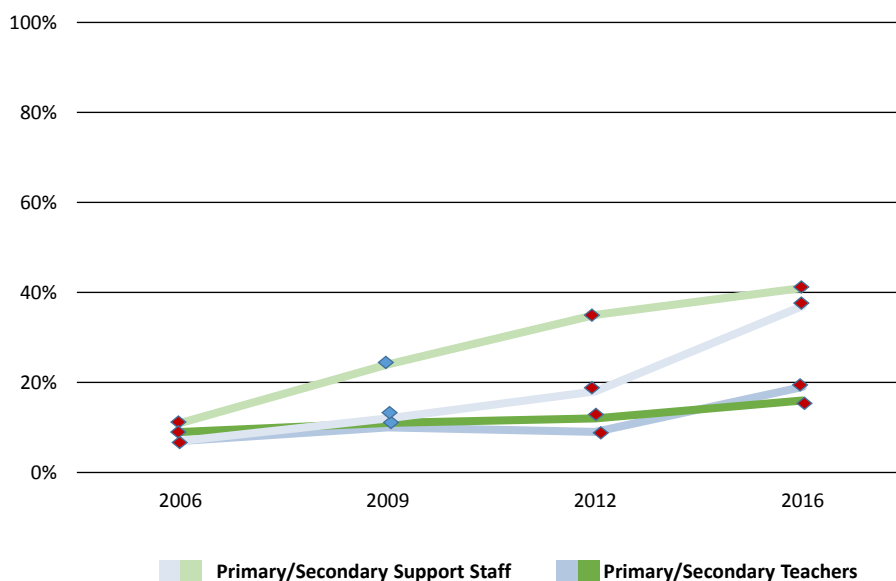
*Increase among primary support staff and teachers between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)
 Increase among secondary teachers between 2012 and 2016 (but no change between 2006 and 2016)
 No change among secondary support staff.*



Bases: secondary teachers 1786 (2016), 2014 (2012), 1460 (2009), 547 (2006); primary teachers 706 (2016), 890 (2012), 556 (2009), 529 (2006); secondary support staff 650 (2016), 781 (2012), 657 (2009), 312 (2006); primary support staff 465 (2016), 585 (2012), 382 (2009), 187 (2006)

Figure 5.9: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘pupils withdrawing from interaction with others/you’ once a day or more in the previous week

All groups increased between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)



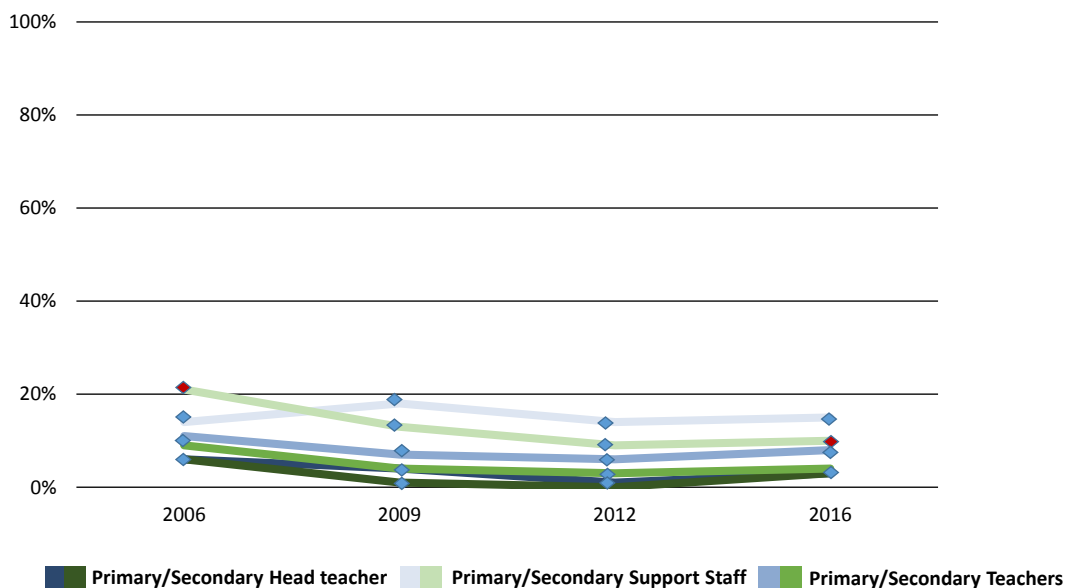
Bases: secondary teachers 1780 (2016), 2007 (2012), 1448 (2009), 541 (2006); primary teachers 703 (2016), 884 (2012), 552 (2009), 524 (2006); secondary support staff 642 (2016), 785 (2012), 639 (2009), 308 (2006); primary support staff 468 (2016), 581 (2012), 375 (2009), 185 (2006)

Longer term trends in serious disruptive behaviour

- 5.23 In primary schools, there has been no change since 2006 in the proportion of staff having to deal with physical aggression or violence by pupils towards other pupils (Figures 5.10 and 5.11).
- 5.24 In secondary schools, there has been a decrease since 2006 in the proportion of support staff encountering physical aggression by pupils towards other pupils and a decrease in the proportion of teachers encountering physical violence by pupils towards other pupils (Figures 5.10 and 5.11).
- 5.25 However, there has been an increase in primary support staff and teachers' experiences of physical aggression towards them personally and support staff (though not teachers) also experienced an increase in physical violence and general verbal abuse towards them personally. The increases occurred between 2012 and 2016. There has been no change in primary headteachers' experiences (Figures 5.12 to 5.14).
- 5.26 There was very little change in secondary staff experiences of physical violence, aggression or verbal abuse towards them personally. The only change was that secondary support staff experienced more incidents of general verbal abuse towards them personally than they did in 2006 – with the increase occurring between 2012 and 2016 (Figures 5.12 to 5.14).

Figure 5.10: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘physical aggression towards other pupils (e.g. by pushing, squaring up)’ in the classroom once a day or more in the previous week

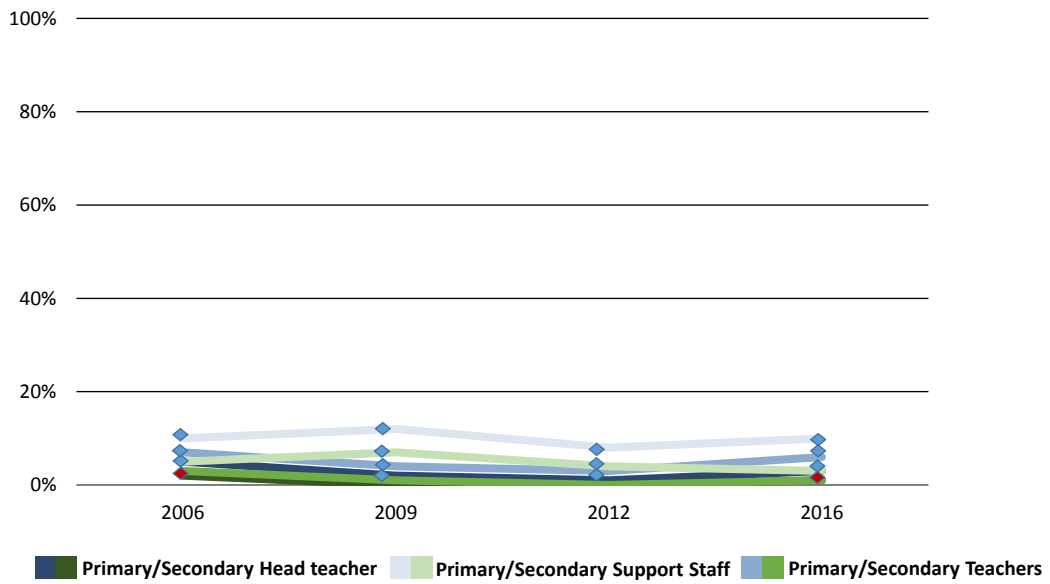
No change among secondary support staff between 2012 and 2016 (but a decrease between 2006 and 2016). No change among other groups



Bases: secondary headteachers 186 (2016), 266 (2012), 242 (2009), 162 (2006); primary headteachers 291 (2016), 303 (2012), 242 (2009), 205 (2006); secondary teachers 1779 (2016), 2019 (2012), 1456 (2009), 547 (2006); primary teachers 705 (2016), 885 (2012), 554 (2009), 525 (2006); secondary support staff 650 (2016), 782 (2012), 653 (2009), 309 (2006); primary support staff 471 (2016), 583 (2012), 381 (2009), 185 (2006)

Figure 5.11: Proportion of staff reporting that they had to deal with ‘physical violence towards other pupils (e.g. punching, kicking, head butting, use of a weapon)’ in the classroom once a day or more in the previous week

*No change among secondary teachers between 2012 and 2016 (but a decrease between 2006 and 2016)
 No change among other groups*

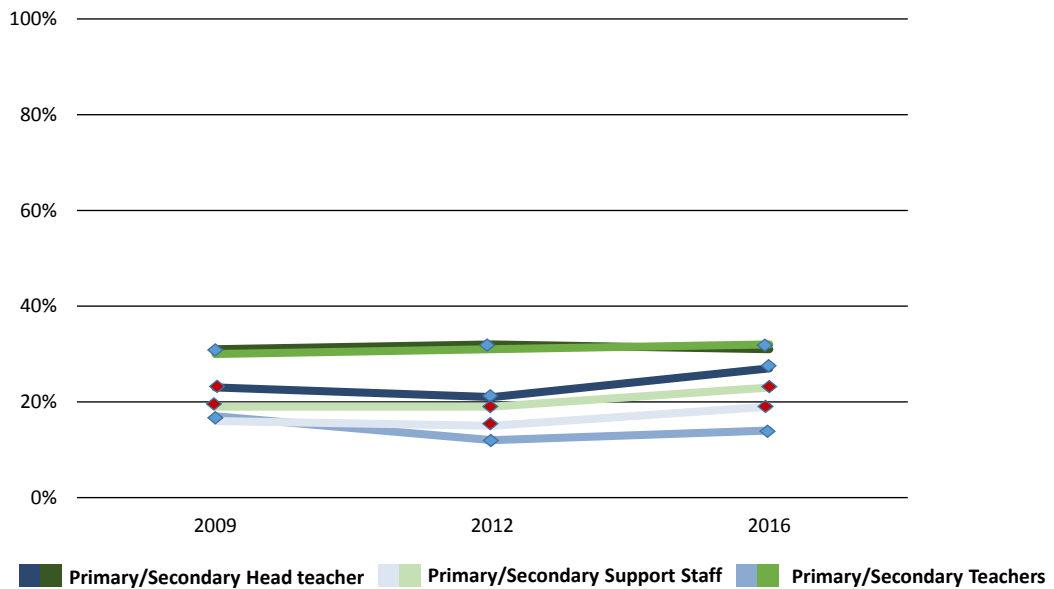


Bases: secondary headteachers 186 (2016), 266 (2012), 242 (2009), 162 (2006): primary headteachers 291 (2016), 303 (2012), 242 (2009), 205 (2006): secondary teachers 1779 (2016), 2019 (2012), 1456 (2009), 547 (2006): primary teachers 705 (2016), 885 (2012), 554 (2009), 525 (2006): secondary support staff 650 (2016), 782 (2012), 653 (2009), 309 (2006): primary support staff 471 (2016), 583 (2012), 381 (2009), 185 (2006)

Figure 5.12: Proportion of staff reporting that they personally experienced at least one incidence of ‘general verbal abuse towards you (e.g. threatening remarks)’ in the previous 12 months

No change among teachers or headteachers

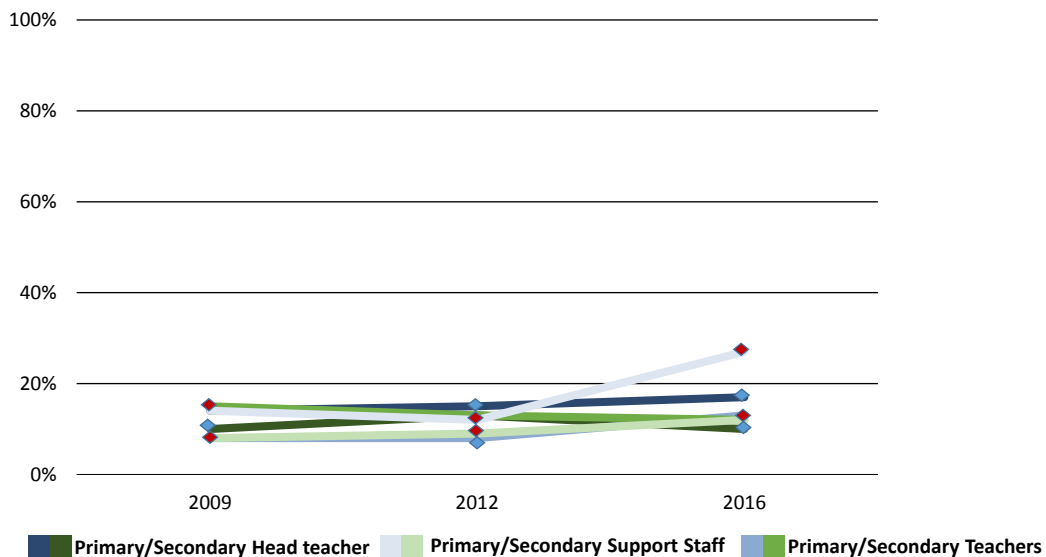
Increase among primary and secondary support staff between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)



Bases: secondary headteachers 185 (2016), 266 (2012), 246 (2009); primary headteachers 289 (2016), 307 (2012), 243 (2009); secondary teachers 1643 (2016), 2044 (2012), 1462 (2009); primary teachers 692 (2016), 894 (2012), 559 (2009); secondary support staff 600 (2016), 795 (2012), 678 (2009); primary support staff 400 (2016), 599 (2012), 389 (2009)

Figure 5.13: Proportion of staff reporting that they personally experienced at least one incidence of ‘physical aggression towards you (e.g. pushing, squaring up)’ in the previous 12 months

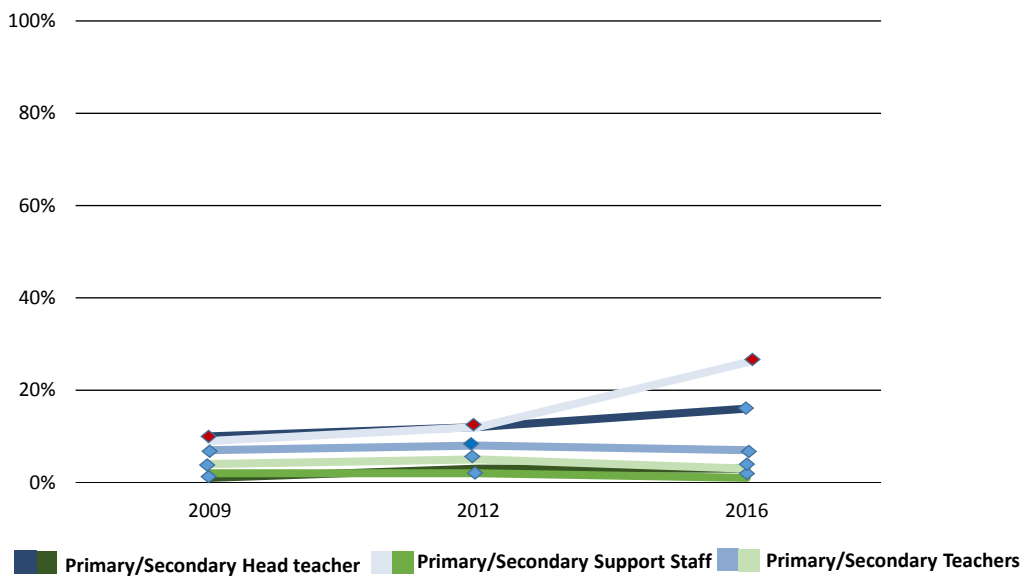
*Increase among primary teachers and support staff between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)
No change among headteachers, secondary teachers or secondary support staff*



Bases: secondary headteachers 185 (2016), 266 (2012), 246 (2009); primary headteachers 289 (2016), 307 (2012), 243 (2009); secondary teachers 1643 (2016), 2044 (2012), 1462 (2009); primary teachers 692 (2016), 894 (2012), 559 (2009); secondary support staff 600 (2016), 795 (2012), 678 (2009); primary support staff 400 (2016), 599 (2012), 389 (2009)

Figure 5.14: Proportion of staff reporting that they personally experienced at least one incidence of ‘physical violence towards you (e.g. punching, kicking, head butting, use of a weapon)’ in the previous 12 months

*Increase among primary support staff between 2012 and 2016 (and between 2006 and 2016)
No change among other groups*



Bases: secondary headteachers 185 (2016), 266 (2012), 246 (2009): primary headteachers 289 (2016), 307 (2012), 243 (2009): secondary teachers 1643 (2016), 2044 (2012), 1462 (2009): primary teachers 692 (2016), 894 (2012), 559 (2009): secondary support staff 600 (2016), 795 (2012), 678 (2009): primary support staff 400 (2016), 599 (2012), 389 (2009)

Why has low-level disruption in primary schools increased?

- 5.27 The remainder of this section is based on findings from the qualitative research¹⁰. The quantitative survey found that both primary teachers and primary support staff reported dealing with low-level disruption in the classroom more frequently in 2016 than they had in 2012. We explained this finding and explored their perceptions of the possible reasons for it in the qualitative research with primary headteachers, teachers and support staff. Low-level disruption was also discussed with secondary staff.
- 5.28 The reasons suggested by staff for the increase in low-level disruption in primary schools were varied and often intertwined. However, there were two underlying themes at the core of many of the issues that were raised: increasing use of digital technology and perceived changes in the parent-child relationship. There was a further theme related to insufficient ASN resources and staffing that was more clearly separated from the other two raised (although there are areas of overlap here too). It is worth noting that, apart from ASN resources, staff focused on *external* factors rather than school factors – so it may be worthwhile considering how schools can work alongside, and influence, these social and cultural factors. Their views on a range of school factors are explored in subsequent chapters.
- 5.29 There were six main reasons suggested for the increase in low-level disruptive behaviour:
- lower levels of respect for adults and, in particular, teachers than in the past
 - less well developed social skills
 - lower levels of resilience, both in terms of pupils' relationships with other pupils, and in response to challenging learning situations
 - lower levels of concentration and shortened attention spans
 - a greater number of pupils exhibiting a need for attention
 - a greater number of pupils exhibiting a need for attention a reduction in the availability of ASN resources (support staff, on- and off-site provision, and expert advice).

Respect

- 5.30 Teaching and support staff thought that the level of respect pupils held for others (including teachers) had diminished over time. There were two main ways this was demonstrated. The first, most commonly raised by support staff, was a general deterioration in manners. The second was the display of what teachers termed a 'defiant' attitude shown through constant questioning of instructions and refusal to carry out tasks.
- 5.31 There was no single explanation provided for why respect had decreased and it was seen as a wider societal issue. More specifically, one common explanation

¹⁰ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

from staff was that inappropriate language and disrespectful treatment of others on social media has increased, and this type of behaviour has therefore been normalised in society. It was suggested that young people's exposure to this means they are less able to determine the correct way to interact with others.

- 5.32 Another explanation given by staff was that this lack of respect was due to some parents not modelling respectful behaviour for their children¹¹. Both teaching and support staff felt that some parents would assume that an incident has happened as a result of something the school has done rather than their child. This was linked to a wider societal 'blame culture'.

Reduced social skills

- 5.33 One explanation given for the increase in low-level disruption was a perception that pupils' social skills are less well developed than they once were. Teachers thought that, with poorer social skills, pupils were more likely to argue with their peers, say inappropriate or hurtful things, and to respond in a disproportionate manner so that these incidents escalate.
- 5.34 Staff thought that pupils face greater social isolation than in the past because they spend more time alone and unsupervised (often using digital technology) rather than spending time face-to-face with friends or family. This means that they do not have the opportunity to develop the type of social skills needed to effectively interact with their peers and with adults.

Resilience

- 5.35 It was common for staff at all levels, including headteachers, to discuss a perceived lack of resilience as a major change in pupils' skills set over recent years, both in terms of their interactions with their peers and when facing challenges, either in their personal life or in their school work.
- 5.36 An explanation provided for this perceived decrease in levels of resilience was a view that some parents are increasingly solving their children's problems without first encouraging them to tackle problems themselves. This may mean that these children are becoming less independent, are not developing problem solving skills, or patience, and may not know how to act appropriately if faced with difficulty. The expectation that an adult will step in if they find something difficult can then carry over into school life.
- 5.37 An alternative explanation, specifically related to resilience in peer relationships, was related to a perception that pupils were more socially isolated. In addition to causing low-level disruption through less well developed social skills (as discussed above), it was felt that pupils did not have the opportunity to build up resilience in dealing with difficult interpersonal situations.

¹¹ In this Chapter, it may appear that staff were quite critical of parents in general. However, it should be noted that, where there are criticisms, staff were not talking about ALL parents – rather they were suggesting reasons why the approach of *some* parents may have contributed to problems.

5.38 It was thought that there were several consequences to this. Firstly, that pupils were more reliant on staff members to resolve problems between peers which may have been previously resolved between themselves. Secondly, it was felt that pupils were less able to cope with challenges they faced in their personal lives and this was manifested through 'acting out' in class. Thirdly, teachers (in particular) felt that if pupils came up against a piece of work that they found challenging they were more likely to 'give up' and expect a teacher to solve the problem for them, or to disengage, rather than try again.

I think they expect you to deal with everything, things...are minor little fall outs..., they want you to do something about it. Like, 'go and tell them they have to play with me'.

Primary support staff

Concentration and attention span

5.39 Teachers in both primary and secondary schools felt that pupils struggled to concentrate more now than they had in the past and that their attention spans were shorter.

5.40 If a pupil was not concentrating, or lost interest in the task set by the teacher, this led to disengagement. In turn, disengagement led to pupils being more likely to distract others.

5.41 The predominant view was that digital technology could be the cause of poor concentration levels and short attention spans, and its effects were thought to be twofold. Firstly, teachers and support staff believed that pupils were getting less sleep than they had previously (because they were playing computer games and spending more time on social media late at night). Secondly, digital technology allows pupils to have near constant access to entertainment. Teachers felt that it was therefore more difficult to keep them engaged in school work – lessons had to incorporate greater variety to be successful.

Need for attention

5.42 Primary school staff felt that more pupils were exhibiting a need for attention. This encompassed several behaviours, including constantly seeking affirmation from the teacher, wanting to be close to the teacher at all times and shouting out in class out of turn.

Low-level behaviour sort of suggests that they're doing naughty things for [the sake of it], I don't think the children are doing that. They are desperately, desperately seeking attention at lots and lots of different levels. I think it's the shouting out, it's the coming up, it's the close proximity, it's the need to feel safer, closer to an adult in a way.

Primary teacher

- 5.43 While both teachers and support staff spoke of increased need for attention among pupils, primary teachers made an explicit link between these types of behaviours and an increase in pupils with attachment type disorders.
- 5.44 The perceived increase in the need for attention was thought to be due to some families spending less time together. However, even if families are physically together, the increase in digital media use means that they are not necessarily interacting. As noted above, staff believed that some pupils were being given less attention, with some parents using tablets or smartphones as a 'babysitter'.

Changes to ASN resources

- 5.45 School staff frequently raised ASN resources when discussing increases in low-level disruption, particularly in relation to reductions in local authority special school provision and the number of support staff available to the school.
- 5.46 The number of pupils identified with ASN in mainstream schools has risen since 2012, although to a greater extent in secondary schools than primary schools¹². While school staff, on the whole, supported the inclusion principles behind some of this rise¹³, they felt that the provision of ASN support was not proportionate to the additional work that this required of schools.
- 5.47 Furthermore, it was common for teachers and headteachers to say they had seen a reduction in the number of support staff at the school, in combination with reduced levels of support for pupils with ASN at a local authority level – both in terms of on-site and off-site provision and expert advice (including educational psychology input). The link between resourcing (more broadly) and disruptive behaviour is discussed further in paragraph 10.40.

Why has disengagement increased?

- 5.48 As Figure 5.9 above shows, levels of disengagement (as measured by the statement 'pupils withdrawing from interaction with others/you') increased between 2006 and 2016. This was the case for teachers and support staff, in both sectors.
- 5.49 This was explored further in the qualitative research. It is important to note that staff tended to discuss it mostly in relation to immediate engagement/disengagement with teaching and learning in the classroom, and not with school life in a broader sense.
- 5.50 Disengagement was often seen as a precursor to low-level disruptive behaviour and some of the explanations for an increase were the same as those for the increase in low-level disruptive behaviour: poorer levels of concentration and lower levels of resilience when dealing with challenges. (See paragraphs 5.35 to 5.41 above.)

¹² Scottish Government (2016). Pupil census supplementary data. Available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/dspupcensus16>

¹³ There number of pupils identified with ASN varies greatly across LAs, which may be in part due to different thresholds being set. Changing thresholds may explain part of the rise in numbers'.

- 5.51 In addition to these reasons, there was a view among some secondary teachers and headteachers that the introduction of the new National qualifications had led to increased disengagement of some S4 pupils. They were concerned that the lack of an exam for National 4 qualifications demotivated pupils completing this level. The lack of an exam was felt to devalue the award which had an impact on pupils' self-esteem – and this was exacerbated by schools forming mixed level classes (pupils completing National 4 and 5 (which does involve an exam) in the same class).
- 5.52 Another consequence that secondary teachers and headteachers highlighted was that parents were often keen to have their child complete National 5, even if the school recommends they should be completing National 4 – again this was related to parental doubts about the value of a qualification without a final exam. This meant that some pupils were forced to work at a level that was not appropriate for their abilities and other qualification pathways were not considered.
- 5.53 Introduced as part of *CfE*, the broad curriculum has been extended from S1-2 to S3. Secondary teachers commented on two possible ways this could encourage disengagement. Firstly, they had previously found that the move into S3 signalled a time when pupils become more focused as they started studying for qualifications. However, now that the broad curriculum has been extended, teachers felt that pupils were unfocused for longer. Teachers thought that this was a particular problem in subjects that pupils knew they were not going to continue.

What works well in tackling disengagement?

- 5.54 What works in relation to engaging pupils in their learning is discussed in Chapter 7.
- 5.55 In addition, headteachers in particular, highlighted the need to be flexible and that often the best way to engage certain pupils was to offer an alternative to classroom-based learning. This was commonly through college courses and work experience programmes but did cover a range of other opportunities. For example, in one school some S4 pupils were given the opportunity to work in a local bicycle shop as an alternative to some classes. Another school had an outdoor classroom at a local business and involved pupils in helping with PE classes.

6 Factors which predict experiences of behaviour

6.1 This chapter explores the extent to which different factors predict teacher and support staff experiences of negative pupil behaviour. The scope of the research only extended to exploring some specific school variables which might be linked to experiences of pupil behaviour. It was not intended to provide a full explanation of pupil behaviour as there are clearly many other variables that could contribute to this (e.g. aspects of pupils' home lives or peer pressure).

Key findings

6.2 By far the strongest predictor, for teachers and support staff in both sectors, was perceptions of school ethos: those who gave a poorer rating when asked to rate 'the overall ethos of your school' reported that they experienced negative behaviours more often.

6.3 Among secondary teachers, after perceptions of ethos, the next best predictors were working in a school with a higher proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas and being a less experienced teacher.

6.4 In order to identify what predicts staff experiences of different types of behaviours, we used regression. This is a statistical technique which analyses a number of different variables, controls for the fact that some of them might be linked with each other (for example, deprivation might be linked to the proportion of pupils with additional support needs), and separates out the effect of each to identify which has the biggest impact.

6.5 The following variables¹⁴ were analysed:

- perceptions of school ethos
- school size
- school capacity
- school building condition
- proportion of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland
- proportion of pupils with additional support needs (ASN)
- ratio of support staff to school roll
- ratio of support staff to pupils with ASN
- length of service of teaching staff
- the proportion of pupils that have additional support needs
- stage taught (primary teachers only)

¹⁴ for more details on the data on which these variables were based, please see Annex B.

- whether school in top 25% of schools for attainment (secondary only).
- 6.6 By far the strongest predictor, for teachers and support staff in both sectors, was perceptions of school ethos: those who gave a poorer rating when asked to rate 'the overall ethos of your school' reported that they experienced negative behaviours more often. This was the case for almost all the behaviour groupings (e.g. low-level behaviour in the classroom, aggression and violence towards staff etc.) for each category of staff.
- 6.7 It is worth noting here that the effect may not be in one direction: ethos may have an impact on behaviour, and behaviour may have an impact on ethos.
- 6.8 Among secondary teachers, after perceptions of ethos, the next best predictors were working in a school with a higher proportion of pupils from the most deprived areas (which predicted five of the seven behaviour groupings) and being a newer teacher (which predicted three).
- 6.9 Among primary teachers, and both primary and secondary support staff, none of the other variables predicted more than two of the behaviour groupings.
- 6.10 See Annex B for Tables which show full details of which variables predicted staff experiences of the different types of behaviour, and for more details of how the analysis was conducted.

Analysis of subjects taught

- 6.11 We also undertook some analysis to explore whether secondary teachers' experiences of pupil behaviour were linked to the subjects that they taught. However, there was no clear pattern by subject.

7 Pupil engagement in teaching and learning

7.1 In the qualitative research with staff and pupils, we explored the links between relationships and behaviour in the classroom and pupils' engagement in their learning.

Key findings

7.2 The qualitative research with staff and pupils indicates a strong link between engagement in learning and behaviour in the classroom.

7.3 Rather than specific teaching methods being more or less effective, what matters most is how they are delivered and how well they engage pupils.

7.4 Staff and pupils agreed that teachers taking an interest in, and getting to know pupils as individuals, was key to developing relationships and managing behaviour.

7.5 The following aspects of teachers' manner and demeanour were important to pupils: being happy/smiling, being enthusiastic, using humour, being calm and not shouting.

7.6 Using a variety of different teaching methods was one of the most important ways to engage pupils.

7.7 It is important – from a behaviour point of view as well as a learning point of view – to ensure appropriate differentiation in lessons.

7.8 In the qualitative research with staff¹⁵, we asked the extent to which different teaching and learning methods had an impact on behaviour, while in the qualitative research with pupils, we explored the factors which helped engage them in their learning. There was a great deal of consistency in the themes that emerged – evidence of the strong link between engagement and behaviour.

7.9 There was a consensus that it's not so much about whether specific teaching methods are more or less effective, in terms of behaviour, it is about how methods are delivered – how they engage pupils – and about:

- relationships between teachers and pupils
- variety
- differentiation

¹⁵ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

Relationships between teachers and pupils

- 7.10 Staff and pupils agreed that teachers taking an interest in, and engaging with their pupils, was key to developing relationships and managing behaviour. A common theme was that, over and above teaching and learning, it was important to understand individual pupils. Staff felt that having a good relationship with pupils enabled teachers to better negotiate behaviour in the classroom.
- 7.11 This point was illustrated with the observation from support staff that some pupils behave differently with different teachers – some teachers *'get them'*, while others do not – and that this speaks to the relationships that they have developed.
- 7.12 More specifically, teachers felt that the understanding that comes from good teacher-pupil relationships enabled teachers to select methods that would suit individual pupils.
- 7.13 An awareness and understanding of what is going on in the classroom throughout the lesson was another aspect of maintaining relationships and managing behaviour. Teachers stressed the importance of scanning the classroom and reacting/adapting. Support staff, in their observations of effective behaviour by teachers, echoed the need to maintain a strong presence and move round the classroom.
- 7.14 Aspects of teachers' manner and demeanour were important to pupils. In particular, they identified the following as important in setting the tone in the classroom and helping make a lesson enjoyable:
- 'the teacher being happy' (and 'not being in a bad mood' – 'maybe the previous class has put them in a bad mood')
 - 'the teacher smiling when you come in to class'
 - 'when the teacher is enthusiastic'
 - using 'humour'
 - 'being calm'
 - 'not shouting'.

Variety

- 7.15 There was universal agreement, among both staff and pupils, that using a variety of different teaching methods was one of the most important ways to engage pupils. Teachers felt that almost all pupils will be more engaged if there is variety in lessons. Furthermore, that, because some pupils learn more effectively with specific methods (which in turn impacts their behaviour), having variety helps address this. Primary teachers, in particular, described having a number of approaches planned for the same lesson and changing their approach if a particular method was not working in the classroom.

You're not going to appeal to everyone, there are some kids that are going to be like, 'yes, creative writing'. Others will say 'oh, my goodness this is torture'. So, having a mixture of strategies and tasks within the class that

kind of allow pupils...different pupils to crop up and show their expertise and to get engaged.

Secondary teacher

- 7.16 Another common view among teachers was that having a clear structure – and communicating it to the class – helps pupils to know what is coming next and gives them cues on what type of behaviour is appropriate. This is particularly important for some pupils e.g. those on the autistic spectrum who require that level of structure.

Active learning

- 7.17 One of the main ways in which teachers introduced variety was through the use of different active learning approaches¹⁶. Active learning approaches were seen, again by both staff and pupils, as particularly effective in engaging pupils.
- 7.18 Staff also acknowledged that giving pupils more choice in some of the topics they covered and the approaches they used, resulted in pupils feeling more ownership of their learning – and that this had led to more engagement.
- 7.19 However, while there was general agreement that active learning approaches led to increased engagement, there was a concern among staff that the emphasis on active learning meant that some pupils struggled with more ‘traditional’ teaching approaches – such as working quietly on writing tasks or listening to the teacher. There was a view among secondary teachers that the extensive use of active learning approaches in primary/early secondary meant that, in the senior phase of secondary, some pupils struggled when ‘traditional’ approaches were required. Linked to this, pupils themselves talked about finding it uncomfortable if the class was ‘*too silent*’.

Triggers for disruption

- 7.20 Primary school staff indicated that pupils moving out of their seats could be a trigger for disruptive behaviour. There was the view that this should be managed by having a balance between physically active tasks and sitting down, as too much moving around can also lead to disruptive behaviour.
- 7.21 Transitions between activities were also identified as possible triggers for disruption.

¹⁶ Learning where the learner is responsible for instigating, planning or managing what they do (or where teachers are responsible for instigating, planning and managing what the learner does in a way which involves the learner actively e.g. through engaging the learner in dialogue, asking questions, posing problems, setting stimulating tasks, encouraging investigations and through cooperative learning approaches). *Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning: a Guide to Developing Professional Practice*, Scottish Government (2010).
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/325191/0104856.pdf>

Group work

- 7.22 Staff also reflected on the fact that group work helped to increase pupils' social skills - and less well-developed social skills was identified as one of the causes of negative behaviour. However, it was pointed out that simply 'doing a lot of group work' is insufficient to develop the necessary skills – structuring the group work and helping pupils to learn and practise aspects of effective group working (e.g. only one person talking at once and responding constructively to others' suggestions) can help develop those skills.
- 7.23 Whilst recognising the pros and cons of group work, there was general agreement among staff that it could lead to off-task chatting at times.

Differentiation

- 7.24 There was a consensus among staff that it was important – from a behaviour point of view as well as a learning point of view – to ensure appropriate differentiation¹⁷ in lessons to avoid pupils disengaging and becoming disruptive because they find tasks too difficult (or too easy).
- 7.25 Related to this, pupils thought that the following were important factors in maintaining engagement:
- understanding the task and the content of the lesson
 - responding quickly to requests for help
 - praise and encouragement.

Planning

- 7.26 Ensuring variety, structure, a balance of activities, differentiation and engaging lessons, requires careful planning. Indeed, planning was a cross-cutting theme in the qualitative research and staff frequently discussed the need for planning in terms of breaking lessons into manageable sections, and (in primary school), the overall planning of the day.
- 7.27 Pupils identified that disruptive behaviour was more likely to occur when there were 'gaps' and they were not being occupied.

¹⁷ Pitching the same lesson at different levels to accommodate learners with different levels of ability, interest or prior learning.

8 Support for pupils

- 8.1 Whether pupils feel supported in their learning and in their wider experience of school – particularly at potentially challenging times such as the transition from P7 to secondary and during exams – may have an impact on relationships and behaviour. In the qualitative research with pupils and parents, we therefore explored views on how schools supported pupils.

Key findings

- 8.2 To pupils, feeling supported meant feeling known and understood; being listened to; and having their qualities recognised.**
- 8.3 In terms of day-to-day support with work in the classroom, what mattered most to pupils (P5 pupils in particular) was that sources of support (teacher, support staff, other pupils) were available when needed.**
- 8.4 On the whole, transition from primary to secondary had been smooth. Factors which helped were preparation in P7 (including a visit from a secondary school teacher, enthusiasm of P7 teacher, increased responsibilities and independence); being in classes with friends; having a transition visit before starting secondary; and senior pupils helping S1 pupils to find classes during the first few weeks.**
- 8.5 The main ways in which pupils and parents thought exam support could be provided were additional supported study sessions; guidance on study skills; help to deal with stress and boosting morale/confidence.**
- 8.6 Pupils generally talked positively about the support they had received from teachers when they had asked for help with personal issues including friendship problems with other pupils.**

- 8.7 In half of the focus groups with pupils¹⁸, we explored their views on how their school supported them in their learning and in their wider experience of school¹⁹. There was considerable overlap here with the themes that emerged in the discussions about ethos (see paragraphs 11.70) and pupils said that being supported included:
- feeling known and understood
 - being listened to – with action being taken as appropriate (they were frustrated when teachers indicated that something would be done about something only for nothing to happen)
 - having their qualities recognised.

¹⁸ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

¹⁹ This section is about support for all pupils, not about the specific support provided to some pupils with Additional Support Needs.

Day-to-day support in the classroom

- 8.8 What mattered to the P5 pupils, in particular, was feeling confident that there were sources of support/help easily available if they needed it. They talked most frequently about the fact that they could ask their teacher but were also aware of support staff and other pupils as sources of help.
- 8.9 There was a view among one group of S4 pupils that a few of their teachers had 'favourites' who were given undue attention. They felt these pupils were better at the subject and therefore less in need of help than they were – the perceived unfairness of this left them feeling quite unsupported.

Support in the transition from primary to secondary school

- 8.10 S1 pupils and parents of S1 pupils at three schools were asked for their views on the transition from primary to secondary school. On the whole, they felt the transition had been smooth and pupils had generally adapted to, and were enjoying, the new challenges that secondary school offered them. Factors which had aided the transition for pupils included:
- being in classes with friends
 - a member of the secondary school staff visiting pupils in Primary 7
 - the enthusiasm of the Primary 7 teacher in preparing them for secondary school
 - giving pupils increased responsibilities and independence in Primary 7
 - senior pupils helping S1 pupils to find classes during the first few days and weeks
 - having a three-day transition visit before starting secondary where pupils are in their secondary classes and follow their secondary timetable
- 8.11 Where pupils had faced challenges, the most common were adjusting to the increase in homework and assessments, and finding their way around the school.
- 8.12 Some schools also organised transition meetings for parents – which parents talked positively about.
- 8.13 Parents at one school were also very positive about a new initiative involving a meeting with their child's guidance teacher in the first term following transition. This covered how the child had settled in – from a holistic rather than purely academic sense – and reassured parents that the guidance teacher had got to know their child well and was '*looking out for them*'.
- 8.14 In contrast, parents of S1 pupils at other schools commented that they had had to wait up five months before the first parents' night at secondary school and that this was too long.

Exam support

8.15 In two schools, S4 pupils and parents of S4 pupils were asked about the support given by the school in the lead-up to exams and during exams. The three main ways in which they felt support could be provided were:

- additional supported study sessions
- guidance on study skills
- dealing with stress and boosting morale/confidence.

Supported study

8.16 In both schools, there appeared to be considerable opportunity for supported study (additional, optional sessions with the teacher for revision outwith the timetabled class e.g. during lunch time or after school). These were valued and appreciated by pupils and parents. However, one group of pupils (who, more generally, seemed particularly stressed and concerned about the amount of work they had to do) pointed out the potential difficulties of finding time to attend as many of these supported study sessions as they felt they should because of clashes between supported study sessions in different subjects; the need for a break at lunch time/at the end of the day; and work and caring responsibilities after school.

Study skills

8.17 The extent to which pupils received advice on study techniques and how to plan their exam preparation appeared to vary – but where it was provided, pupils generally found it helpful (particularly when provided in Personal and Social Education (PSE) by guidance teachers rather than subject teachers).

8.18 The role and status of PSE was highlighted in this context: on the one hand there was a call for more guidance on study techniques and how to handle the stress of exams (which would tend to be provided in PSE), and at the same time there were calls for more flexibility in timetables and the ability to have extra periods of particular exam subjects (with PSE most commonly suggested as the subject that could be replaced).

Dealing with stress and boosting morale/confidence

8.19 In addition to study techniques, parents felt it was important to boost pupils' morale and confidence and help them deal with anxieties about exams. One school had engaged a motivational speaker to help with this and pupils felt he had given helpful tips about '*performing at your best*'.

Pastoral support

8.20 Pupils generally talked positively about the support they had received from teachers when they had asked for help with personal issues including friendship problems with other pupils. In secondary schools, this was often from guidance teachers but there was a view that all teachers should be able to help.

9 Digital technologies

9.1 This chapter looks at the impact of the use of digital technologies in the classroom on pupil behaviour. Questions about digital technologies were included for the first time in the 2016 wave of the survey. The issue was also explored in the qualitative research with teachers and with P5 pupils.

Key findings

9.2 **The following positive behaviours were perceived to be more common when digital technologies were used for learning and teaching: ‘pupils keenly engaging with tasks’; ‘attentive, interested pupils’; and ‘pupils enthusiastically participating in classroom activities’.**

9.3 **Digital technologies were thought to help increase engagement in part because they are often highly visual, they enable the ‘gamification’ of learning, and they can increase pupils’ ownership of their learning.**

9.4 **Staff felt that the use of digital technologies had very little or no impact on the likelihood of serious disruptive behaviours occurring in the classroom.**

9.5 **Apps designed for school reward systems were seen as effective and engaging.**

Impact on positive behaviours

9.6 In the survey, staff were given the same list of 13 positive and 35²⁰ negative behaviours discussed in Chapter 4 above, and asked which were more or less likely to occur in the classroom when digital technologies were being used for learning and teaching purposes²¹. Charts in this chapter show the net percentages of behaviours perceived as more likely or less likely to occur (the percentage of staff saying that the behaviour was *more* likely to occur minus the percentage of staff saying the behaviour was *less* likely to occur).

9.7 In both primary and secondary schools, the following positive behaviours were perceived by headteachers and teachers to be more likely to occur when digital technologies were used:

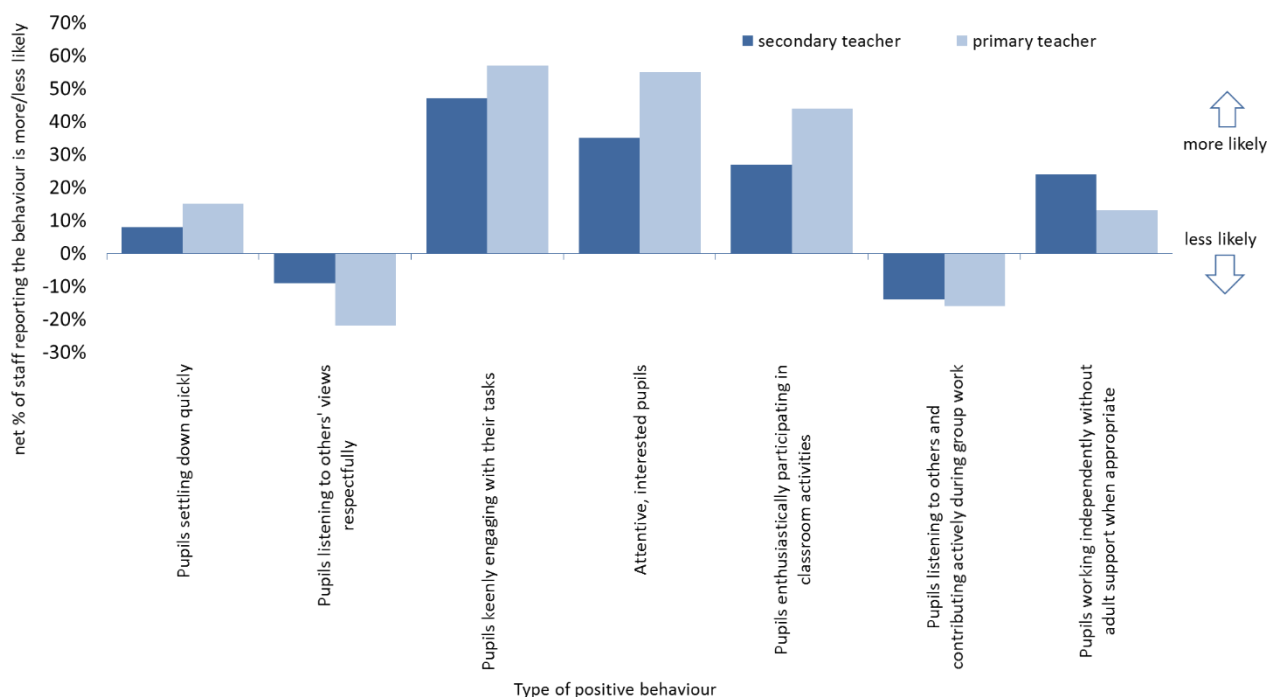
- Pupils keenly engaging with tasks
- Attentive, interested pupils
- Pupils enthusiastically participating in classroom activities.

²⁰ One of the negative behaviours from the original list, ‘Going on sites they shouldn’t (e.g. to play games, use social media) when digital technologies used in teaching and learning’ was excluded because, by definition, it can *only* occur when digital technologies are used and therefore must be more common.

²¹ To keep the questionnaire to a manageable length, half the sample (randomly allocated) were asked about positive behaviours and the other half were asked about negative behaviours.

9.8 Headteachers and teachers in both sectors thought that pupils listening to each other respectfully was slightly less likely to occur when digital technologies were used. Secondary headteachers thought that pupils contributing to class discussions was less likely (Figure 9.1 – for clarity, and because the views of teachers and headteachers were similar, only the results for teachers are shown).

Figure 9.1: Impact of digital technologies on positive behaviours



Bases: secondary teacher 869, primary teacher 366

Reasons for increased engagement

9.9 The qualitative research²² with teachers and P5 pupils identified some reasons for increased engagement. The use of digital technologies was one way in which teachers could introduce variety to lessons (see paragraphs 7.15 to 7.16 on variety). However, it was commonly felt that digital technologies – if used appropriately – could help increase engagement, on their own merit, regardless of the variety introduced. The increased engagement stems, in part, from the visual aspect of digital technologies e.g. watching video clips and (pupils) using PowerPoint in lessons. Indeed, teachers in both sectors felt that there was increasing demand for visual stimulus by pupils.

9.10 It was also widely thought that the ‘gamification’ of learning which digital technologies helped facilitate increased pupil enjoyment and engagement – *‘it doesn’t feel like hard work’* – which in turn led to positive behaviour.

Using a sort of game as a framework for a project...we were doing an under the sea project, it was sort of a virtual reality game where they could

²² To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

catch fish and things like that with deep sea diving. It did really help to engage them.

Primary teacher

I think there should be more learning using the computers [...] Because it is really fun and then everyone would be happy, then we don't always have to write stuff down.

P5 pupils

- 9.11 Pupils themselves suggested online games as an alternative approach to learning which might work *'if you were not getting something'* through another method.
- 9.12 A related view was that the use of digital technologies led to pupils having more ownership of their learning. For instance, apps allowing pupils to have their own portfolio of work where they can add photos and examples of their classwork. For others, ownership stemmed simply from pupils having more choice (e.g. selecting games or video clips).
- 9.13 Where digital technologies involved the use of headphones, it was pointed out that this could minimise the distraction of other pupils being disruptive.

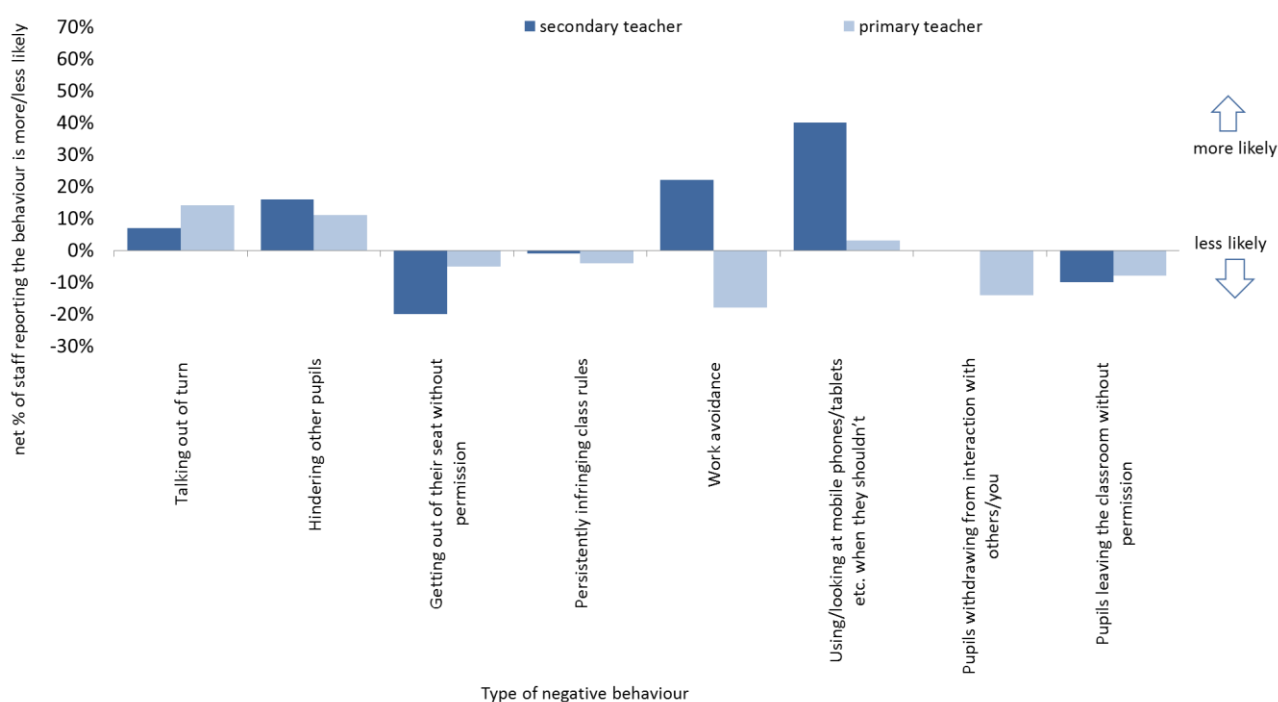
Impact on negative behaviours

- 9.14 The survey results show that digital technologies were felt to have little or no impact on serious disruptive behaviours²³. A small net proportion of secondary headteachers (13%) and teachers (7%) thought that using digital technology abusively (e.g. malicious posting of comments, photos, videos)' was *more* likely to occur. Very little difference was reported in primary schools, with headteachers (1%) thinking that it was *less* likely to occur and no difference reported by teachers.
- 9.15 Digital technologies were also perceived to have very little impact on most low-level disruptive behaviours. However, in both sectors there was a perception that pupils talking out of turn and hindering other pupils were more likely. Secondary headteachers (net 45%) and teachers (net 40%) also thought that pupils were more likely to use/look at mobile phones and tablets when they shouldn't, while

²³ Teachers reported that the use of digital technologies in the classroom were likely to make no or very little difference to the occurrence of the majority of serious disruptive behaviours, therefore these have been omitted from Figure 6.2. Behaviours not shown (where the net percentage of teachers thinking the behaviour was more or less likely was less than 10%) were: making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise; not being punctual cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses; general rowdiness, horseplay or mucking about pupils deliberately socially excluding others using digital technologies abusively; pupils missing lessons (e.g. truancy); physical destructiveness (e.g. breaking objects, damaging furniture and fabric); racist abuse towards other pupils; sexist abuse or harassment of other pupils; abuse towards other pupils who have a disability; abuse towards other pupils who have additional support needs; religious abuse towards other pupils; homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic abuse towards other pupils; general verbal abuse towards other pupils; physical aggression towards other pupils (e.g. by pushing, squaring up); physical violence towards other pupils (e.g. punching, kicking, head butting, use of a weapon); racist abuse towards you/staff; sexist abuse or harassment towards you/staff; abuse towards you/ a member of staff because of a disability; abuse towards you/ a member of staff because of an additional support need; religious abuse towards you/staff; homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic abuse towards you/staff; general verbal abuse towards you/staff; physical aggression towards you/staff (e.g. by pushing, squaring up); physical violence towards you/staff (e.g. punching, kicking, head butting, use of a weapon); pupils under the influence of drugs/alcohol.

very few of those in the primary sector thought this was the case. A small net proportion of primary headteachers and teachers reported work avoidance to be *less* likely, while secondary headteachers and teachers reported this to be *more* likely when digital technologies were being used (Figure 6.2 – for clarity, and because the views of teachers and headteachers were similar, only the results for teachers are shown) .

Figure 6.2: Impact of digital technologies on negative behaviours



Bases: secondary teacher 907, primary teacher 334

9.16 In the quantitative survey, pupils using mobile phones when they shouldn't was an increasing area of low-level disruptive behaviour in the secondary sector. In the qualitative research, there was the view among secondary teachers that it was difficult to have a clear-cut policy on mobile phone use in the classroom: they can be useful for teaching and learning but it is difficult to monitor whether they are being used for work or personal use.

Digital reward systems for good behaviour

9.17 In the qualitative research, teachers, particularly in the primary sector, frequently mentioned using digital technologies as a way of recording behaviour. Specific apps were cited as being effective and engaging for some pupils. The tools had the further advantage of enabling teachers track individual pupils' behaviour and link parents in to the system.

Equalities aspects

9.18 One of the other advantages identified in the qualitative research was that digital technologies could help *'level the playing field'* on certain types of task. For example, pupils who struggled with handwriting or spelling could work on a

PowerPoint presentation and produce something that looked as good as their classmates' work.

- 9.19 Levels of engagement and confidence in the use of digital technologies were seen to vary by levels of familiarity – how much the pupil used digital technologies at home – and there was a concern that this might disproportionately affect pupils from the most deprived families. Having said that, it was also felt that using digital technologies in the classroom helped to ensure that those who do not have access at home could do so at school.

10 Approaches used in schools

- 10.1 This chapter explores the range of approaches²⁴ used in schools to encourage positive relationships and behaviour and respond to disruptive behaviour. It highlights the most commonly used approaches (including the most frequently used methods of dealing with low-level and serious disruptive behaviours) and the amount of time that headteachers and teachers spent on different ways of supporting relationships and behaviour.

Key findings

- 10.2 As in 2012, whole-school strategies and supportive approaches, rather than the exclusion of pupils or other punishments, were identified by headteachers and teachers as the most frequently used approaches to encourage positive relationships and behaviour and manage disruptive behaviour.**
- 10.3 The use of restorative approaches and solution oriented approaches increased between 2012 and 2016. Although changes to the wording of the question mean that the results for ‘nurture approaches’ cannot accurately be compared over time, the qualitative research suggested that the use of nurture approaches may also have increased. The use of detention and punishment exercises decreased.**
- 10.4 Regardless of the specific approaches or interventions used, staff and pupils agreed it was important to be clear about expectations; regularly reinforce these expectations; be clear about the consequences if expectations are not met; and follow through on the consequences.**
- 10.5 Approaches need to be adapted on the basis of what works for individual pupils.**
- 10.6 Pupils, in particular, valued consistency. There was a tension, however, in being consistent while at the same time being responsive to an individual pupil’s circumstances**
- 10.7 Praising positive behaviour was widely viewed as a positive way of managing low-level disruptive behaviour.**
- 10.8 Among all groups of staff, there was a widely held view that a lack of both internal and external resources was having a negative effect on the management of behaviour (in particular, a lack of support staff, teacher shortages and difficulties finding supply teachers, and reductions in external support for pupils with more severe behavioural problems).**

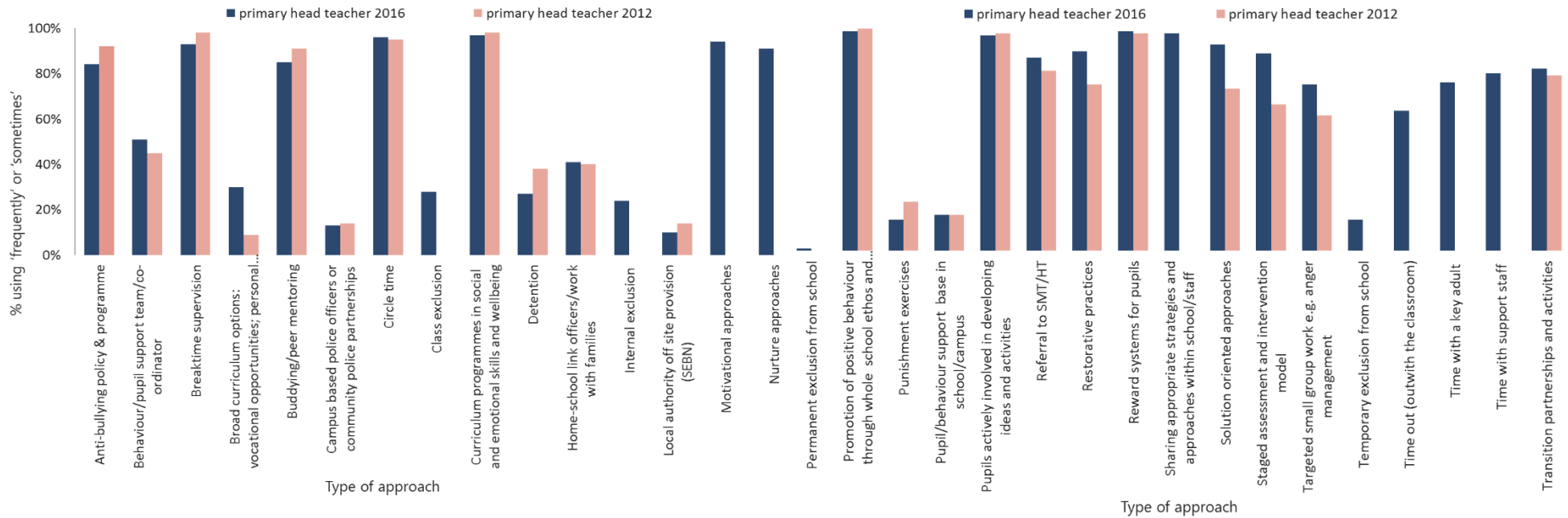
²⁴ For brevity, the term ‘approach’ is used throughout this Chapter but it is used in its broadest sense and includes both specific techniques and wider strategies.

Approaches used in schools

- 10.9 The survey asked headteachers and teachers to indicate how frequently, if at all, each of 32 different approaches was used in their school.
- 10.10 Primary headteachers and teachers shared the same perceptions of the most commonly-used approaches within their schools. Approaches used most often were; promotion of positive behaviour through whole-school ethos and values (99% headteachers, 97% teachers); reward systems for pupils (99% headteachers, 98% teachers); and sharing appropriate strategies and approaches within school/staff (99% headteachers, 97% teachers).
- 10.11 Secondary headteachers and teachers also agreed on the most commonly-used approaches, but there was difference in that headteachers reported higher frequencies of use. The three approaches used most often in secondary schools were: promotion of positive behaviour through whole-school ethos and values (100% of headteachers and 85% of teachers said this was used 'frequently' or 'sometimes'); broad curriculum options, vocational opportunities and personal and social development programmes (headteachers 97%, teachers 91%) and break-time supervision (headteachers 96%, teachers 85%).
- 10.12 Differences in the reports of frequency of reporting from secondary headteachers and teachers may be attributable to their roles: headteachers are more likely to have a whole-school overview of all the approaches used, including work with external agencies, while teachers may be more likely to base their response on approaches they have used personally or know that colleagues have used. For example, almost all (97%) secondary headteachers stated that staged intervention and assessment models (e.g. school and multi-agency joint assessment and planning teams) were used 'frequently' or 'sometimes', while only 69% of secondary teachers did so (22% of secondary teachers said they did not know about the use of this approach or thought it was not applicable).
- 10.13 Related to this point, almost all (97%) secondary headteachers reported sharing appropriate strategies and approaches within school/staff as occurring 'frequently' or 'sometimes'. However, only 81% of secondary teachers did so, with 15% stating that this approach happened 'rarely'.
- 10.14 Figures 10.1-10.4 below show the percentage of headteachers and teachers saying that approaches were 'frequently' or 'sometimes' used in their schools (2016 and 2012).²⁵

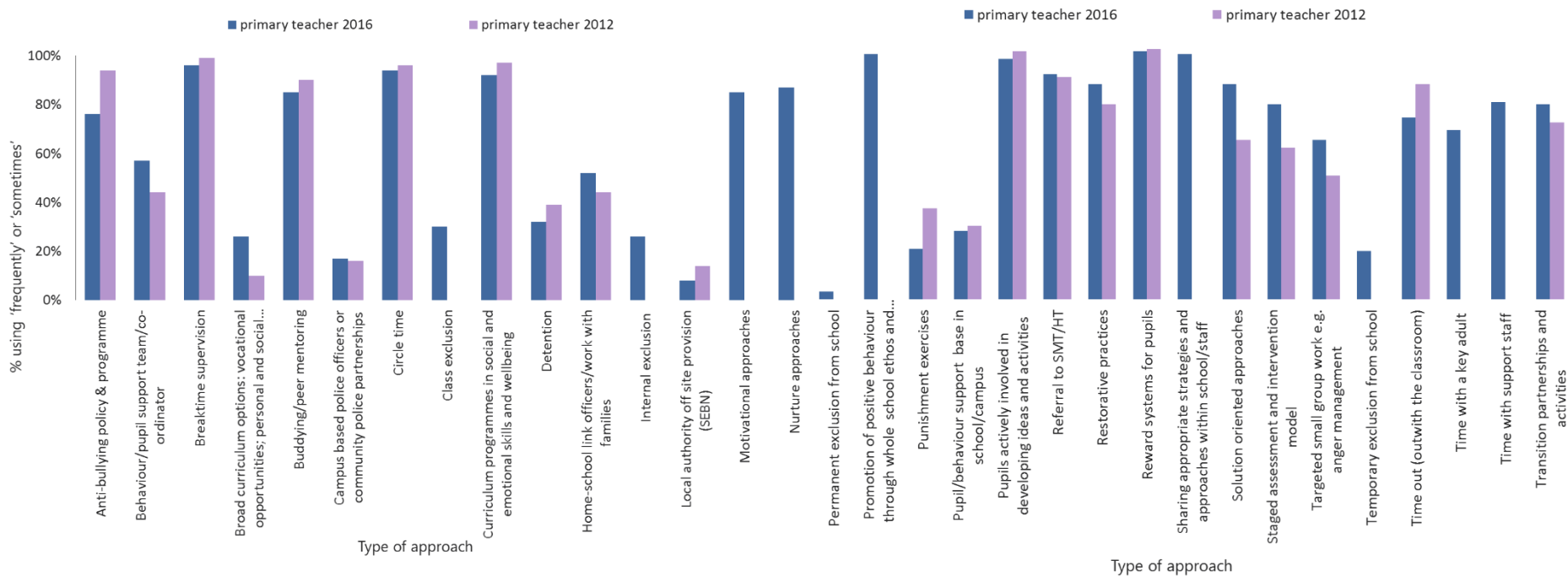
²⁵ The wording of some approaches has been amended in 2016, meaning results are not comparable for: 'motivational approaches ('the motivated school' in 2012); nurture approaches ('nurture groups/nurture principles' in 2012). Rewording may have also had an impact on 'Anti bullying policy & programme ('anti-bullying policy' in 2012) responses.

Figure 10.1: Approaches used in schools 2016/2012: primary headteachers



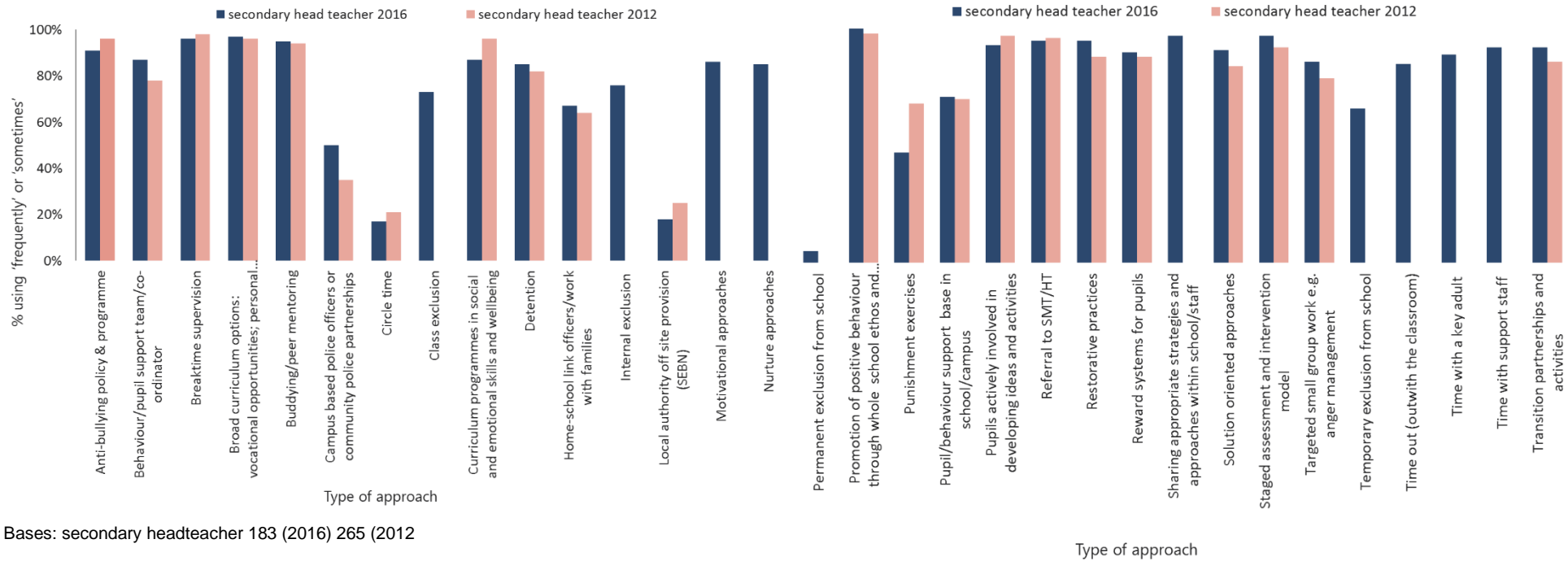
Bases: primary headteacher 287 (2016) 295 (2012)

Figure 10.2: Approaches used in schools 2016/2012: primary teachers



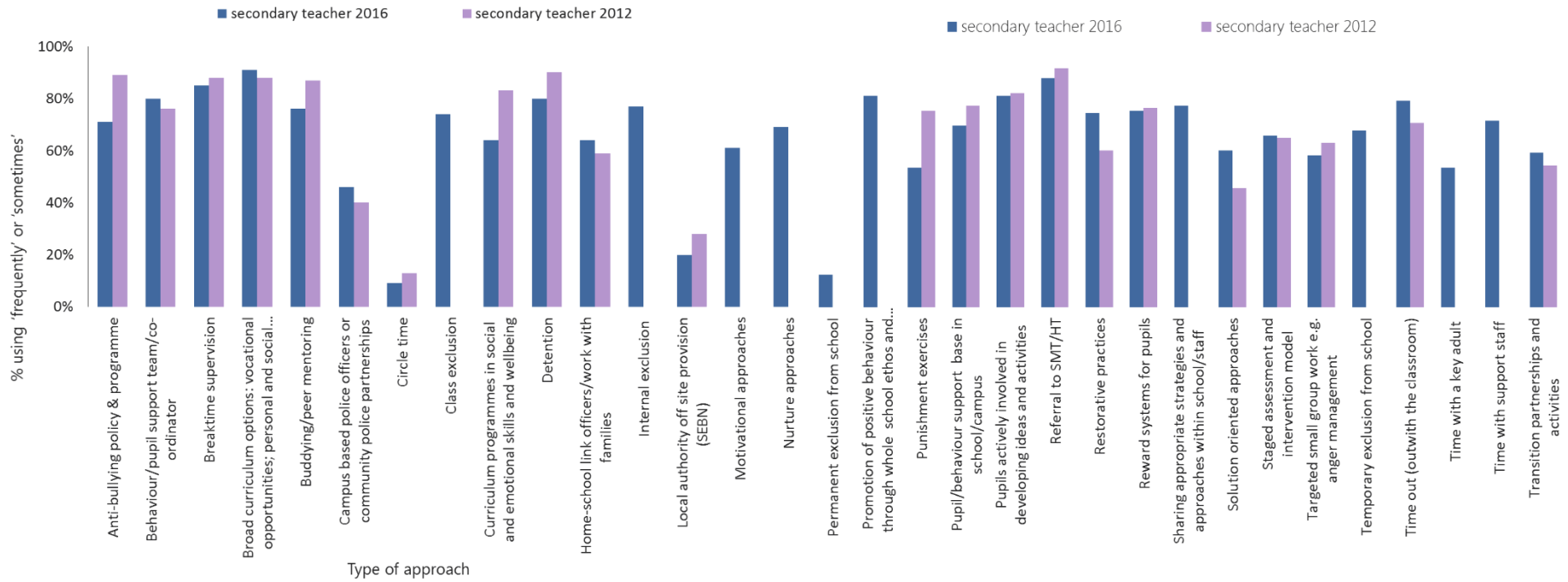
Bases: primary teacher 694 (2016) 884 (20)

Figure 10.3: Approaches used in schools 2016/2012: secondary headteachers



Bases: secondary headteacher 183 (2016) 265 (2012)

Figure 10.4: Approaches used in schools 2016/2012: secondary teachers



Bases: secondary teacher 1744 (2016) 2019 (2012)

Changes over time

10.15 Overall, both headteacher and teacher responses reflect the same changes between 2012 and 2016. In both sectors

- the use of punishment exercises has decreased
- the use of detention has decreased (although secondary headteachers disagree somewhat, with their 2016 responses being almost the same as in 2012)
- the use of restorative approaches has increased
- the use of solution oriented approaches has increased.

10.16 In secondary schools there has also been an increase in the use of campus police/community police partnerships.

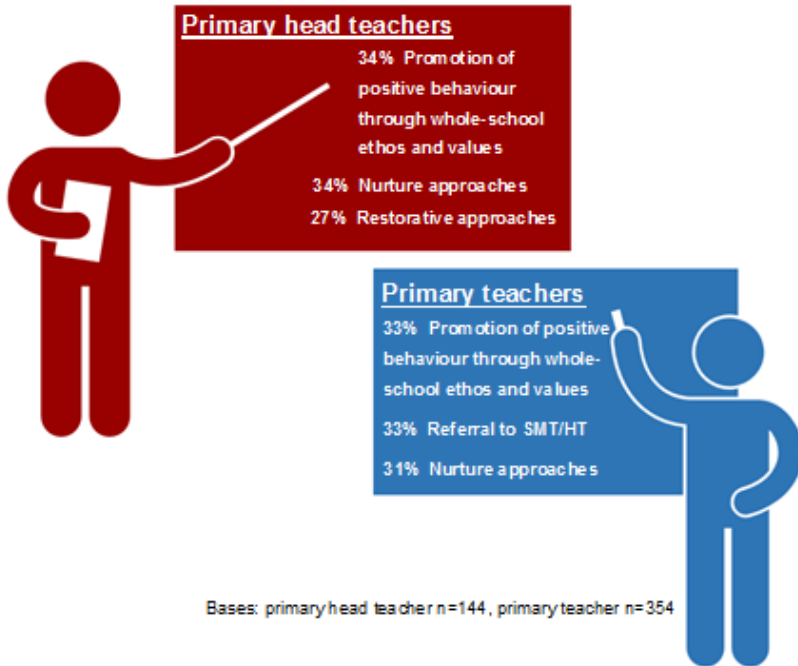
10.17 Although changes to the wording of the question mean that the results for 'nurture approaches' (referred to as 'nurture groups/nurture principles' in 2012) cannot accurately be compared over time, the qualitative research suggested that the use of nurture approaches may have increased.

Dealing with serious and low-level disruptive behaviours

10.18 Staff were also asked to select up to three of the approaches which were most commonly used in their school to deal with specifically with serious disruptive behaviour and with low-level disruptive behaviour²⁶. The most commonly mentioned are shown in Tables 10.1 to 10.4. While the responses of primary headteachers and primary teachers were broadly similar, secondary teachers were more likely to mention exclusionary/punitive approaches (detention, class exclusion and punishment exercises) than secondary headteachers. Again this may be because headteachers have a greater focus on whole-school policy and preventative approaches, while teachers may be more likely to focus on dealing with individual pupils and on reactive, as well as preventative, approaches.

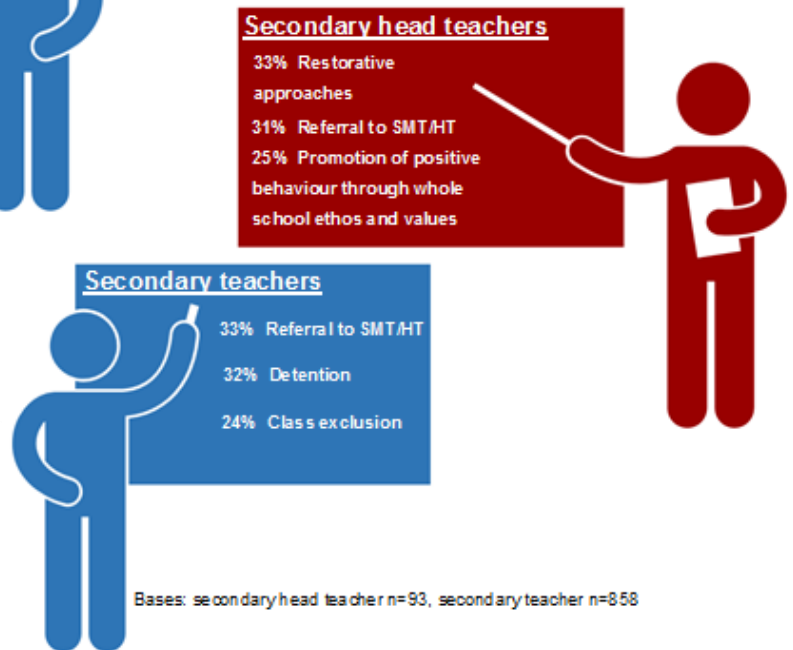
²⁶ Half the sample (randomly selected) were asked about serious disruptive behaviour and the other half were asked about low-level disruptive behaviour.

10.1: Approaches most commonly used in primary schools to deal with serious disruptive behaviour

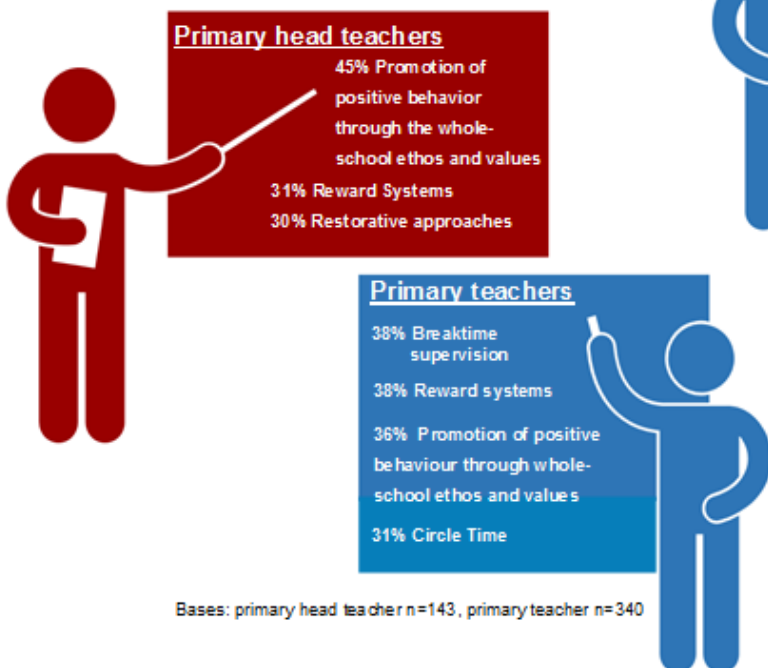


% saying approach was one of the three most commonly used

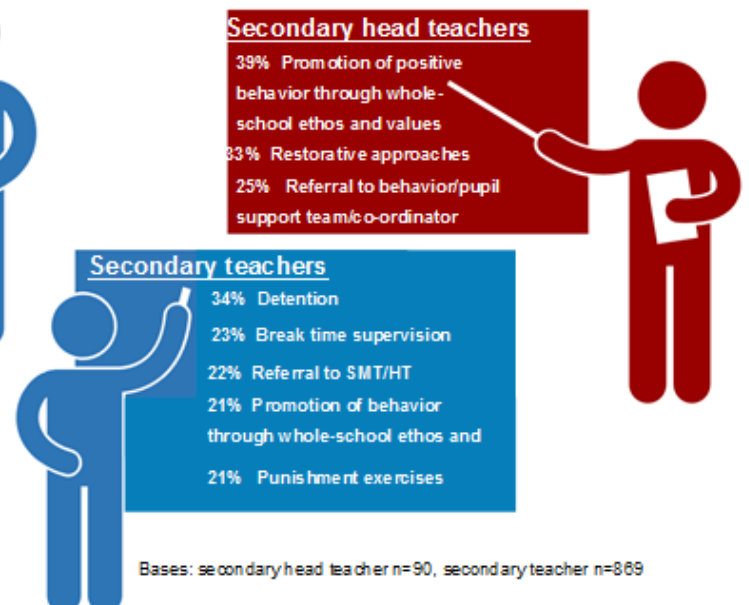
10.2: Approaches most commonly used in secondary schools to deal with serious disruptive behaviour



10.3: Approaches most commonly used in primary schools to deal with low-level disruptive behaviour



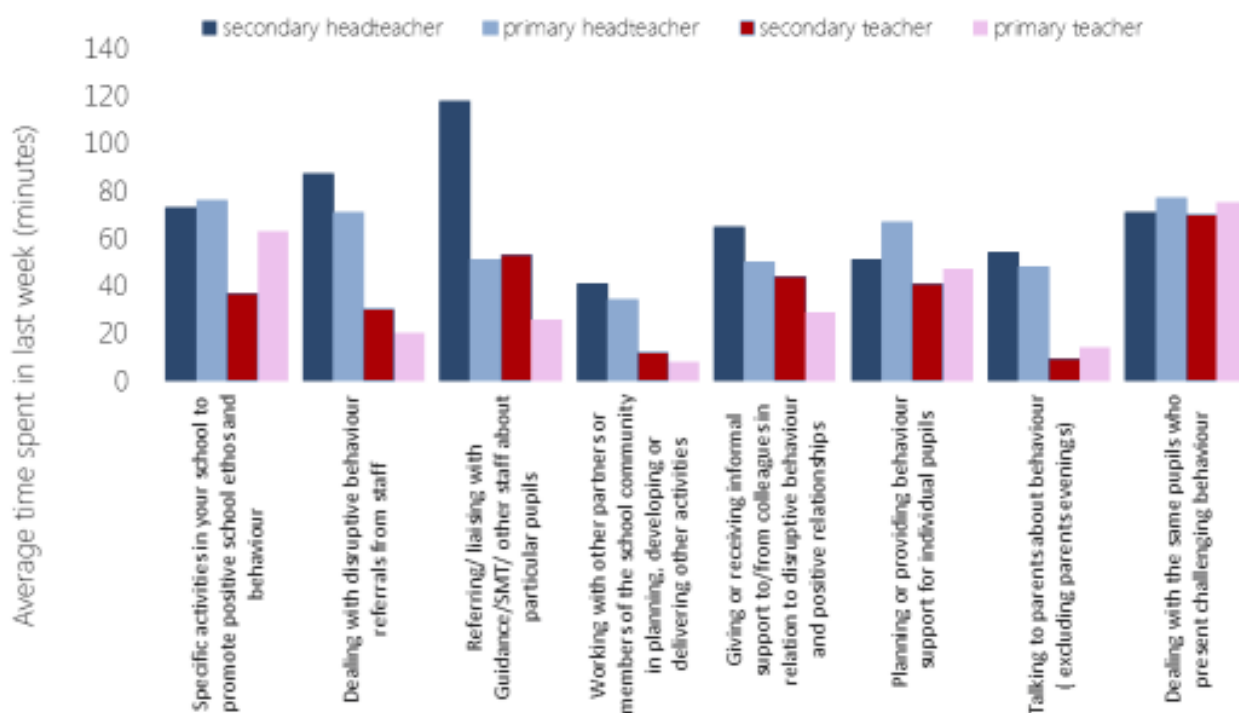
10.4: Approaches most commonly used in secondary schools to deal with low-level disruptive behaviour



Time spent on supporting relationships and behaviour

10.19 In the survey, headteachers and teachers were asked to provide an estimate of the time they spent in the last full teaching week on eight different types of activity related to supporting relationships and behaviour²⁷. Figure 10.5 below shows the average amount of time spent on these activities (including those who reported that they spent no time on that activity).

Figure 10.5: Time spent on different ways of supporting relationships and behaviour



Bases: secondary headteacher 175, secondary teacher 1652, primary headteacher 278, primary teacher 654

- Dealing with the same pupils who present challenging behaviour was the activity that primary headteachers (an average of 77 minutes in the previous week), primary teachers (75 minutes) and secondary teachers (70 minutes) spent most time on.
- Secondary headteachers spent most time (an average of almost two hours), on referring/liasing with Guidance, SMT or other staff about particular pupils. For secondary teachers this was the activity they spent the second most amount of time on (70 minutes).
- In total, the average amount of time spent on all of these activities combined was:
 - 8 hours 22 minutes (primary headteachers)
 - 9 hours 42 minutes (secondary headteachers)

²⁷ The results are not directly comparable with the 2012 findings as the questionnaire in 2012 asked whether staff had spent 'no time', 'under an hour', 'an hour to three hours' or 'more than three hours'. The question was amended in 2016 to obtain more accurate estimates and enable a calculation of the average amount of time spent.

- 4 hours 46 minutes (primary teachers) and
- 5 hours 15 minutes (secondary teachers).

Managing disruptive behaviour – findings from the qualitative research²⁸

10.20 There is considerable overlap in the measures used to manage low-level and more serious disruptive behaviour. This section, therefore, considers what is working well in terms of managing both low-level and more serious disruptive behaviour – and what the barriers are to doing so. It covers the perspectives of headteachers, teachers and support staff as well as pupils. There are clear links between behaviour and factors such as engagement in learning and the wider school ethos. However, as there are separate sections on these topics (see Chapter 7 on engagement and Chapter 11 on ethos), this section focuses on measures specifically aimed at minimising and addressing disruptive behaviour.

Setting and reinforcing expectations

10.21 Regardless of the specific approaches or interventions being used to manage behaviour, both staff and pupils agreed it was important to

- be clear about expectations
- regularly reinforce these expectations
- be clear about the consequences if expectations are not met
- follow through on the consequences.

10.22 Explaining *why* certain behaviours were disrespectful was also mentioned by secondary support staff as being useful.

10.23 In terms of what these expectations are, pupils talked positively about teachers who were '*strict but not too strict*'. They liked it when teachers did not pick up on '*every little thing*' and when they moved on quickly from a negative incident rather than letting it mar an entire lesson.

Adapting approaches

10.24 It was considered important to be clear on behaviour that is expected from pupils. However teachers and headteachers recognised that the strategies that worked to encourage positive behaviour for one pupil may not necessarily work for others. This was particularly true for pupils who had an additional support need that was most effectively handled in a certain way. What works is forming a positive relationship with each pupil and adapting the strategies used accordingly.

²⁸ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

10.25 One group of primary teachers, who were working in a school with large class sizes and several pupils with considerable support needs, said that they were confident of the different strategies which worked with the individual pupils in their classes. However, given the numbers of pupils involved, they found it difficult to apply all these strategies at the same time.

Consistency and fairness

10.26 While acknowledging different teaching styles, consistency across staff in relation to which behaviours were or were not acceptable, and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour, was considered important. Pupils, in particular, valued consistency and when new 'fads' (such as 'bottle flipping') emerged this served to highlight these inconsistencies among teachers. Consistency was more of an issue in secondary schools because pupils are taught by more teachers. Support staff who were in classes with different teachers commented that there were differences in what was acceptable from one class to the next. They felt this made it harder for pupils to know what was acceptable, and for teachers to deal with behaviours that they are unhappy with.

10.27 Inconsistencies and 'grey areas' were more common in response to low-level disruptive behaviour than in relation to serious disruptive and/or violent behaviour. For the latter, there tended to be clear procedures in place which were implemented following an incident.

10.28 There was a tension, however, in being consistent while at the same time being responsive to an individual pupil's circumstances. There are two elements to this. Firstly, if a class teacher was aware, for example, that a pupil was experiencing problems in their personal life, they may feel it appropriate to be more lenient with them in the classroom for a period of time. At the same time, they were conscious that the rest of the class might not understand why the pupil was being treated differently and might see this as the teacher being unfair and not following through on consequences. Indeed, pupils also raised this issue: they understood that there might be reasons for different treatment, but sometimes felt that it was, nonetheless, unfair. Secondly, staff talked about feeling unsupported in instances where a referral to SMT had been treated in a different way to normal. They had later found out that this was due to something that was happening in the pupil's personal life, but this had not been explained to them at the time.

Rewarding positive behaviour

10.29 Rewarding achievement and celebrating success – in relation to behaviour as well as other in other areas – was widely viewed as a positive way of managing low-level disruptive behaviour. This included paying attention to positive rather than negative behaviour and making a point of praising pupils for it – this was highlighted by primary staff in particular.

10.30 Specific rewards-based systems were also widely used and valued by both staff and pupils. An example was using a positive referral system for pupils which aimed to see a shift from referrals being related solely to negative behaviour.

Whole-school approaches

- 10.31 Approaches which were embedded in the school ethos were discussed in terms of their positive impact on disruptive behaviours by both primary and secondary staff. Two main approaches were used: nurturing and restorative. Although the nurture approach was implemented differently across schools, a common theme was for pupils who were experiencing difficulties to spend some time out of the classroom, in a calming place, where staff could work with them to address the root cause of their problems. For pupils with chaotic home lives, headteachers also emphasised the importance of ensuring that their basic needs were met before they could be expected to learn and behave in a positive way. This included hygiene, clothing and food as well as provision of equipment such as pencils and the use of ICT if it is not available at home.
- 10.32 Staff in both sectors felt that restorative approaches were successful in resolving specific incidents and, although pupils did not necessarily discuss it in these terms, they did talk about the importance of feeling that they were being listened to. Staff noted, however, that restorative approaches are also time consuming, meaning that they are either not used as often as they could be or are not always used correctly.

Building resilience and emotional intelligence

- 10.33 As discussed in paragraphs 5.35 to 5.38, there was a view that many pupils lack the resilience to be able to solve their own problems in an appropriate manner and are overly reliant on adults to resolve things for them. Acknowledging the link between this and behaviour, staff talked about using programmes which aimed to equip pupils with greater emotional intelligence and resilience.

Sanctions

- 10.34 When teachers had to address disruptive behaviour it was considered important to do this in stages. Staff and pupils felt that giving pupils some leeway was preferable to being very strict from the outset.
- 10.35 Sanctions were implemented when low-level disruptive behaviour had been persistent or had escalated or the initial incident was more serious in nature. These sanctions included behaviour sheets, being kept in at break or lunch time (primary schools), punishment exercises, detentions and internal or external exclusions (for more serious behaviour). While the above sanctions were felt to be effective to varying degrees, depending on the pupil, staff in secondary schools, in particular, commented that, for a small number of pupils, none of the sanctions were significant deterrents. It was not uncommon for these pupils to refuse to do punishment exercises or detentions.
- 10.36 Pupils also talked about measure teachers used to control low-level disruptive behaviour. They frequently mentioned disruptive pupils being moved next to quieter ones. However, they felt that this often did not work as it meant that the quieter pupils were then disrupted. On a related point, one group of pupils, who were struggling a little with a subject, felt that that some of the 'good' pupils in the

class were allowed to talk more as they doing well anyway, but that this was unfair as it was distracting for them.

10.37 When behaviours were more serious or violent, they tended to result in a temporary external exclusion²⁹. Schools tended to use this sanction as a last resort for less serious behaviours which had escalated or continued despite a series of other interventions such as those mentioned above. In some cases, exclusion was considered to be the most appropriate response in terms of both supporting the pupils and the wider school. However, teachers also raised concerns in relation to exclusion. Firstly, teachers did not always feel that an external exclusion was necessarily in the best interests of the pupil who was being disciplined. This could be if their home life is so chaotic that they are either felt to be less cared for at home and/or the parents were not on board with helping the school to implement the exclusion as they would hope and were instead letting them do enjoyable activities while excluded, such as watching TV or going out. Secondly, there was a view among staff that, for some pupils, exclusion is not an effective deterrent. Beyond exclusion, teachers and headteachers described a lack of available options. They linked this to a reduction of external local authority support for pupils with behavioural needs (see paragraph 10.40 below).

10.38 Some schools adopted a system of excluding pupils from classes instead. This involves the pupil being taken out of classes for a period of time and doing their work in another part of the school. While, in some ways, this was considered a positive option, it carried its own problems – most notably that it was increasingly difficult to resource class exclusions as they required a member of staff (often from the SMT) having to be with the pupil at all times during their class exclusion. Teachers did not feel this was a sustainable option given resourcing constraints. Furthermore, as noted in paragraphs 5.42 to 5.44, there was suggestion that one of the reasons for the increase in low-level disruption was that pupils are experiencing a lack of attention at home and the behaviours they display in class are often a result of a need for attention. For such pupils, an internal inclusion may not be considered a disincentive as they welcome the individual attention they receive.

Specific prevention of violence initiatives

10.39 Schools also talked about measures used to prevent violent behaviour. Some schools had specific anti-violence initiatives in place within the school. These included sessions delivered in PSE and in assemblies as well as the provision of peer mediation training for senior pupils to enable them to better resolve issues among themselves without teachers always having to get involved. Other schools, however, did not feel it was necessary to implement specific approaches to prevent violence because they didn't have a serious problem with it and/or because the message was incorporated in the broader values and ethos of the school and in other initiatives designed to encourage positive behaviour and relationships.

²⁹ "External exclusion" refers to a formal removal from school for a period of time.

Resourcing

10.40 Among all groups of staff, there was a widely held view that a lack of both internal and external resources was having a negative effect on the management of behaviour. A number of specific issues were raised:

- As discussed in paragraphs 5.45 to 5.47 above, across both sectors, Headteachers and teachers commented on the link between positive behaviour and having **appropriate numbers of support staff** in class. Indeed, both secondary and primary pupils also commented that behaviour was better when there was a pupil support assistant in the class. Staff felt that a reduction in numbers of support staff, alongside an increased number of pupils with ASN (as a result of inclusion policies), had resulted in a lack of one-to-one support for pupils who need it and has had a wider negative impact on behaviour.
- **Teacher shortages and the use of supply teachers** were also negatively linked to behaviour. There was a view among secondary support staff that behaviour can be notably worse with supply teachers as the pupils have less respect for them. Given the importance of teachers building relationships with individual pupils in terms of supporting positive behaviour, this lack of a consistent teacher can, therefore, lead to issues with behaviour. Some pupils with ASN, in particular, can take longer to adjust to changes in staffing and their behaviour – which may already be challenging – is particularly affected.
- A related point was that, as there is a lack of supply teachers, SMT are having to cover greater numbers of classes – meaning that they are less available to deal with behaviour issues and also generally less visible within the school.
- Teachers and headteachers talked about the problems of **reductions in external support for pupils with more serious behavioural problems or additional support needs**. This included special schools or units and also shorter term support. Some teachers reported experience of support only being accessible when a situation had reached ‘crisis point’. They felt strongly that issues had often escalated too far by that stage for there to be a positive outcome, whereas an earlier intervention might have helped. They thought that, for some of these pupils, mainstream school was not an appropriate setting.
- Staff in some secondary schools who had **community based or campus police officers** talked about the positive impact that they can have on behaviour. Staff at another, which had problems with serious disruptive behaviour, no longer had their campus police officer and were feeling the effects of this loss.

Parental support

- 10.41 Teachers frequently commented on their parents being generally very supportive and clear on the expectations of behaviour within the school.
- 10.42 However, as discussed in paragraph 5.31 above, there was a widely held view that some parents not being supportive of the actions of the school was more widespread in recent years. Specific issues raised included parents telling their children that they did not need to do punishments (e.g. detentions); parents phoning the school in defence of their child immediately after an incident (as pupils now tend to have mobile phones in schools, they can phone their parents straight away and give their side of the story); and parents questioning the decisions made by teachers.

11 School ethos and support

11.1 This chapter looks at perceptions of school ethos and the extent to which staff feel supported in their work to encourage positive relationships and behaviour and manage negative behaviour. First, staff perceptions of the overall ethos of their school are explored, before examining responses related to support, training/professional learning and involvement in whole-school approaches to relationships and behaviour. The chapter closes by looking at the ways in which incidents of serious disruptive behaviour towards staff are followed up.

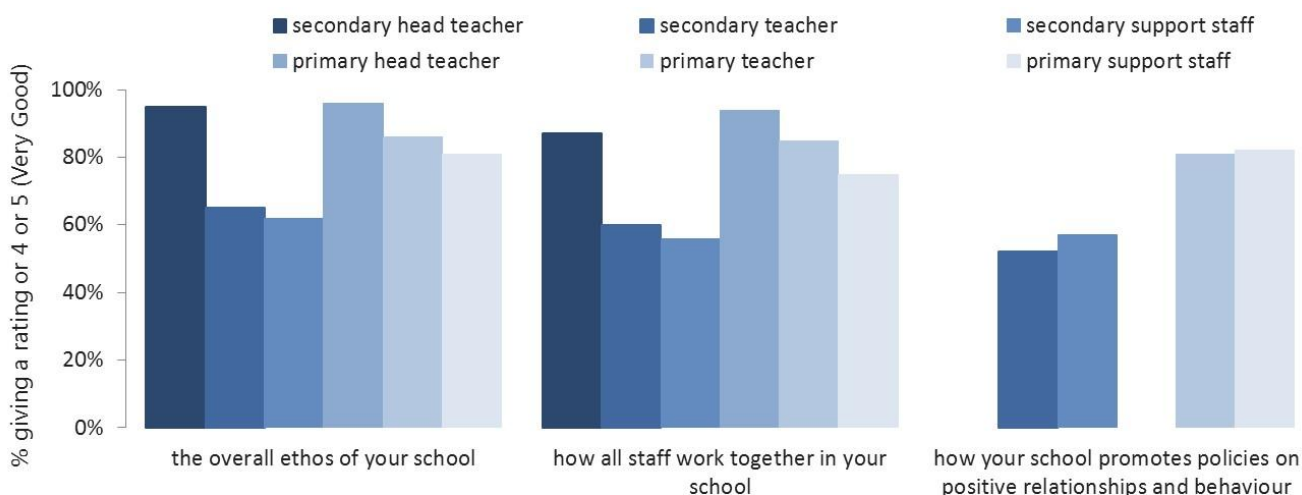
Key findings

- 11.2 Ratings of school ethos were positive and were broadly the same as in 2012.
- 11.3 A positive ethos is characterised by a school feeling like a community; shared values (including, above all, respect); strong leadership from the SMT; communication and openness among staff; and everyone's voice – particularly the pupil voice – being heard.
- 11.4 Most teachers were confident in their ability to promote positive relationships and behaviour and respond to indiscipline in their classrooms.
- 11.5 Most teachers and support staff were confident that senior members of staff would help them if they experienced difficulties with behaviour management.
- 11.6 Headteachers and teachers thought that an effective method for improving skills to support relationships and behaviour was through peer learning, including peer observations and informal discussions with colleagues.
- 11.7 The experiences of support staff were mixed. Primary support staff tended to be more positive than secondary support staff. There is scope for improvement in relation to ensuring support staff feel valued; communication; involvement in discussions about individual pupils and whole-school approaches; and training.

Perceptions of school ethos

11.8 Staff were asked to rate particular aspects of their school ethos on a scale of 1-5 ('1' = 'poor' and '5' = 'very good'). Responses were largely the same as 2012, with headteacher ratings being consistently highest.

Figure 11.1: Perceptions of school ethos



Bases: secondary headteacher 184, secondary teacher 1734, secondary support staff 649, primary headteacher 287, primary teacher 692, primary support staff 473

Overall ethos of your school

11.9 As in 2012, primary headteachers, teachers and support staff were very positive about their school ethos: 96% of headteachers, 86% of teachers and 81% of support staff gave this a rating of 4 or 5.

11.10 Secondary headteachers were also very positive about their school ethos (95% gave a rating of 4 or 5). Secondary teachers and support staff ratings were less positive than in the primary sector (but very similar to 2012): around two thirds of (65% of teachers and 62% of support staff) gave a rating of 4 or 5.

11.11 As discussed in Chapter 5 above, perception of the school ethos was the strongest predictor of experiences of disruptive behaviour: teachers and support staff who rated the overall ethos of the school they worked in as 'poor' were more likely to have experienced disruptive behaviours. (It was not an effective predictor of headteachers' experiences – because almost all headteachers gave a high rating for the ethos of their school, it is not surprising that it did not emerge as a discriminating factor).

11.12 In order to try and unpick what 'ethos' means in practice, the survey data on ethos was analysed further (see paragraphs 11.18 to 11.21 below) and it was explored in the qualitative research (see paragraphs 11.70 to 11.93 below).

How staff work together in your school

- 11.13 As with their ratings of the overall school ethos, results were very close to those of 2012 in both sectors.
- 11.14 Almost all primary headteachers (94%) gave a rating of 4 or 5 to the level of collegiality amongst staff, while 85% of teachers and 75% of support staff did so.
- 11.15 Ratings were lower among secondary staff: 87% of headteachers, 60% of teachers and 56% of support staff gave a rating of 4 or 5.

How the education authority works in partnership with your school to promote positive relationships and behaviour

- 11.16 This question was asked only of headteachers. In 2016, primary headteachers were less satisfied than in 2012, with 40% giving a rating of 4 or 5 (compared with 50% in 2012). This may reflect the reduction in local authority resources (e.g. fewer development officers). However, results from secondary headteachers were similar to 2012 (40% in 2016 and 42% in 2012).

How your school promotes positive relationships and behaviour

- 11.17 This question (new in 2016) was asked only of teachers and support staff, with 81% of primary teachers and 82% of support staff giving a rating of 4 or 5. In secondary schools, 52% of teachers and 57% of support staff did so.

Factors which predict staff perceptions of ethos

- 11.18 In order to identify what predicts teacher and support staff³⁰ ratings of ethos, we used regression. This is a statistical technique which analyses a number of different variables, controls for the fact that some of them might be linked with each other (for example, deprivation might be linked to school size), and separates out the effect of each to identify which has the biggest impact.

Variables analysed

- 11.19 The following variables³¹ were analysed:

- school size
- school capacity
- school condition
- proportion of pupils living in the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland
- length of service
- levels of agreement with the following statements:

³⁰ Because such a high proportion of headteachers gave positive ratings of the ethos of their school, this analysis was not undertaken for headteachers.

³¹ for details on the data on which these variables were based, please see Annex B, Table B7.

- 'I can talk to colleagues openly about any behaviour-related challenges I experience' (teachers) / 'I can talk to other support staff openly about any behaviour-related challenges I experience' (support staff)
- 'I can talk to teachers openly about any behaviour-related challenges I experience' (support staff only)
- 'I am confident that senior staff will help me if I experience behaviour management difficulties'
- 'I am regularly involved in discussions about improving relationships and behaviour in the whole school'
- 'I feel supported in dealing with relationship and behaviour difficulties'
- 'I contribute ideas and provide support to my colleagues regarding pupil relationships and behaviour' (teachers only)
- 'My school has a clear and comprehensive whole school approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour' (teachers only)
- 'I have time within my contracted hours to enable discussions around classroom planning to take place' (support staff only)
- 'I have time within my contracted hours to enable feedback discussions with colleagues/SMT/class teacher to take place' (support staff only)
- 'Support staff in my school play an important role in promoting positive relationships and behaviour' (support staff only)
- ratings of:
 - 'how all staff work together in your school (e.g. the level of collegiality)'
 - 'how your school promotes policies on positive relationships and behaviour.'

Findings

11.20 Among both primary and secondary teachers, the predictors were (shown in order of strength of prediction):

- disagreeing that "My school has a clear and comprehensive whole-school approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour"
- lower ratings of "How all staff work together in your school (e.g. the level of collegiality)"
- disagreeing that "I am confident that senior staff will help me if I experience behaviour management difficulties"
- lower rating of "How your school promotes policies on positive relationships and behaviour".

11.21 The picture for support staff was similar: among both primary and secondary support staff, the predictors were:

- lower ratings of "How all staff work together in your school (e.g. the level of collegiality)"

- lower rating of “How your school promotes policies on positive relationships and behaviour”
- disagreeing that “I am confident that senior staff will help me if I experience behaviour management difficulties”.

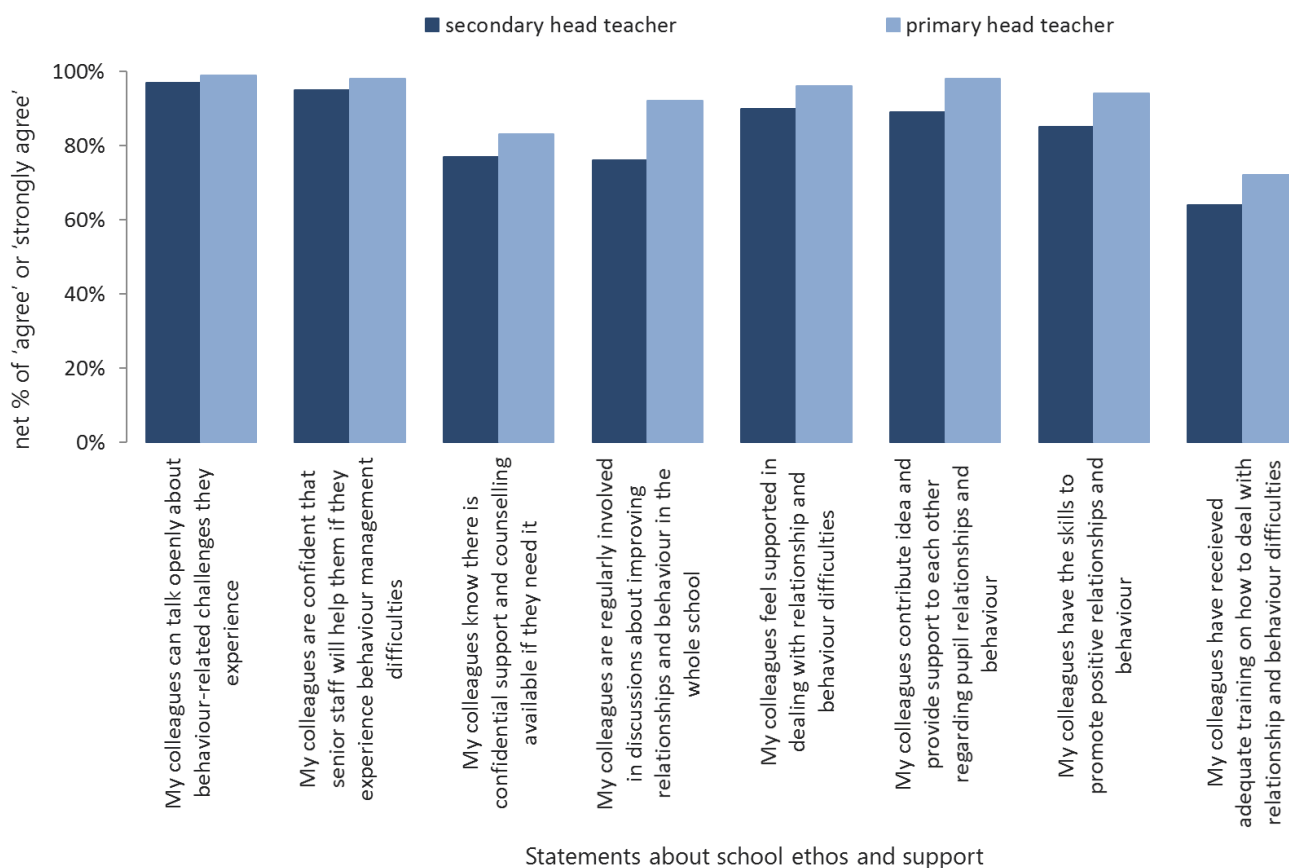
(Note that support staff were not asked the question about whether “My school has a clear and comprehensive whole-school approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour”, which emerged as the strongest predictor among teachers).

Perceptions of school culture and support

- 11.22 Staff were also asked the extent to which they agreed with a set of statements about their school culture and the support available to them with regards to their work on pupil behaviour and relationships. Figure 11.2 shows headteacher responses to statements about their perceptions of these issues in relation to their staff. Figures 11.3 - 11.7 show responses from headteachers, teachers and support staff when asked to think about their own experiences³². All charts show the percentage of ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ responses to these statements.
- 11.23 A number of new statements were added in 2016, but, where comparable to 2012, results are similar in both years.
- 11.24 Overall, headteachers were positive about the extent to which their colleagues are supported, with primary headteachers generally more positive than their secondary counterparts (Figure 11.2).

³² Where charts do not show a response from a specific group of respondents (e.g. headteachers, teachers or support staff) this is because they were not asked about a particular statement.

Figure 11.2: Headteacher perceptions of school ethos and support in relation to their staff



Bases: secondary headteacher n=291, primary headteacher n=184

School culture and policy

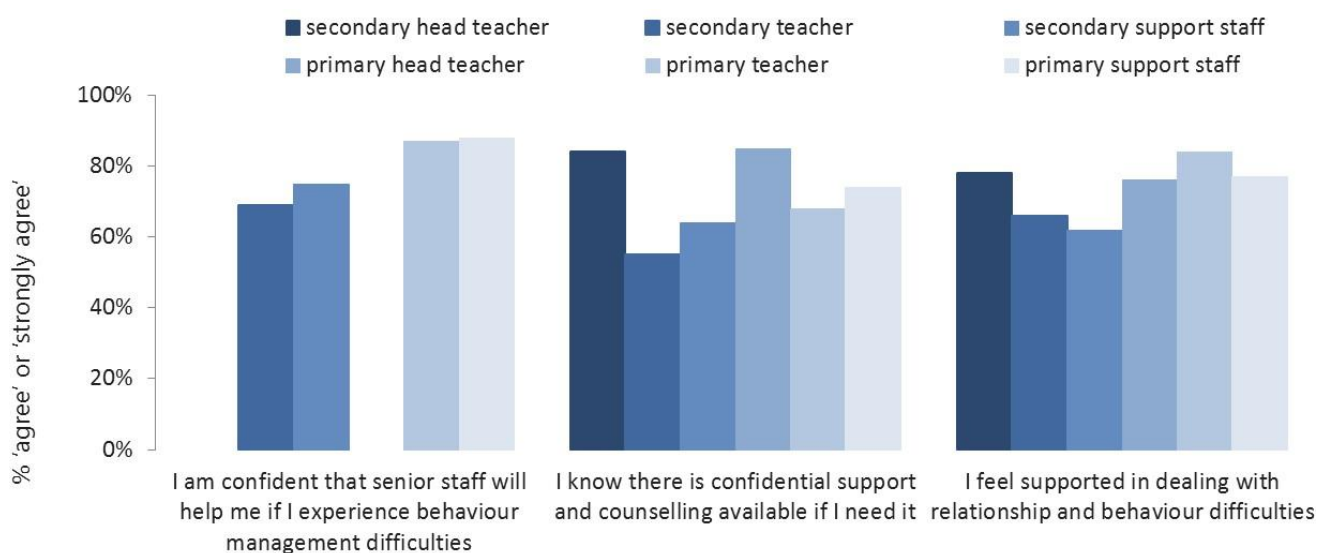
- 11.25 Almost all staff in both sectors felt that they were able to talk openly with their colleagues about any behaviour-related challenges that they faced.
- 11.26 Primary headteachers and teachers were more likely than their secondary counterparts to agree that their school has ‘a clear and comprehensive whole-school approach to promoting positive relationships and behaviour’. In both sectors, but particularly in secondaries, headteachers were more positive than teachers.
- 11.27 Almost all primary staff felt that their school had ‘a culture of developing positive relationships and behaviour for the health and wellbeing of all’. Secondary headteachers were also very positive on this point but teachers and support staff were more mixed in their views (67% of teachers and 74% of support staff agreed/strongly agreed).

Support available to staff

- 11.28 A majority of respondents from both sectors remained confident that they would receive support from senior staff if they encountered behaviour-related challenges, although levels of secondary teachers’ agreement were slightly lower than 2012 (69% in 2016, 74% in 2012).

11.29 Levels of awareness of confidential support and counselling were mixed across both sectors³³, as were levels of feeling supported to deal with relationship and behaviour difficulties³⁴.

Figure 11.3: Perceptions of support available



Bases: secondary headteacher 184, secondary teacher 1755, secondary support staff 658, primary headteacher 290, primary teacher 698, primary support staff 471

Contribution of ideas and involvement in discussion on behaviour and relationships

11.30 In both sectors headteacher perceptions of the extent of their colleagues' involvement in discussions about improving relationships and behaviour in the whole school were higher than those reported by teachers and support staff.

11.31 Almost all (92%) primary headteachers agreed or strongly agreed that 'My colleagues are regularly involved in discussions about improving relationships and behaviour in the whole school', compared with 78% of teachers and 61% of support staff who agreed/strongly agreed that 'I am regularly involved...'. Three quarters (76%) of secondary headteachers agreed with this, compared with 56% of teachers and just 33% of support staff³⁵.

11.32 Headteacher and teacher perceptions on the extent of the contribution of ideas and support to colleagues were similar: 89% of secondary headteachers and 86% of secondary teachers, and 98% of primary headteachers and 94% of teachers agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.

Skills and training

³³ Question amended slightly from 2012 so not comparable

³⁴ New question in 2016

³⁵ Question amended in 2016 so not comparable

- 11.33 Almost all (94%) primary headteachers and 85% of secondary headteachers agreed/strongly agreed that 'my colleagues have the skills to promote positive relationships and behaviour' (a new question in 2016).
- 11.34 Teachers were asked to rate their confidence in their ability to 'promote positive behaviour in your classroom' and 'respond to indiscipline in your classroom' on a scale of 1 to 5 (1='not confident at all' and 5='very confident'). Confidence levels were high. In relation to promoting positive behaviour, 94% of primary teachers and 94% of secondary teachers gave a rating of 4 or 5. In relation to responding to indiscipline, 89% of primary teachers and 86% of secondary teachers gave a rating of 4 or 5. Levels of confidence have not changed since 2012.
- 11.35 Three quarters of primary headteachers and two thirds of secondary headteachers felt they had received adequate training on how to promote positive relationships and behaviour in their school. Similarly, three quarters of primary teachers and two thirds of secondary teachers felt that they had undertaken sufficient professional learning to deal with relationship and behaviour difficulties. Teachers' views on professional learning around behaviour and relationship management were explored further in the qualitative research and are discussed in paragraphs 11.40 to 11.46 below.
- 11.36 Support staff were less likely than teachers to feel that they had received adequate training: 59% of primary support staff and 45% of secondary support staff agreed/strongly agreed that 'I have received adequate training on how to deal with relationship and behaviour difficulties'. The views of support staff on training and, more broadly, their role and the support they receive were discussed in the qualitative research (see paragraphs 11.47 to 11.66 below).

The role of support staff

- 11.37 In both sectors, support staff felt that they play an important role in their schools in promoting positive relationships and behaviour (94% of primary support staff and 86% of secondary support staff agreed/strongly agreed). See Figure 11.4.
- 11.38 However, the majority of support staff did not feel they have time within their contracted hours to discuss classroom planning. While one third of primary support staff agreed or strongly agreed they had time to engage in this within their contracted hours, 43% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A quarter of secondary support staff agreed or strongly agreed, while 52% disagreed or strongly disagreed (Figure 11.4).
- 11.39 Similarly, the majority of support staff did not feel they had time within contracted hours to enable feedback discussions. Only 42% of primary support staff and 36% of secondary support staff agreed or strongly agreed that they had time to do so (Figure 11.4).

Figure 11.4: Support staff perceptions of role and contracted hours



Bases: secondary support staff 651, primary support staff 463

Teachers' professional learning on relationships and behaviour

- 11.40 The overwhelming message from teachers in the qualitative research³⁶ was that there was no single solution, or set of solutions, when it came to supporting relationships and behaviour – different approaches work for different teachers with different pupils. This meant that more formal Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) courses were not always considered the most effective means of increasing skills in this area.
- 11.41 In general, teachers thought that there had not been many CLPL courses on supporting relationships and behaviour available in recent years. Secondary teachers commented on the fact that most of the recent courses were on subject content and the new National Qualifications. Courses that they had undertaken tended to be internal school courses completed on in-service days.
- 11.42 There were a number of barriers identified by teachers in accessing CLPL courses:
- most national courses are only available in the central belt
 - a lack of supply cover
 - even if they did attend training, there were issues with having the time to put their learning into practice.

Peer learning

- 11.43 Headteachers and teachers in both sectors thought that the most effective method for improving skills in supporting relationships and behaviour was through peer learning and were happy with the level of internal CLPL they were receiving. This could include both informal and formal methods. Examples included peer observations, informal discussions with colleagues, teaching and learning communities dedicated to supporting relationships and behaviour, working lunch meetings to discuss strategies, and showcasing different ways of supporting relationships and behaviour at in-service days.

In terms of professional learning the best resource is...peer learning...where there are opportunities within the school for teachers to work together and learn from each other. I wouldn't say it's sharing best practice, I think it's actually learning together and sharing experiences because I don't know if there is such a thing as best practice.

Secondary headteacher

- 11.44 Teachers described two main benefits to peer learning in relation to supporting relationships and behaviour. Firstly, they felt that having supportive colleagues made the biggest difference to them developing their practice – and felt that they would be supported if they wanted to try something new. Secondly, discussing issues with school colleagues, rather than others on a training course, meant that

³⁶ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

they can discuss specific strategies to use with specific pupils or classes – and, as noted above, tailoring approaches to what works with individuals was thought to be key to successfully supporting relationships and behaviour.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

11.45 Recently qualified teachers, and some headteachers, felt that behaviour and relationships should be given more prominence in ITE.

I think we all felt that there wasn't enough of that, so we hadn't really had any behaviour management advice before we went out on placement. Inevitably that's the thing that people are most concerned about that they want more advice on.

Secondary headteacher

11.46 There were a number of specific suggestions given on how to improve ITE provision on supporting relationships and behaviour:

- current teachers should be invited to speak to students to share their experiences and talk them through practical scenarios
- teaching on supporting relationships and behaviour should be provided in advance of student placements
- observations of students' skills in supporting relationships and behaviour should be conducted early on in their series of placements to allow them to develop strengths and work on any weaknesses
- making it clear that not all approaches will work with all pupils and that not all approaches will work for all teachers (approaches also need to suit a teacher's personality) – training should focus on the flexibility and tailoring required to be effective.

Support staff: their perceptions of their role and the support they receive

11.47 The qualitative research with support staff revealed were mixed experiences in relation to their role and the support they receive. Some were largely positive while others shared experiences about aspects that were not working so well. Overall, primary support staff tended to be more positive than secondary support staff.

11.48 This reflects the quantitative findings. Almost all support staff felt that they play an important role in their school in promoting positive relationships and behaviour. Nevertheless, they were less positive, particularly in the secondary sector, about how staff work together in the school, involvement in discussions about improving relationships and behaviour in the whole school, training on how to deal with relationship and behaviour difficulties, and time for discussions about classroom planning and feedback.

Feeling valued

- 11.49 In some schools, support staff felt that they were not always given their place in school, and were not seen as part of the 'team'. In one group, there was a suggestion that they are not paid enough, and that being a member of support staff nowadays was not a viable career option.
- 11.50 Where support staff felt undervalued, this seemed to stem mainly from perceptions about levels of support from senior management, and to a lesser extent from class teachers. Where senior management had asked their opinion and addressed specific concerns that they had raised, this backing helped support staff feel valued and part of the team.
- 11.51 Support staff also described feeling undervalued when their side of a story was not prioritised by senior management. For example, if a teacher and a member of support staff had both witnessed an incident, there was a perception that the teacher's side of the story would be given more weight (even if the member of support staff was on the scene first).
- 11.52 Related to this was a feeling that teachers can sometimes have a lack of trust in the professional judgement of support staff in particular situations. For instance, support staff described situations where teachers suggested that they had been too lenient or too strict with a pupil, when they were unaware of the background that led to that particular interaction.

Communication

- 11.53 Perceptions about communication between senior management, teachers and support staff tended to be more positive in the primary than in the secondary sector. Secondary support staff often described a lack of communication from senior management and teachers. One group of support staff shared experiences of being sent to classrooms and not being told any information about why they were there or which pupils they need to deal with. While primary support staff were generally positive about the level of communication, they tended to want more frequent meetings with teachers.
- 11.54 A couple of practical barriers to communication were raised
- support staff are often not at a desk/computer so are unable to check their emails regularly and keep 'in the loop' about what is going on across the school
 - some support staff do not have a base where they can discuss issues with colleagues/as a team.
- 11.55 Examples of when communication was working well in both sectors included having regular meetings with senior management/teachers, and having the opportunity to discuss, as a team, the best approaches to support individual pupils.

Clarity on the overall approach to behaviour

11.56 Support staff in some secondary schools reported a number of concerns related to a lack of a clear overall approach to behaviour – or at least a lack of communication to them about their role. They felt that there was a lack of consistency in the approach that different teachers take when dealing with pupils. This meant that support staff were unclear about what they were supposed to do in certain situations. Similarly, one group of support staff mentioned that there was a lack of clear rationale for the support base as pupils were being sent to the base for low-level indiscipline, and they did not know whether their role was to deal with pupils with additional support needs or to work with other pupils to support positive behaviour.

Involvement in discussions about individual pupils

11.57 There were mixed experiences in both sectors about the level of involvement that support staff have in discussions about individual pupils. There was the feeling among support staff that they were told less about individual pupil circumstances than teachers. There was a recognition that this often relates to issues which senior management and teachers are not in a position to disclose. Nevertheless, it was felt that the reasons for withholding the information could be made more explicit. At other times, they felt it was simply due to a lack of communication.

Involvement in whole-school discussions about behaviour

11.58 Support staff in both sectors mentioned that they tended not to be involved in overall discussions about behaviour in schools. (In the survey, only 33% of support staff in both sectors agreed that they were involved in discussions about improving relationships and behaviour in their school). Views about involvement in discussions often depended on the approach of individual senior management teams. For instance, one group of support staff reported that they had a new pupil support base leader who was now involving them in discussions that they would not previously have been involved in.

11.59 Some support staff in the primary sector indicated that, while they were often not involved in formal discussions about behaviour, they felt that they could approach senior management with suggestions. For others, their lack of involvement meant that they did not have input into decisions about school-wide behaviour approaches. For example, one school had dropped Golden Time. The support staff did not know why this decision had been taken and felt that it had impacted negatively on behaviour – it seemed that they had no expectation of being involved in discussions about this and did not feel that they could suggest bringing it back.

Career-long Professional Learning (CLPL)

11.60 There were varying degrees to which support staff reported that they had received training and how useful they had found it. In the quantitative research, 59% of primary support staff and 45% of secondary support staff agreed that they had received adequate training on how to deal with relationship and behavioural difficulties.

- 11.61 In the qualitative research it is worthwhile noting that, when referring to training, support staff tended to think in terms of 'training courses' rather than 'on the job' opportunities for learning.
- 11.62 Support staff raised the point that they were sometimes asked to undertake tasks such as clearing out cupboards or administrative work rather than undertake training or development activities during in-service days. They also indicated that they would like more time to discuss things with staff during in-service days.
- 11.63 There were a number of areas in which support staff identified that they would like more training
- specific training for support staff
 - differentiation between the primary and secondary sectors (they felt that issues were often quite different so separate rather than combined training would be more useful)
 - approaches to behaviour
 - how to build positive relationships
 - specific training on using de-escalation/managing challenging behaviour. (Staff in a couple of schools had received this and had found it extremely helpful. Staff in another school had requested it but been told it was not necessary for the type of pupils they were dealing with – they nonetheless thought it would be).

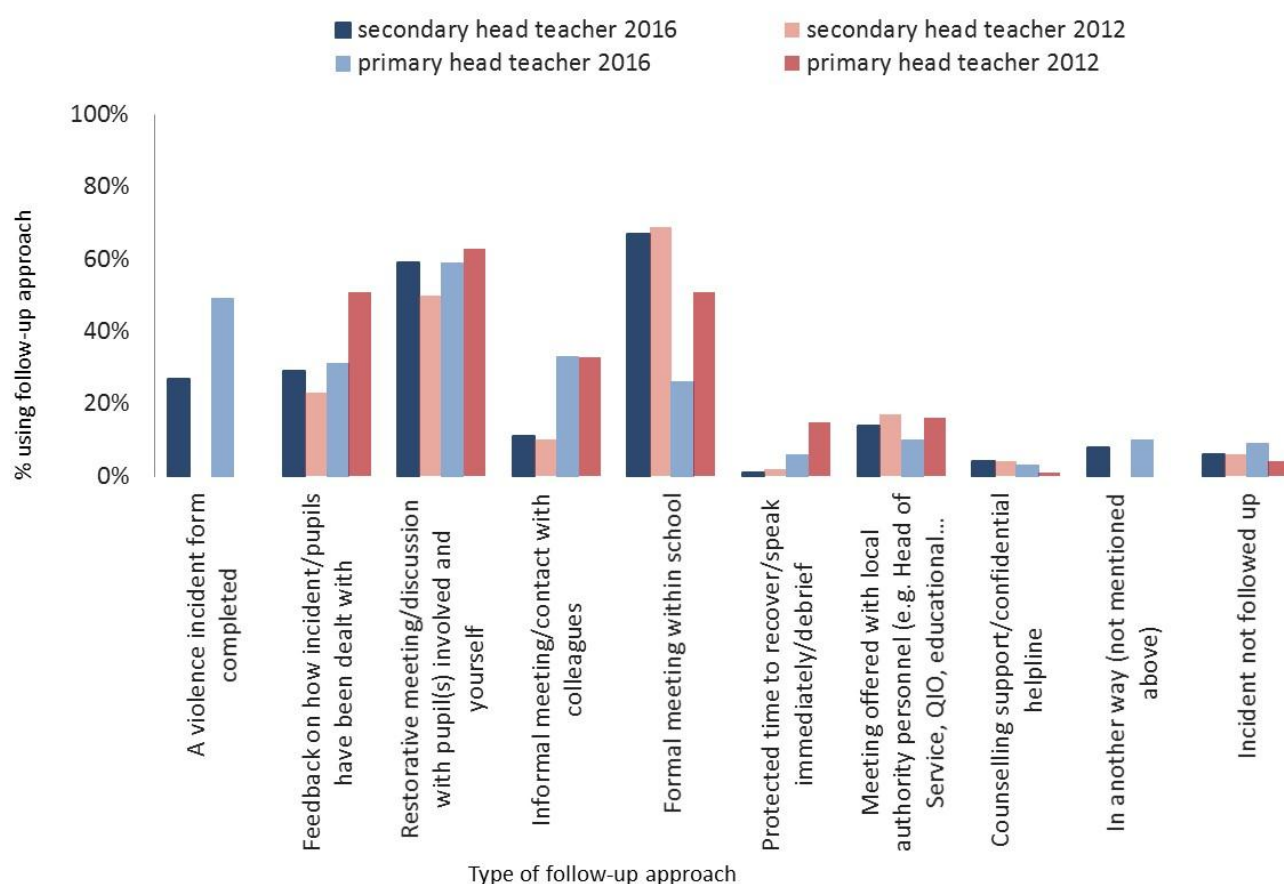
Support staff resources

- 11.64 Overall, support staff in both sectors felt that they were understaffed. Headteachers and teachers shared this view and noted that there were fewer support staff, dealing with more pupils displaying challenging behaviour. Some headteachers talked about using their school budget to employ more support staff, outwith what was formally allocated through the LA formula, and investing money into support staff training.
- 11.65 Where there was a decrease in the number of hours that they were available to support pupils in schools, this was exacerbated by them having to do work such as playground supervision (because of the loss of playground supervisors), which meant that they have to have breaks/lunch during class time, and therefore have less time in class. There are further difficulties when support staff also have medical duties, and are called away to deal with medical problems during their class time.
- 11.66 In term of recruitment, a headteacher indicated that there was a specific skill set required for behaviour support and another for learning support – and that it was easier to find staff with skills for learning support than behaviour support.

Follow up of incidents of serious disruptive behaviour towards staff

- 11.67 In 2016, the most common ways in which an incident was followed up remained the same as in 2012 for all groups of staff in both sectors³⁷ (Figures 11.5 to 11.7).
- 11.68 The most common outcome for incidents involving secondary headteachers was a formal meeting within school, and for primary headteachers this was a restorative meeting/discussion with pupil(s) involved.
- 11.69 For both teachers and support staff in both sectors, feedback on how the incident/pupils had been dealt with remained the most common follow-up approach. The frequency of feedback appears to have decreased for both groups of staff since 2012 but this may be due to the addition of ‘a violence incident form completed’ as the first response option in 2016 (although staff were asked to select all the responses that applied, some may have simply selected the first response that applied and moved on to the next question) .

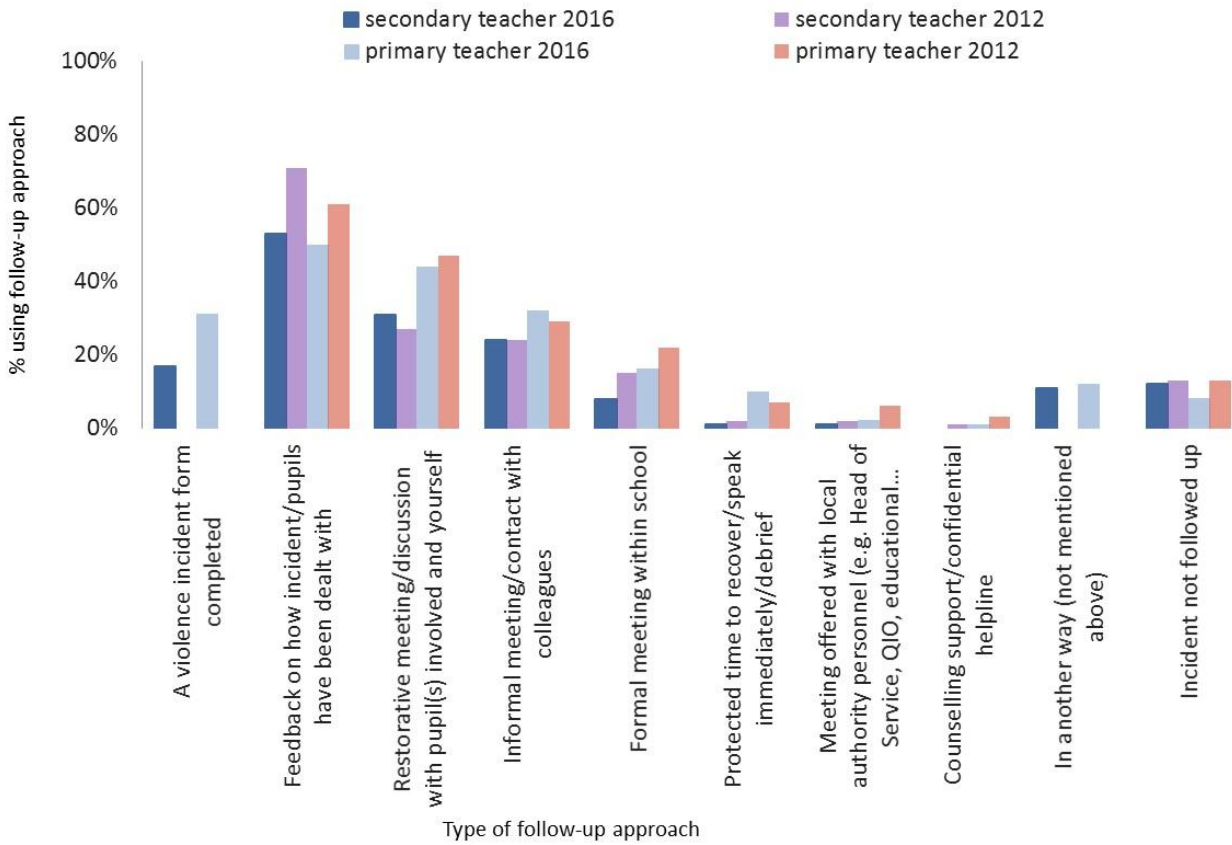
Figure 11.5: Headteacher incident follow-up approaches 2016/2012



Bases: secondary headteacher 63 (2016) 92 (2012), primary headteacher 98 (2016) 81 (2012)

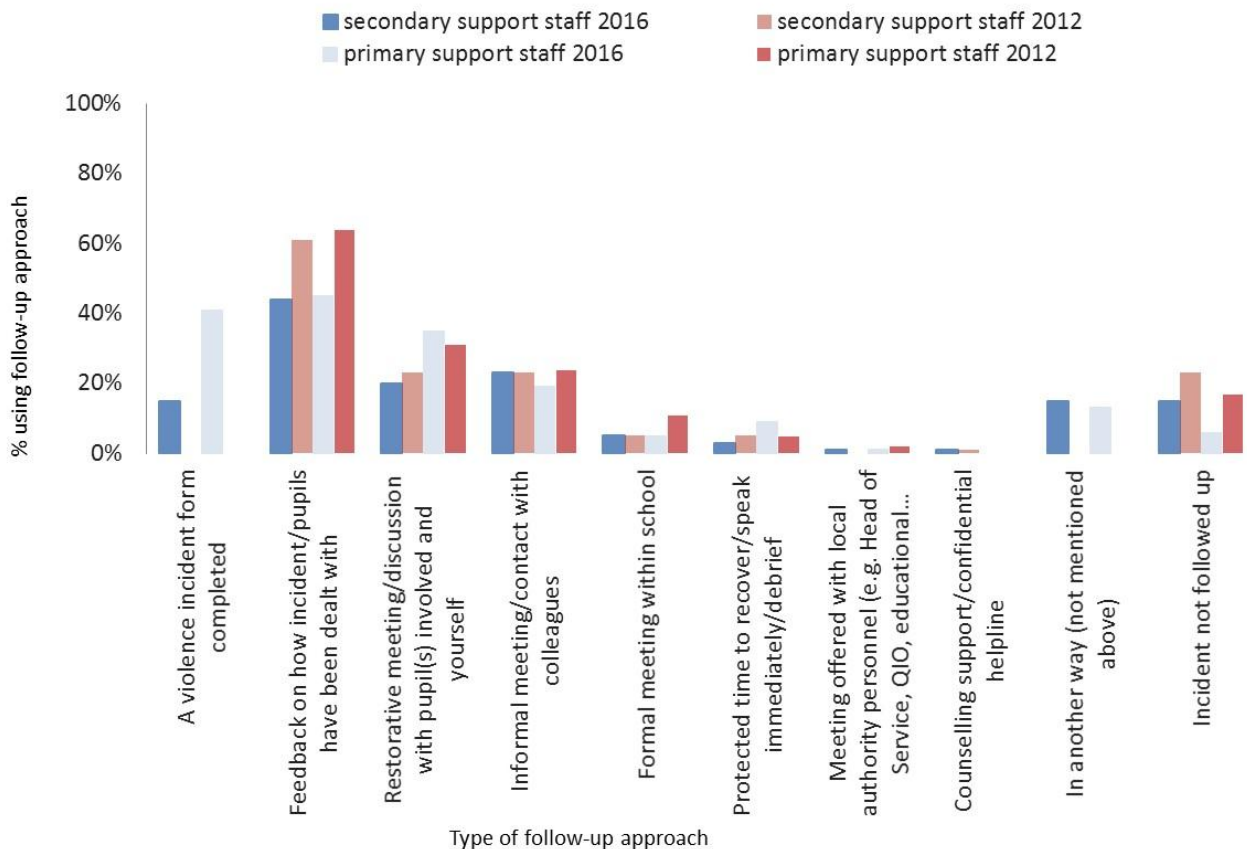
³⁷ Staff were not asked about the use of violence incident forms or given the option to choose ‘in another way not mentioned above’ in 2012.

Figure 11.6: Teacher incident follow-up approaches 2016/2012



Bases: secondary teacher 549 (2016) 696 (2012), primary teacher 148 (2016) 160 (2012)

Figure 11.7: Support staff incident follow-up approaches



Bases: secondary support staff 168 (2016) 192 (2012), primary support staff 139 (2016) 130 (2012)

Exploring 'ethos'

11.70 In the qualitative research with staff and parents, we explored their views on ethos: what happens in a school with a strong, positive ethos and what happens (or fails to happen) in a school with a less positive ethos? In the qualitative research with pupils, we did not ask directly about ethos – but their views on this emerged in the discussions about other aspects of their school experience (e.g. what engages them in their learning and what makes them feel supported).

11.71 There was a great deal of consistency in the themes that emerged. There was some difference in emphasis but staff, parents and pupils – in both the primary and secondary sectors, and in large and small schools across Scotland – were agreed on the characteristics of a school with a positive ethos.

11.72 In some ways this is not surprising: few would argue with the features discussed below. Nonetheless, the research confirms the importance of these features and provides reassurance that there is a consensus on what schools should be aspiring towards. That is not to say that it is *easy* to create and maintain a positive school ethos – but it does suggest that there are no hidden or unexpected aspects currently being missed by policy makers and practitioners.

11.73 The aspects of ethos discussed by participants were closely inter-related but can be broadly categorised as relating to:

- what a school should be
- school values
- what happens (or needs to happen) to become that school and embody those values.

11.74 Each is discussed below.

What a school should be: a community

11.75 A school with a positive ethos was commonly described as feeling like a '*community*' or a '*family*' where all pupils, their parents and staff feel known, included, valued, safe, supported and cared for. Pupils talked about '*not being ignored*'.

It's a real community. Like a wee village.

And the kids love that as well.

Primary teachers

It's just a family.

P5 parents

It's just got this feeling of warmth.

S1 parents

Everyone would feel part of one big society [in a school with a positive ethos].

Support staff (school where they did not feel this)

11.76 Supportiveness was a dominant theme. Ultimately, this meant everyone being supportive of each other but, in particular, participants stressed the importance of staff being supportive of pupils, the SMT being supportive of staff and pupils being supportive of each other.

11.77 Being part of the wider community was also seen as important.

Values

11.78 Headteachers recommended developing and agreeing values with the pupils ‘so *they can articulate the values in their own words*’ and then making explicit reference to those values day-to-day.

11.79 There was strong agreement about the most important values:

- respect (above all)
- fairness (raised by pupils, in particular), equality and inclusion
- honesty and trust
- setting high expectations/aspirations for pupils regardless of their background (in relation to attainment and positive destinations)
- setting high standards and ‘*not letting little things slip*’ (in relation to behaviour).

It is very much about pride in themselves and respect, and if I come across poor behaviour, okay, you try to handle things as calmly as possible and respectfully as possible.

Secondary headteacher

What needs to happen to become a community and embody these values: behaviours and activities

11.80 The following behaviours and activities – the ways to become the kind of community described above – were commonly raised in the discussions.

Leadership

11.81 All categories of staff identified the need for strong leadership from the headteacher (in particular) and the SMT. This involved:

- imbuing a sense of purpose – having long term aims and targets
- leading by example
- having empathy for staff
- being optimistic and solution focused – ‘*turning negatives into positives*’

- being visible (in corridors, in classrooms, around the playground, in the canteen) and approachable – from the point of view of pupils, staff and parents.

Communication, openness and sharing among staff

11.82 Lack of communication and staff cliques were frequently cited as evidence of a poor ethos. Linked to this was staff keeping problems in the classroom to themselves and not feeling that they could safely discuss problems with colleagues.

I think communication is key, that there wasn't a forum to voice their opinions to say, this is the issue, can we try and resolve it as a team? Rather than internalising the problem. [...] I think that lack of communication between teachers and management meant that we were dealing with the same issues, but nothing was being resolved.

Primary teacher

11.83 In contrast, openness, honesty about problems, and sharing resources and ideas were seen as features of a positive ethos.

11.84 The visibility and approachability of the headteacher and SMT (noted under 'Leadership' above) were also viewed as key here.

11.85 To help improve communication and relationships, staff talked about making an effort to spend time together (e.g. having coffee together, having lunch together on a Friday, having a 'social half hour').

Everyone's voice being heard

11.86 The importance of the '*pupil voice*' was another dominant theme – particularly from pupils themselves. Pupil councils were the most commonly mentioned vehicle for this and pupil surveys were also suggested.

11.87 More generally, there was agreement that '*everyone being listened to*' was important. This included staff and parents as well as pupils.

Yes, being an equal part of the school, being an equal and listened to, I suppose, I think that has changed, I think she [new headteacher] has pushed that forward much more.

Researcher: It sounds like you're saying that has created a more positive ethos?

It has.

I think parents want to get more involved as well, as you said, they see things are...you know, they are not just filling in a form for it to be filed away, you fill in a form and actually change might happen.

P5 parents

Keeping calm and not shouting

11.88 Pupils were particularly concerned about teachers keeping calm and not shouting. As well as being disruptive and creating an unpleasant, tense atmosphere, they felt that being shouted at led to defensiveness and an escalation of issues.

By the time everybody is shouted at, the bell goes, and that's you done the lesson, just a lesson of people getting shouted at.

[...]

I think the teachers get stressed and that's why they start shouting.

Once the teacher is stressed that's it.

S4 pupils

Researcher: If you were in charge of teacher training what would you say to them to do?

Don't take things so like...

Like serious.

Like if someone makes a mistake don't start shouting at them, just calm down

P5 pupils

11.89 Staff from all categories agreed that keeping calm and not shouting helped promote a positive ethos. Some schools had a 'no shouting' policy.

Fun events to build relationships

11.90 Opportunities to have fun and to 'have a laugh' together were felt to boost morale and help develop relationships (among pupils, among staff and between staff and pupils). A wide range of different events were mentioned: a staff panto, an X Factor competition, dressing up for Hallowe'en (all of which gave pupils a chance to laugh at their teachers and 'see that they are human'), a bake-off challenge and a running challenge.

11.91 Parents, in particular, felt that opportunities for pupils to have enjoyable, new experiences was a sign of a positive ethos.

Celebrating success

11.92 Celebrating success (in a wide range of areas – specifically not just academic success) was frequently mentioned by staff and parents as very positive. It was felt to promote inclusion and a sense of community.

School uniform

11.93 In some schools, the uniform was seen as an aspect of ethos because it was (variously) seen as a way of promoting a sense of belonging, a sense of pride in the school, and pupils' sense of pride in themselves. In order to fulfill those functions, it was explicitly talked about in those ways with pupils.

12 Parents' perspectives

- 12.1 In the qualitative research, we explored parents' views on the accessibility and approachability of school staff in relation to their children's behaviour and relationships at school. Parents were also asked about ethos, transition to secondary school and support during exams and their views on these topics are incorporated in the relevant sections of this report (see paragraphs 11.47 to 11.93 on ethos and Chapter 8 on transitions and support during exams).

Key findings

- 12.2 On the whole, parents who took part in the qualitative research were positive about the availability and accessibility of school staff.
- 12.3 Primary parents frequently reported being able to easily see staff face-to-face, often without an appointment. Other methods of communication open to them were email and Apps, which were considered useful in terms of the flexibility they offered.
- 12.4 Secondary parents tended to approach their child's guidance teacher when they had a concern and were generally positive about these links.
- 12.5 Parents' evenings were the main way in which schools communicated with parents about their child's behaviour and relationships.
- 12.6 Beyond parents' evenings, parents tended not to hear much from the school in relation to their child's behaviour and relationships unless there was a problem. Some parents were content that they would be informed promptly if there was a problem while others expressed a desire for more feedback.
- 12.7 Parents of secondary pupils reported a reduction in the amount of feedback from primary to secondary school and, again, there were mixed views on whether this was appropriate.
- 12.8 Parents were generally supportive of the way behaviour was managed at their child's school.

Approachability/accessibility³⁸

Primary schools

- 12.10 Parents' experiences of contacting the school when they had a concern about their child varied, but they were generally positive. Primary parents, in particular, commented that they had 'every opportunity to contact the school'. Some were easily able to speak to school staff face-to-face (often at very short notice and without an appointment).

Easy, you just phone up and ask for an appointment and you're given an appointment, or if you feel like you need to do it there and then and you come in, then there is always someone to talk to.

Primary parent

- 12.11 Others, however, had found it more difficult to arrange an appointment with teachers and reported using other means of contact instead.

...the teachers and the headteacher are so busy and trying to get contact from them is quite difficult sometimes. [...] I ended up sending an email because I thought, well that's maybe the easiest way and then they did respond. [...] they're very rarely in the office.

Primary parent

- 12.12 Email was the preferred communication method among some parents since it offered greater flexibility in terms of timing, i.e. they could send an email in the evening if they were working during the day and unable to phone or go to the school. A number of schools had also introduced Apps to facilitate communication between parents and teachers – which parents were positive about.

- 12.13 Parents raised the issue that schools often preferred them to speak to the headteacher rather than the class teacher if they had a concern, or wanted to pass on information about something that had happened at home. While there was an understanding that schools did this to avoid the class teacher being interrupted, some parents would prefer to have the opportunity to speak to the class teacher directly where possible.

Secondary schools

- 12.14 In secondary schools, parents tended to approach their child's guidance teacher when they had a concern. In the main, they were very positive about their links with guidance teachers and found them to be approachable.

Yes, pastoral care is really lovely. The woman I've dealt with, she is very, very good, when I have had to speak, twice I had to speak to the school

³⁸ To help distinguish between findings from the quantitative survey and findings from the qualitative research, throughout the report, sections discussing the qualitative research have a pale pink background.

about something and she was very good, very, very good... sat down and had a chat she was very welcoming and listened and was supportive.

Secondary parent

- 12.15 However, in one school, parents talked about not knowing who to approach if they had a problem. They suggested providing parents with this information (including the best time to get hold of the person) at the start of each school year.
- 12.16 Events where staff and parents interacted together and could talk in an informal way were considered helpful in enabling communication between parents and staff as they made parents feel that the staff were more approachable. The SMT, in particular, seemed less 'intimidating' as a result.

Communications regarding behaviour and relationships

- 12.17 Parents' evenings were the main way in which schools communicated with parents about their child's behaviour and relationships. Schools tended to hold two parents' evenings per year, with slots for parents lasting around 10 minutes. While behaviour was covered in these meetings, to varying degrees, there was a view that the time slot was not long enough to cover everything in detail.
- 12.18 Beyond parents' evenings, parents tended not to hear much from the school in relation to their child's behaviour and relationships unless there was a problem. Views on this were mixed, with some parents content that they would be informed promptly if there was a problem. This was particularly true in cases where the school communicated regularly with parents about things that they would consider less important: the fact that there was communication about these more minor matters reassured them that there would also be communication if there was a concern. There was also some support for *not* telling parents about 'every little thing' in order to encourage pupils to take responsibility and resolve issues themselves. On the other hand, there were parents who would, ideally, welcome more feedback, including positive feedback. However, these parents did acknowledge the constraints on teachers' time.
- 12.19 There was also a feeling that what happens in the playground, as well as the classroom, is important in terms of behaviour and relationships. This does not tend to be fed back to parents via existing mechanisms such as parents' evenings as it is usually support staff who witness this. For some parents, hearing about what happens in the playground would reassure them that the school is looking out for their child more widely.

... obviously you can't report back every single day about every child, you would never be able to do any work. But if they have found that when they're outside they have seen a child is sitting and still sitting on their own, and say it's been a week and they're still sitting on their own, then there needs to be a call to see if everything is all right. Then to say, 'okay, so if everything is okay at home, then can we put something in place to say to start up some games in the playground and they're run by adults?'

So, just a certain amount of times you get your phone call, just so that you know they're actually watching your children as well, and they're acknowledging who they are. It's nice to know that they know them personally, to know that they were sat on a chair for a week, that's not like them, or they're getting into an argument, it's not like them, what's happening? You rely on a lot from the teacher and a lot of behaviour, the teacher doesn't experience it, so it would be nice to be reassured, yes.

Primary parents

12.20 Parents of secondary pupils commented on the reduction in the amount of feedback from primary to secondary school and, again there were mixed views on whether this was appropriate. To ease the transition to secondary, some schools gave more feedback to parents in S1 than in other secondary years. At one school, this involved sending 'postcards' home to parents containing detailed information on their child's behaviour and effort as well as academic progress and, at another school, holding early parents' evenings with guidance teachers (see paragraphs 8.10 to 8.14 on transitions).

Parental views on how behaviour is managed with school

12.21 Parents did not talk in detail about the way that their child's school managed behaviour. However, they were aware of rewards-based systems and were generally supportive of them – and of the wider principle of praising positive behaviour. When parents had needed to contact the school about a specific incident, they were, on the whole, satisfied that the school had acted quickly and effectively to resolve it.

13 Conclusions and implications

13.1 The 2016 wave of the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research shows that positive behaviour and relationships continue to be the norm in Scottish schools:

- most staff report that they encounter positive behaviour from pupils all or most of the time
- most staff give a high rating to the overall ethos of their school
- most teachers are confident in their ability to promote positive behaviour in their classrooms and to respond to indiscipline
- where there are problems, these are more likely to relate low-level disruptive behaviour than serious disruptive behaviour. Serious violent incidents are rare.

13.2 Nonetheless, there are challenges. While the most common problems might be classed as 'low-level' (e.g. talking out of turn, hindering other pupils and work avoidance), this kind of disruption impacts on the learning of all pupils. Moreover, low-level disruptive behaviour in primary schools increased between 2012 and 2016. Many of the reasons that staff identified for this increase in low-level disruption are linked to broader societal changes -- the impact of digital technologies and changes in parenting – and there are limits to what education policy makers and practitioners, alone, can do. Addressing other aspects of the issue will require the investment of more resources (in support staff and specialist support for pupils with ASN, in particular).

Implications for policy and practice

The links between behaviour and engagement, relationships and ethos

13.3 The research confirms that behaviour in schools cannot be seen in isolation and it is inherently bound up with engagement in learning, with relationships in the classroom and around school, and with the ethos of a school. This reinforces the emphasis placed on these aspects in recent years by a range of policies and initiatives³⁹.

Engagement in learning

13.4 Engagement in learning is not about which particular methods are used, it is about: using a variety of methods; adapting methods and reacting to what is working/not working; providing a clear structure; ensuring appropriate differentiation; and avoiding gaps between activities.

13.5 On top of all this, the most important element of engagement is the pupil-teacher relationship, and that includes taking an interest in, and getting to know pupils as individuals – and pupils want teachers to be happy/smiling, enthusiastic, use humour and be calm.

³⁹ Including, for example, Curriculum for Excellence; Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour; How Good is Our School.

13.6 Considerable time for planning for engagement in learning is therefore required.

The role of parents

13.7 The role of parents is key. A number of the reasons that staff identified for the increase in low-level disruptive behaviour were linked to broader societal changes (e.g. the increased use of digital technologies, a perceived 'blame culture' and a reduction in respect for others) and staff highlighted the role of parents in mediating the potential negative effects of these changes on their children. Other reasons given related more directly to parenting skills e.g. spending quality time together and teaching problem solving skills. At the same time, staff acknowledged the difficult social and economic circumstances faced by many parents and recognised the challenges of parenting. This reinforces the need to support and equip parents⁴⁰.

The role of support staff

13.8 Headteachers, teachers, support staff and pupils commented on the link between positive behaviour and having sufficient numbers of support staff in class. Staff felt that a reduction in numbers of support staff, alongside an increased number of pupils with ASN (as a result of inclusion policies), had resulted in a lack of one-to-one support for pupils who need it and a wider negative impact on behaviour.

13.9 The research with support staff also indicated a need to allow them more time for discussions with class teachers about individual pupils and classroom planning, and time for involvement in whole-school discussions about approaches to behaviour and relationships. Again, this has resource implications.

Resources to support pupils with more serious behavioural problems or additional support needs

13.10 Headteachers and teachers talked about the problems of reductions in external support for pupils with more serious behavioural problems or additional support needs. They identified a need for additional support staff (as discussed above) as well as more specialist input and advice.

Broader resource issues

13.11 It is important to note that reductions in resources have not just affected resources for pupils with more serious behavioural issues or additional support needs. Resources within schools have been stretched by issues including teacher shortages, difficulties in obtaining supply cover, and the reduction in local authority support. This has had a knock-on impact on aspects which help promote positive behaviour and relationships such as SMT visibility around the school; time for class planning; and time for peer observations and sharing experiences with colleagues.

⁴⁰ Recognised by The National Parenting Strategy 2012.



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