Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs programme

Final report

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Executive summary

The Behaviour Hubs programme was launched as a three-year funded initiative to support schools and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) in improving behaviour. The programme encouraged 'lead' schools and MATs with exemplary behaviour cultures to collaborate closely with 'partner' schools seeking to improve their pupil behaviour. It aimed to improve the behaviour culture in partner schools and spread good practice across the country.

The programme launched in April 2021, ran over nine cohorts of partner schools, and was open to primary, secondary, alternative provision (AP), special schools and trusts. It built on centrally organised bespoke resources and a taskforce of behaviour advisers, delivering customised specialist training and networking events, open days, and building relationships between schools.

The programme enabled over 650 schools to receive support through three streams:

- a core stream for schools that had started implementing new behavioural approaches but needed additional support

- an extended stream offering ongoing one-on-one assistance for schools requiring tailored support

- a multi-school/trust (MAT) stream, for trusts to develop new behaviour approaches across multiple schools

Evaluation Aims and Objectives

This report outlines the findings of the evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs programme. The evaluation aimed to:

- determine whether the programme met its strategic objectives and achieved its projected outcomes for schools, staff, and pupils

- understand how and why the intervention did (or did not) meet its objectives

- investigate the change mechanisms triggered by the programme that produced the observed outcomes and impacts, examining variation across different schools and respondent groups

Evaluation Methodology

To reach these aims and objectives, a theory-based approach was adopted, combining elements of realist evaluation and qualitative comparative analysis (QCA).

Key findings

- The programme largely achieved its objectives, driving nationwide systemic, sustainable improvements in how schools managed behaviour and in the way they designed, developed, tested, and implemented their behaviour policies.

- There was strong evidence that pupil behaviour improved following the programme; in some instances, these improvements could be directly attributed to the programme itself, but additional causal factors also played a substantial role.

Behaviour ratings

- Following the programme, staff observed substantial improvements in pupil behaviour compared to the period before its implementation, with the most notable gains seen in schools with lower pupil-teacher ratios, small primary schools, and large secondary schools.

Change mechanisms

- The vast majority of schools who participated in the evaluation (80%) found the programme very useful, particularly schools with small pupil numbers[1], and the most significantly improved schools (those reporting the largest positive changes in pupil behaviour)[2]. The average behaviour change score was 6.5/8, where 1 was behaviour has become significantly worse and 8 was behaviour has significantly improved).

- The programme achieved success in improving pupil behaviour in different ways:

  - inspiring schools to enact changes

  - providing useful guidance and advice to schools

  - reframing the school's priorities

  - challenging the school's way of thinking

  - increasing the school's confidence about its pre-existing plans

- Across all schools, the most highly rated change mechanism or immediate reason why the programme was helpful for stakeholders was inspiration, intended as exposure to new possibilities and practical examples of behaviour change. This

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[1] 'Small' denotes schools with pupil numbers <= 530 (see Table 4).
[2] Selecting either 7 or 8/8 where 8 was "pupil behaviour has significantly improved".

was followed by providing useful guidance and increasing confidence in previous behaviour-related plans.

- Reframing the school's priorities was also an important mechanism for schools to improve behaviour. There was a strong association between not reframing school priorities and a minor or negative change in pupil behaviour.

Factors affecting pupil behaviour targeted by the programme

To improve pupil behaviour, during and after the programme, schools adopted several types of change to their behaviour management, to the way they implement behaviour policy, and to behaviour policy governance.

- Schools changed the way they manage behaviour. In particular, they:

    - created new behaviour standards

    - increased prevention of misbehaviour

    - increased activities aimed at rewarding good behaviour

- Large[3] schools in particular benefitted from increased use and collection of behaviour monitoring data.

- The most significantly improved schools focused on:

    - increasing rewards for good behaviour and

    - increasing behaviour management responsibilities of teaching staff

- Secondary schools particularly benefitted from allocating specific behaviour tasks to new or existing staff.

- In addition, schools changed the way they implemented their behaviour policy. They substantially improved:

    - how they communicated the policy to staff and pupils

    - their consistency in applying the policy

    - the frequency with which the policy was communicated

    - the policy's language (simplicity)

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[3] 'Large' denotes schools with pupil numbers > 530 (see Table 4).

- Schools also changed how the policy was designed, developed, and tested, increasing the involvement of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and teaching staff in these activities.

Success factors and barriers

- Overall, the programme's success was driven by the following factors:

  - individual motivation of staff (also shown to be necessary for the most significant improvements in pupil behaviour)

  - visits by partner schools to lead schools and to other partner schools

  - the programme's flexibility, which allowed schools to tailor the programme to their needs

  - the relationship with the lead school or with other partner schools, particularly the other school's competence, communication, and willingness to help

  - capacity and resourcing

- Overall, the following factors impeded progress towards success:

  - more than a third of respondent schools claimed to have encountered substantial external challenges[4] in implementing the programme and none of these achieved the most significant improvements in pupil behaviour. The absence of these external challenges was shown to be necessary for the most significant improvements in pupil behaviour

  - poor resourcing / lack of capacity

  - the participating schools' competing priorities and scheduling conflicts

- In addition, the most significantly improved schools considered low staff turnover a hindering factor because they believed that introducing major changes to behaviour policy was easier with new staff who were not accustomed to existing practices. In contrast, the least significantly improved schools pointed to high staff turnover as a challenge, citing difficulties in maintaining consistency, the need for constant training, and embedding new approaches.

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[4] Such as a difficult relationship with parents, post-Covid adaptations, a large proportion of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children, etc.

Sustainability of programme outcomes

- The evidence clearly demonstrates that the changes resulting from the programme are sustainable and are expected to continue over time. The overwhelming majority (98%) of schools involved in the evaluation/ survey believed changes were sustainable even though this will require continued engagement from both teaching staff and SLT, as well as continued adaptation to likely changing circumstances

- Encouraging evidence emerged concerning continued collaboration and engagement among schools after the programme. For example, learnings were shared across different schools in the same academy trust, and lead-partner school relationships often continued after the programme.

Recommendations

The evaluation was able to collect evidence of systemic, sustained changes that were either accelerated, made possible, or improved by the programme. If a similar programme were to be designed and launched in the future, it is highly recommended that:

- it preserves the same relational qualities, continuing to act as a catalyst to encourage interaction and adaptation, particularly in person and through school visits, ideally allocating additional funding to ensure greater interaction amongst schools

- it encourages use of standardised behaviour monitoring data and allocation of specific behaviour tasks to existing or newly hired staff

- it preserves flexibility, such as allowing schools to tailor the programme to their own needs and ideally removes strict requirements such as the mandatory participation of two SLT members

- it preserves structure and defined programme milestones

- it maintains ongoing efforts to engage and involve both teaching staff and senior leadership teams, ensuring their active participation and commitment to sustaining positive behaviour culture

1. Introduction

This report outlines the findings of the Behaviour Hubs evaluation and is organised in five chapters. After this introductory section covering the policy context, the Theory of Change, and the evaluation aims, the second chapter outlines the methodology used in the evaluation. The third and fourth chapters cover the findings (behaviour outcomes first, and an assessment of the programme second). Finally, the fifth, concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings, reflections on the sustainability of programme outcomes, and recommendations.

1.1 Policy context

1.1.1 Pupil behaviour in schools

Attending school and behaving well are critical to children's learning, safety, and physical and mental health, and every child deserves to learn in a safe, calm classroom. There is a consistent association between positive pupil behaviour, disruption-free learning environments, and higher quality educational experiences for children and young people. This relationship ultimately leads to pupils achieving more academically and socially and to an improvement in staff satisfaction (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012).

According to The Big Question Survey Report (NASUWT, 2024) 61% of responding teachers reported verbal abuse by pupils, 35% considered their school hadn't dealt with teachers being abused by pupils or by parents/carers, and 28% considered their school's behaviour policy to be effective. Moreover, results from the 2023/2024 National Behaviour Survey (Department for Education, 2025) suggest that misbehaviour in schools is affecting pupils' learning: 76% of teachers reported that misbehaviour stopped or interrupted teaching in at least some lessons in the past week, whilst teachers reported that for every 30 minutes of lesson time, 7 minutes were lost due to misbehaviour. In addition, a recent report from the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition (Rainer, Le, & Abdinasir, 2023) found that a wide variety of behaviour management systems and approaches are used in schools across England, making it difficult to understand misbehaviour drivers and assess the effectiveness of different behaviour management techniques.

In 2017, an independent review of behaviour in schools was undertaken, [Creating a Culture: how school leaders can optimise behaviour](#) (Bennett, 2017). The review identified a set of core principles which characterised the approach of successful school behaviour policies. These included (a) having a clear understanding of what the school culture is; (b) high expectations of pupils and a belief that all pupils matter; and (c) consistency and attention to detail in the execution of school routines, norms and values. The review highlighted the need for consistent strategies to manage pupil behaviour to

create a positive school culture where pupils and staff are safe and respected. It emphasised that school leaders require access to training in a range of behavioural strategies and examples of best practice in the school system.

The Department for Education has published guidance[5] to support school leaders and staff to manage misbehaviour to create a calm, safe, and supportive environment where both pupils and staff can flourish with safety and dignity. The Department for Education's guidance [Behaviour in Schools: Advice for headteachers and school staff](Department for Education, 2024), is the primary source of help and support for schools on developing and implementing a behaviour policy which outlines effective strategies that will encourage good behaviour. It also highlights the importance of training staff to embody this culture to enable a consistency of approach.

1.1.2 The Behaviour Hubs programme

The DfE-funded Behaviour Hubs programme[6] was based on the principles in the 'Creating a Culture' review. The programme was launched as a three-year funded initiative to support schools and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) in improving behaviour. The programme encouraged 'lead' schools and MATs with exemplary behaviour cultures to collaborate closely with 'partner' schools seeking to improve their pupil behaviour. Its objectives were to ensure that more teachers felt supported by senior leaders in managing misbehaviour, and understood and consistently applied their school's behaviour policy, ultimately leading to fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour. Other aims were for school leaders to implement behaviour systems that were effective and consistently implemented, leading to improvements in the school culture. The intention was for schools to improve individually and, at the macro level, for behaviour management best practice to diffuse across the country. The programme focused on a whole-school approach to improve and support behaviour culture, rather than a targeted intervention focusing on the behaviour of specific individual staff, pupils or groups.

The programme launched in April 2021 and ran over nine cohorts of partner schools, supporting self-referring schools that wanted and needed to turn around their behaviour culture. Open to primary, secondary, alternative provision (AP), special schools and trusts, it built on centrally organised bespoke resources and a taskforce of behaviour advisers[7] delivering customised specialist training to help improve a school's culture and spread good practice across the country. It also relied on networking events, open days, and building relationships between schools. The Behaviour Hubs programme enabled

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[5] The Department for Education has published a series of guidance documents related to managing pupil behaviour in schools. [Improving behaviour in schools - GOV.UK](#)
[6] [Behaviour Hubs - GOV.UK](#)
[7] The behaviour advisers are a group of six experts who led the design and structure of bespoke resources comprised of virtual modules and practical tools. They also support lead schools and MATs in sharing their experience and delivering mentorship to partner schools.

over 650 schools to receive direct, in-person, peer-to-peer support and access the programme's central suite of resources. Additionally, more than 400[8] schools gained access to support via the bespoke MAT pathway (Table 1).

Table 1: Programme information for different cohorts

Partner School Cohort	Programme Start Term	Number of new Lead schools	Number of new Lead schools in MATs	Number of new Lead MATs	Number of new Partner schools	Number of new Partner MATs
1	Summer 21	22	2	2	34	2
2	Autumn 21	0	0	0	41	2
3	Spring 22	0	0	0	23	1
4	Summer 22	28	8	8	96	6
5	Autumn 22	0	0	0	105	10
6	Spring 23	0	0	0	62	9
7	Summer 23	0	0	0	93	10
8	Autumn 23	0	0	0	104	0
9	Spring 24	0	0	0	72	0
Total		50	10	10	630	40

Source: Department for Education management information. These numbers are as of May 2024

The programme provided three support streams[9]:

- core: this stream was for schools that had started implementing new behavioural approaches and needed additional support. Designed for schools seeking a more independent journey, this pathway provided access to training, networking opportunities, open days, resources, and action planning sessions. Funding: £3K – 12 to 20 days of partner school commitment throughout the year.

- extended: this stream offered ongoing one-on-one assistance from an assigned lead school. This pathway was tailored for schools requiring personalised support,

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[8] This number refers to the schools within MATs who were on the MAT pathway. It is not possible to verify if these schools have received any notable influence or learning from their MAT's involvement, although that was the goal behind the MAT pathway. The evidence from the MAT case study is very positive in this sense.

[9] The extended pathway offers the highest level of face-to-face interaction and intensive support. However, schools and MATs on all pathways have equal access to resources and events.

especially if previous changes had not yielded desired results. Funding: £9K – 30 to 40 days of partner school commitment throughout the year.

- multi-school/trust: this was a MAT support stream designed for trusts to develop new behaviour approaches across multiple schools, with extended support available for one school within the MAT. Funding: £6K - 22 to 30 days of partner MAT commitment throughout the year.

All partner schools received support from their lead school and were expected to participate in virtual modules hosted by behaviour advisers. These covered topics such as leadership and management, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), creating systems and norms, consequences including sanctions and rewards, and attendance. Additionally, partner schools were required to attend at least one open day at a lead school during the year-long programme. Schools on the extended pathway benefited from multiple visits from their lead school to identify issues and effectively implement their new behaviour culture.

1.2   The Theory of Change

A preliminary Theory of Change (ToC) was co-designed with the Department for Education (DfE) and other key stakeholders, and subsequently revised in light of empirical findings, primarily drawn from case study interviews. As illustrated in Figure 1, the left side outlines the programme's foundational elements—inputs, activities, and deliverables—while the right side maps out the anticipated medium- and long-term outcomes and impacts. The central section highlights how these inputs and activities are expected to influence the contextual resources available to partner schools, thereby initiating a series of change mechanisms. Section 4 explores these mechanisms in detail, examining the processes that activated them and identifying barriers that hindered progress. For an accessible version of the Theory of Change, refer to Annex 5.

Figure 1: Behaviour Hubs Theory of Change

Inputs/ activities

Inputs

£10m DfE funding (2019-2025)

DfE-appointed team of behaviour advisers and school partnership leads (SPLs) to:

- Oversee and quality assure the programme.
- Deliver training & resources.
- DfE-appointed Delivery Centre to:
- Provide administrative and grant management services.
- Select and match schools

DfE-appointed lead schools

Activities

Partner schools/MATs access adviser-led training, hub networking events, lead school open day events, online resources and SPL coaching calls

In addition, partner schools/MATs access 1 of 3 types of support from their lead MAT /school:

- Core support: access to 2hr action planning surgery at lead school.
- Extended support: Bespoke one-to-one 8-12 days of support from a lead school to support diagnosis, action planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Multi-school support: Executive team in partner MAT is supported to launch MAT-wide approaches to behaviour. In addition, a school within partner MAT receives extended support.

Lead schools / MATs access SPL coaching calls, trouble-shooting support from delivery agent, induction and refresher training and networking events with SPL and other leads.

Delivery Centre works with DfE and evaluator to support evaluation activity.

Emerging learning used to refine activities.

Outputs/ outcomes

Tangible products or services

- Adviser-led training events.
- Online resources including good practice examples and behaviour management tools.
- Staff and pupil partner school survey reports to inform action planning by schools.
- Action Plan (a living document) developed by school / MAT in term 1 as a guide to journey on the programme. Updated in term complete the programme to be a guide to ongoing sustainability and continuous improvement.
- Delivered training sessions.
- New / updated behaviour policies and approaches in partner schools.
- School partnerships and hubs for leaders and teachers to share good behaviour management practices, support & information.

Changes in contextual resources

- Increased access to CPD (information, support and tools) to inform behaviour management practice.
- Access to advice of experienced schools who had successfully navigated similar challenges.
- In-person visits to schools and 'immersive' experiences into a similar reality to the one they were aspiring to create.
- Tailored feedback on policies and plans.

Mechanisms/ outcomes

Change mechanisms

- Discovery of what is possible and realistic.
- Increased awareness of requirements, particularly on the relevance of:
  - Behaviour culture
  - Consistency and routines
  - Timing
  - Changing staff relationships
- Increased confidence in already existing processes and plans.

Short-term outcomes

- Pupils, Parents and Workforce:
  - Increased understanding of, effective implementation and adherence to behaviour policy.
  - Increased interaction and discussion of behaviour data and policy (teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, SLT-teacher)
  - Belief in the benefits of the school's behaviour policy for pupils and school, colleagues and self.
  - Increased confidence in effectively managing behaviour and in leadership support.
- School-wide:
  - Clear and consistent overall approach to behaviour policy, new approach to teacher-pupil relationship.

Outcomes and impact

Medium-term outcomes

Pupils:
- Improved behaviour; fewer incidents of low-level disruption and bullying.
- Increased perceptions of safety, belonging, enjoyment of school, and sense of wellbeing.
- Positive attitudes to learning.
- Improved attendance, less truancy and increased punctuality.

Workforce:
- Less teaching / learning time lost to low-level disruption.

School / MAT wide:

Clear and consistent whole-school approaches to behaviour management with reasonable adjustments.

Impact

Sustained improvements to partner schools and MATs (post 2 years)

Pupils:
- Improved attendance, truancy and punctuality.
- Improved attainment and outcomes.

Workforce:
- Sustained behaviour management practices.
- Improved staff wellbeing.

School / MAT wide:
- Improved Ofsted ratings
- Sustained positive behaviour cultures.
- Increased 1st place preference in school applications.

1.3 Evaluation aims

In 2023, NatCen was commissioned by the DfE to continue the evaluation of this programme; building on the partially completed evaluation by Ecorys which included design of an initial Theory of Change and qualitative and quantitative data collection. The evaluation aimed to:

- determine whether the programme had met its strategic objectives and achieved its projected outcomes for schools, staff, and pupils

- understand how and why the intervention had (or had not) met its objectives, by developing and testing the programme's Theory of Change (ToC)

- investigate the change mechanisms triggered by the programme that produced the observed outcomes and impacts, examining variation across different schools and respondent groups

2. Methodology

This methodology chapter describes and explains the evaluation design choices in the three main work packages: qualitative case study work, surveys (initial and final), and Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).

2.1 Overall approach

The delivery of the Behaviour Hubs programme was complex. It included multiple intervention streams, was embedded in unique contexts and was affected by multiple different characteristics of lead and partner schools and MATs. As a result, the evaluation used a theory-based design, combining a Realist Evaluation with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to assess the impact of the programme.

Realist Evaluation is an approach that aims to explain programme outcomes based on so-called Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations (Pawson, 2013) (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In a Realist Evaluation, mechanisms refer to individual or organisational thinking, choices and behaviours that are considered directly responsible for programme outcomes. Mechanisms are what triggers change. In the Behaviour Hubs programme, mechanisms explain, for example, how programme delivery increased awareness of behavioural management strategies and how it affected school staff's priorities.

Context refers to resources, opportunities, and constraints that the individual or the organisation usually cannot fully control. Resources are pre-existing but sometimes modified by the intervention, for example, providing financial resources or opportunities for collaboration. In the Behaviour Hubs setting, two types of context are distinguished: background context and programme context. Background context includes factors such as school size, being a primary or secondary school, the distance between partner and lead schools, or the proportion of vulnerable pupils within them. Programme context includes the resources made available by the programme, for example training, and opportunities of interaction with lead schools.

It is an assumption of Realist Evaluation that Context affects whether, and the extent to which, Mechanisms are triggered; for example, the idea that the lessons learned by partner schools are affected by programme implementation as well as by their background context. Put differently, the CMO framing allows the evaluator to understand why, how, and for whom the intervention was effective (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Structure of Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) explanation
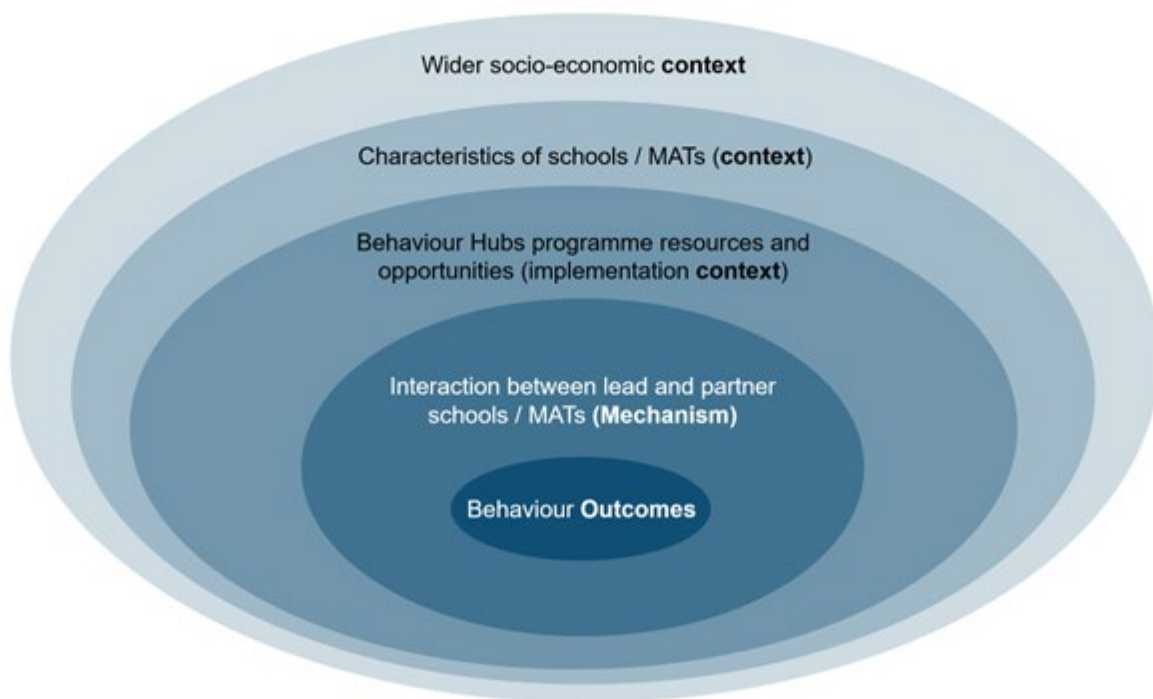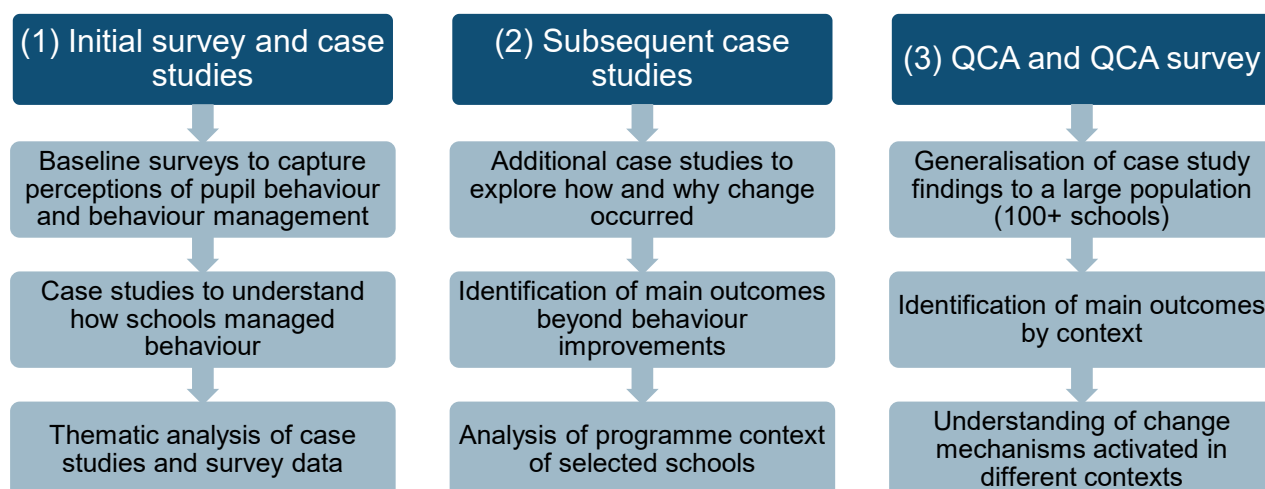

In addition to Realist Evaluation, Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Befani, Ledermann, & Sager, 2007) was used to systematise and generalise the findings. QCA is a method for systematic cross-case comparison, allowing the generalisation of rich, qualitative case-based information about which conditions lead to an outcome to a medium or even large number of cases (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). In this sense, it perfectly complements realist evaluation, where explanations typically refer to one or a handful of cases. The contexts and mechanisms of Realist Evaluation can act as conditions for a QCA model. This enables broader generalisations than would normally be allowed by typical case study work (Befani & Sager, 2006).

2.2   Phases of the evaluation

The evaluation process can be divided into three broadly distinct phases: a) initial survey and case studies, b) additional case studies, and c) QCA and QCA survey. In 2022, two baseline surveys were launched based on the preliminary Theory of Change to capture perceptions of teachers and pupils on pupil behaviour and related factors[10] (see more details in section 2.2.1). The related follow-up surveys were launched in 2023, in parallel with initial case study work (see section 2.3). This was followed by additional case study work in 2024 and 2025. Finally, a preliminary QCA analysis and a QCA survey were completed in the first half of 2025 (see Figure 3 and section 2.4).

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[10] For more details on the baseline surveys please see the Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs Programme, Interim Report (Befani, et al., 2024)

Figure 3: Phases of the evaluation

(1) Initial survey and case studies	(2) Subsequent case studies	(3) QCA and QCA survey
Baseline surveys to capture perceptions of pupil behaviour and behaviour management	Additional case studies to explore how and why change occurred	Generalisation of case study findings to a large population (100+ schools)
Case studies to understand how schools managed behaviour	Identification of main outcomes beyond behaviour improvements	Identification of main outcomes by context
Thematic analysis of case studies and survey data	Analysis of programme context of selected schools	Understanding of change mechanisms activated in different contexts

2.2.1 Baseline and follow-up surveys

Two types of surveys were designed and conducted. The first took place between 2022 and 2023, before the qualitative analysis was completed. Its purpose was to understand how schools managed behaviour and to capture perceptions of staff, teachers, and pupils before and after the intervention. The team collected data from staff (both teachers and members of SLT) and pupils during the first term at programme (baseline) and during the final term of the programme (follow-up)[11].

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[11] Baseline and follow-up surveys were administered to cohorts 1-5. Cohort 6 undertook a baseline survey only. Cohorts 7-9 did not participate in the online surveys. Baseline surveys took place at the beginning of the term that the cohort started. Follow-up surveys took place approximately eight to nine months after the baseline surveys.

Table 2: Programme participation by school term for different cohorts

Partner School Cohort	Start Date	Policy Launch	End Date
1	April 2021	September 2021	March 2022
2	September 2021	January 2022	July 2022
3	January 2022	April 2022	December 2022
4	April 2022	September 2022	March 2023
5	September 2022	January 2023	July 2023
6	January 2023	April 2023	December 2023
7	April 2023	September 2023	March 2024
8	September 2023	January 2024	July 2024
9	January 2024	September 2024	December 2024

Source: Department for Education management information

The evaluation collected data to understand how schools managed behaviour and the perceptions of staff, teachers and pupils before and after the intervention. Staff surveys were administered online to all teaching staff in partner schools, including teaching assistants. Schools were asked to self-administer the pupil survey to all pupils in their schools. Stakeholders completed online surveys during the first term of the programme (baseline) and again in the final term (follow-up). At baseline, staff respondents were 9,688 and pupil respondents 31,886. At follow-up, staff respondents were 4,235 and pupil respondents 18,635. Between baseline and follow-up, it was possible to match 1,290 staff respondents. The surveys asked about perceptions of misbehaviour, its frequency, and its impact on pupils, learning, and teachers. They also included questions on awareness of school behaviour policies and expectations for handling misbehaviour and positive behaviour.

These surveys also collected limited data on the schools' context. Pupil surveys collected data on pupil year group and gender, and staff surveys captured staff roles in the school. School identifiers were used to source additional contextual data on schools and MATs involved in the programme, such as school location, teacher and pupil numbers, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM).

Where possible, longitudinal analysis was conducted for the subset of staff respondents that could be paired between baseline and follow up surveys. In addition, cross-sectional analysis was conducted to improve the reliability of the conclusions. Full details of the analysis and sample sizes can be found in Section 2.2 of the interim report (Befani, et al., 2024).

2.3 Case studies

Two waves of qualitative data collection and analysis were completed for the evaluation case studies. Each case study included one lead school or MAT and at least one of their partner schools or MATs. The first wave was completed in 2023 and included nine case studies, seven of which comprised one lead school and two partner schools and the remaining two comprised one lead school and one partner school (a total of 16 partner schools). The second wave was conducted in early 2025 and covered, in addition to a MAT case study, seven case studies including nine partner schools. Of these, two case studies comprised one lead school and two partner schools and the remaining five comprised one lead school and one partner school. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the 25 partner schools involved in the case studies by key characteristics.

Table 3: Partner schools included in the qualitative research for both waves

School Type	Count
Primary	8
Secondary	13
Special School	2
Alternative Provision	2
Region	**Count**
East of England	3
North East	1
North West	4
London	1
South East	4
West Midlands	5
East Midlands	4
Yorkshire & Humberside	3
Support type/ cohort	**Count**
Cohort 1	3
Cohort 2	3
Cohort 4	10
Cohort 5	2
Cohort 7	3

Cohort 8	3
Cohort 9	1
Core	12
Extended	13

2.3.1 Data collection

Each case study involved a number of data collection encounters[12], including Senior Leadership Team (SLT) interviews and pupil and staff focus groups. The total number of qualitative data collection encounters was 138, from 25 partner schools from both waves.

Data collection involved school visits which included focus groups with teachers and pupils, while most individual interviews (with SLT staff in partner schools and lead schools) were delivered online.

One case study explored the experience of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). This case included a Lead MAT, two Partner MATs, and partner schools within the partner MATs. For the MAT case study, semi-structured online interviews were conducted with:

- two SLT members in the Lead MAT

- SLT members in two partner MATs and

- SLT members from two partner schools for each of the two partner MATs

Altogether, 84 partner school interviews, 32 lead school interviews, 5 parent focus groups, 9 staff focus groups and 17 pupil focus groups were conducted, resulting in 138 qualitative data sources.

The aims of the case study analysis were:

- to delve into the programme context of selected schools and the main outcomes achieved beyond improvements in behaviour. This included understanding what actions partner schools had taken prior to joining the programme and what actions they were taking as a consequence of the programme.

- to understand how and why change was occurring or had occurred. This included examining the role of lead schools, the interactions between lead and partner schools, other changes within partner schools not directly linked to the

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[12] A data collection encounter refers to a single, discrete interaction during which data was gathered from participants. It can refer to either an individual interview, a paired interview, or a focus group.

programme, and how partner schools used available resources—whether from the programme or elsewhere. These are described in more detail in section 4.

A qualitative analysis framework was used to organise the data from transcripts and interview notes. This facilitated thematic analysis[13], conducted using a mixed deductive/inductive approach. The thematic analysis was structured as follows:

- change mechanisms: how the partner schools and lead schools interacted, with details of knowledge transfer (what was learned in the interaction and how this learning took place)

- programme outcomes: aspects of the school approach to behaviour management which had changed as a result of the programme

- modified contexts: new action plans put in place by partner schools, how these had been implemented (including challenges to implementation), and why they were perceived to be conducive to change (or not)

- congruence of experience between partner and lead schools (including parent and pupil perspectives)

2.4 Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) can be used in Theory-Based evaluation to understand how and why a programme works. QCA combines well with a realist approach and is able to handle both small, medium, and large numbers of cases. For the evaluation, surveys and the qualitative case studies were designed to answer the key evaluation questions:

- has the programme met its strategic objectives and achieved its projected outcomes for schools, staff, and pupils?

- how and why has the intervention met (or not met) its objectives?

- which change mechanisms were triggered by the programme to produce the observed outcomes and impacts?

- what was the variation across different schools and respondent groups?

The analysis of the qualitative case studies in particular answered the second and third evaluation questions. It provided an in-depth understanding of the changes which had

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[13] Thematic analysis is an umbrella term for methods that involve processes of coding and theme development or identification. It can include coding for semantic/manifest/surface meaning and coding for latent/implicit/hidden meaning, and can be inductive or deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

occurred in the schools and the context in which they had materialised. However, following the case study analysis, it was difficult to generalise these findings and draw overall conclusions because, at 25 partner schools, the total number of case studies was relatively low despite the additional case study work. QCA was brought in to try and fill this gap.

The application of QCA was first attempted on the case studies between March and April 2025. The 25 partner schools included in the case studies were compared on key conditions identified from the analysis (such as general approach to behaviour management, use of behaviour monitoring data, etc.). Data was organised by school and conditions in a dataset, completing Step One (model specification, or identification of outcomes and explanatory conditions)[14] (Befani, 2016). Step Two (calibration), however, proved to be unsurmountable. QCA requires information on a list of conditions to be consistently available and comparable across case studies. Since the data collected was partially exploratory, it turned out to be insufficiently comparable, so a bespoke survey was designed to collect the required comparable data. In addition, more than 700 schools enrolled in the Behaviour Hubs Programme (with more than 650 completing the programme), so generalising findings required further coverage beyond the 25 partner schools included in the case studies.

2.4.1 The QCA survey

The second survey was designed specifically for the QCA to collect staff views on a pre-defined set of themes that had emerged from the previous qualitative case study analysis and was conducted between June and July 2025. Its aims were to 1) generalise the findings to a larger sample and 2) ensure a high level of comparability across a high number of cases. The survey consisted of 38 closed questions with one of two response options: either 1) ranking the degree to which a condition or outcome was present on a scale from 1 to 8, or 2) ranking a list of (usually 5) options in terms of importance. The rationale for choosing these scales is explained below under 'Calibration'.

Schools were encouraged to agree a single collective response so that the dataset collecting survey responses could be considered a QCA dataset, with one case (school) in each row. One of the survey questions was about how many staff members had contributed in building the survey response. The average number of staff contributing to each response was 3.15.

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[14] Applying QCA entails the following steps: 1) model specification; 2) calibrating conditions and outcomes; 3) performing the supersubset analysis; 4) performing the Boolean minimisation and optionally the INUS analysis; 5) interpreting the findings and considering possible iterations.

The tested QCA models: conditions and outcomes

One of the outcomes of interest in this evaluation, and the primary outcome of interest for the QCA survey, was change in pupil behaviour. This was investigated in the case studies and was the first question in all the surveys. The explanatory factors for the outcome were based on case study findings and were grouped into 7 broad categories, with a few sub-categories (Figure 4):

- approach to pupil behaviour management

- implementation of pupil behaviour policy

- governance of pupil behaviour policy

- role of the Behaviour Hubs programme

- characteristics of the Behaviour Hubs programme

    o programme activities

    o programme design

    o facilitating and hindering factors

- relationship with lead schools and other schools

- sustainability and external challenges

Figure 4: QCA survey themes / factors

Approach to pupil behaviour management	Implementation of pupil behaviour policy	Governance of pupil behaviour policy	Role of the Behaviour Hubs programme	Characteristics of the Behaviour Hubs programme	Relationship with lead schools and other schools	Sustainability and external challenges
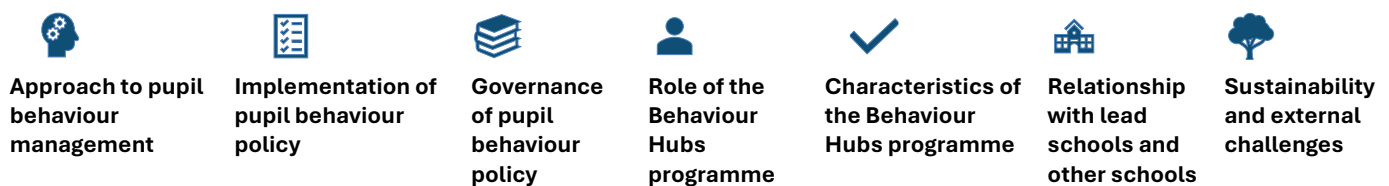
Detail on the structure of the survey and questions asked can be found in Annex 1.

Calibration

Both the case studies and the initial surveys had shown that staff tended to be extremely positive about the programme. Using a scale with a limited number of options (say, a 4-

point scale) would have risked receiving an extremely large number of 3s and 4s and make sufficiency analysis (which requires both positive and negative outcomes) difficult. Another QCA requirement was avoiding a mid-point (an odd scale). So, an 8-point scale was selected as the most appropriate under the circumstances.

This choice was validated by the responses received: for the primary survey outcome, change in pupil behaviour, for example, only 4 out of 110 responses scored less than 5, and around 90% of responses were either 6, 7, or 8. The 8-point scale allowed us to distinguish between "excellent", "very good", and "good" and calibrate the outcome condition (and most other conditions) by assigning "1" (meaning a positive outcome) to 7 and 8.

Analysis

QCA has limitations in terms of the number of conditions it can handle at the same time; in particular, 38 conditions are too many. It was therefore decided to divide the conditions into categories and repeat the analyses for each category. The outcome (change in pupil behaviour between before and after the programme) was then analysed against 10 different groups of conditions (see Annex 2 for details).

The conditions in each model were based on the case study findings which in turn served as a basis to formulate the survey questions (see Annex 4). For each model, three types of analysis were completed:

- superset analysis (or necessity analysis): provided information on which conditions are common in the most significantly improved schools (schools that observed significant improvements in pupil behaviour, see calibration section and findings below for details). This is helpful as these conditions can be seen as fundamental ingredients without which these improvements would be unlikely to materialise.

- subset analysis (or sufficiency analysis): provided information on which combinations of conditions are "winning recipes" in that they regularly bring about the most significantly improved outcomes across the sample. These conditions might not be necessarily required in themselves to achieve success (i.e. the outcome can be achieved in other ways as well).

- boolean minimisation: a tool to simplify the complex information in the dataset that makes it readable while allowing the key causal pathways to emerge. It reduces a dataset with dozens of long rows to a short list of simpler combinations, while preserving the key causal information.

Additional models were tested which include conditions related to the school context (type of school, type of support, region, school size, school's pupil-teacher ratio, and level of deprivation in the area). Table 4 shows how the context conditions were calibrated.

The analysis compared categories of schools mostly in terms of percentage of respondent schools that responded in a strong positive way to QCA survey questions, typically by selecting either 7 or 8/8. For example, comparing such percentages in small versus large schools. However, for the main QCA survey outcome (change in pupil behaviour), average responses (typically around 6.5) were also compared across various groups. These average values did not represent the % of schools who selected a certain value in the survey question, but rather the average response from 1 to 8, which was found to be between 6 and 7. This difference in how responses were analysed is due to the fact that more fine grained information was needed on the main QCA survey outcome (change in pupil behaviour) and that the outcome was not an explanatory factor and was not considered a QCA condition.

When reporting on the QCA survey findings, the average response on pupil behaviour change is sometimes compared across groups of schools (e.g., primary against secondary, large vs. small, etc.). The difference was tested with T-tests and relative significance levels are reported in footnotes. For this kind of differences, it is not appropriate to use the same significance levels used in traditional statistical inference where the only goal is to infer a population value from a sample value: here, the data needs to be interpreted as part of a larger evidence base complemented by previous surveys and qualitative evidence. This means that significance values of around 80% or sometimes even lower are worth reporting in this context, next to 90% or higher.

When reporting the QCA findings, mostly in dedicated white boxes across the text, the prevalence of certain responses in particular groups of schools is assessed as high or low. This is not tied to a fixed threshold (e.g. more than 50%) but is typically relative to either a) how schools from a comparative group responded, e.g. primary compared secondary schools; or b) how the same schools responded to other questions in the same group (e.g. the behaviour management group, or the behaviour policy governance group).

Table 4: Calibration of context conditions

Condition	Zero	One
School Type	Primary	Secondary
Type of Support	Core	Extended
Geographical Region	South (SE, SW, EoE, GL)	North (NE, Y&H, NW, EM, WM)
School Size	Small (<= 530 pupils)	Large (> 530 pupils)
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Low (<= 17)	High (> 17)
% pupils eligible for FSM (deprivation)	Low (<= 30%)	High (> 30%)

2.5 Limitations

This section illustrates methodological limitations of each phase.

Quantitative findings from the baseline and follow-up survey data provided an initial indication of the background contexts and perceived outcomes for the evaluation, as well as the extent to which the latter changed during programme implementation. However, caution is recommended in interpreting all the changes between baseline and follow-up in a causal sense, without additional evidence, for several reasons. Firstly, the analysis was not structured to reconstruct a counterfactual scenario. Secondly, these findings merely reflect perceptions from staff or pupils, and do not consider unconscious biases that may unknowingly influence perceptions of those who are invested in programme implementation (e.g. the so-called *sunk costs fallacy*[15]). Thirdly, those perceptions tend to be different for pupils and school staff, in line with the 2023-24 National Behaviour Survey (Department for Education, 2025), which weakens the construct validity of perception as an outcome measurement. Finally, only staff responses, and a limited number of them, could be individually paired between baseline and follow-up as well as collected in the QCA survey.

Some, but not all, of these limitations were mitigated by the QCA survey and the qualitative data. Here the programme was seen as one contributory factor among others, while change mechanisms and processes of change used generative causality to attribute findings to the programme and other factors, rather than isolating and precisely measuring the net effect of the intervention (although average perceived measures of change are provided). In addition, the QCA returned insights on causal necessity and causal sufficiency of some factors, increasing confidence that some of the relationships are indeed causal and rather than mere associations.

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[15] The sunk cost fallacy refers to individuals continuing a course of action despite knowing that abandoning it would be more beneficial, because they have already invested significant resources that cannot be recovered.

3. Findings: Behaviour outcomes in the programme partner schools

This chapter illustrates the improvements observed in the schools during and after enrolling in the Behaviour Hubs programme. Starting from change in pupil behaviour ratings, multiple programme outcomes are discussed such as changes in how schools manage behaviour, how they implement the behaviour policy, and in the school governance in relation to behaviour. In line with the realist approach and the evaluation questions, the chapter also includes explanations of why these changes were observed, and how they were linked to characteristics of the programme, as well as the school context and other factors outside the programme's sphere of influence.

The white boxes in this section include the QCA related findings. Where the findings refer to the "most significantly improved schools", this refers to schools that reported that behaviour had significantly improved on the QCA survey (those reporting either 7 or 8 on the 1-8 scale).

3.1 Behaviour ratings

Key findings from the analysis of behaviour ratings

- The evaluation found consistent positive change in the behaviour of pupils in Behaviour Hub partner schools, from both case study waves, and both types of staff surveys.

- The largest improvements were observed for schools with a low pupil-teacher ratio and schools belonging to the last three cohorts. And to a lesser extent, for schools on extended support, schools in low-deprivation areas, and large schools.

- The case studies showed that behaviour improvements were less marked for SEND pupils.

As interviews with senior leadership and teacher focus groups attest, most case study partner schools noted growing challenges with behaviour post-Covid before they joined the Behaviour Hubs programme. They consistently described how behaviour had generally worsened since pupils returned to school after the enforced home-schooling during lockdowns. Many schools described increases in pupil needs concerning mental health and growing incidents of truancy and poor attendance. Among the challenges, a higher number of SEND children was also mentioned.

Against this backdrop, the evaluation found consistent positive change in the behaviour of pupils in Behaviour Hub partner schools. Survey results from 2023 showed positive changes in the overall perception of pupil behaviour for schools amongst school staff (Figure 5) and pupils in schools with high levels of deprivation. . Schools receiving extended support and those with high deprivation levels showed the greatest positive change in behaviour ratings.[16]

Figure 5: Staff ratings of pupil behaviour at baseline and follow-up
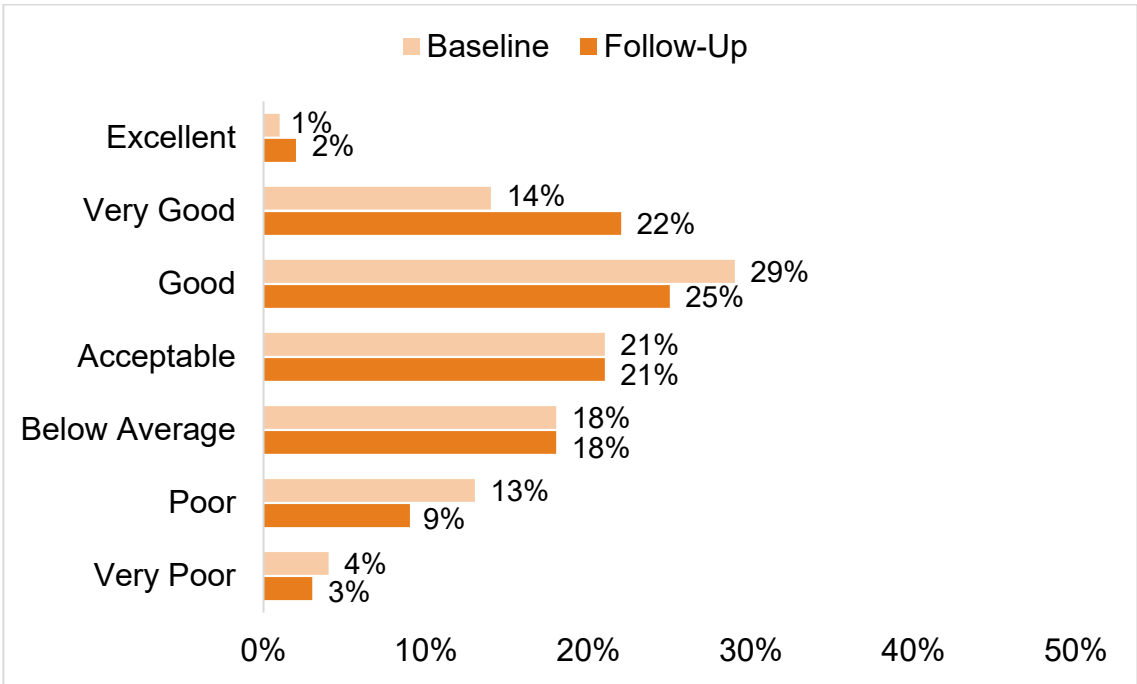
Base: Matched staff from cohort 1-5 across baseline and follow-up surveys (n=1,290).

Source: Longitudinal dataset. Staff baseline surveys and staff follow-up surveys – see Section 2.2.1.
Survey question: In general, how would you rate pupil behaviour in your school?

When asked to rate behaviour change between before and after the programme on a scale of 1 (behaviour has become significantly worse) to 8 (behaviour has significantly improved), the respondents from 105 schools of the QCA survey (2025) averaged 6.48 / 8. Such scores were higher[17] for the last three cohorts (6.59), schools on extended support (6.56), large schools (6.57), schools with lower pupil-teacher ratios (6.63), and schools situated in less deprived areas (6.56). All of these contextual factors affected the extent to which the programme worked.

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[16] See the Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs Programme, Interim Report (Befani, et al., 2024)
[17] One-tailed T-tests showed that the two means are different with: 90%+ probability for cohort and pupil-teacher ratio; 80%+ probability for deprivation level and school size, and 70%+ probability for type of support. See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.

The case studies demonstrated improvements across a range of 'levels' of behaviour, both inside the classroom and during breaks and transitions. Schools consistently reported a reduction in 'low-level' misbehaviours, such as talking in class, talking back to teachers and disorderly transitions between classrooms. 'High-level' disruptions were also reduced, often viewed as a result of better management and therefore less escalation of 'low-level' misbehaviours. Many case study partner schools reported reductions in the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions of pupils, and some reported reductions in levels of truancy.

However, these improvements in behaviour were not consistent across pupils. The case studies often highlighted smaller or negligible improvements for SEND and/or neurodivergent pupils, and pupils with complex needs, compared to the overall pupil population. School staff often attributed the misbehaviour of these pupils to an inability to regulate their emotions rather than any intention to misbehave. As a result, the schools behaviour policy were often unable to tackle these behaviours. Across the case studies, it was consistently acknowledged by SLT, teaching staff and even some pupils, that tailored and targeted support was required for these pupils. On a positive note, some schools described how overall improvements in pupil behaviour had freed up time for staff to focus on these children.

3.2 Change in Behaviour Outcomes

Key findings from the analysis of behaviour outcomes

The evaluation identified three main categories of changes linked to the programme: overall approach to behaviour management, implementation of behaviour policy, and behaviour policy governance:

- for behaviour management, the key changes concerned increased use of a standardised approach, of preventative approaches, and of rewards for good behaviour

- for policy implementation, the key changes concerned improvements in communicating the behaviour policy to teachers and pupils

- increased use and collection of behaviour monitoring data was particularly important for large schools and secondary schools

- for policy governance, the key changes were increased involvement of SLT and teaching staff

Substantially increased allocation of specific behaviour tasks to (new or existing) staff was the single most important factor to make a difference for the secondary schools with the largest improvements in pupil behaviour.

This section describes the factors that affected pupil behaviour that were targeted by the Behaviour Hubs programme. The term "behaviour outcome" is defined as a situation that the programme is attempting to influence. The Behaviour Hubs programme was never intended to affect the basic characteristics of schools that potentially affect pupil behaviour such as school type, size, and geographic area, but aimed instead to change practices, mindsets, and culture. The case studies returned evidence of several changes made by schools aimed to improve pupil behaviour, mainly in three aspects:

- approach to managing behaviour and content of behaviour policy

- implementation of behaviour policy

- behaviour governance and relationships

3.2.1 Approach to behaviour management and content of behaviour policy

Key findings from the analysis of behaviour management

- The evaluation found that, during and after enrolling in the programme, schools significantly increased:

    - adoption of a standardised approach to behaviour management

    - prevention of misbehaviour

    - use of rewards for good behaviour

- Rewarding good behaviour and increasing responsibilities of teaching staff in behaviour management appeared particularly effective for improving pupil behaviour.

The case studies showed that, upon enrolment in the programme, the partner schools were in different phases of their journeys in tackling pupil behaviour. Several had compliance-based systems designed around punishment, with little or no rewarding of good behaviour. In some of the schools, examples of de-escalation techniques appeared to focus on shame, with interventions performed relatively late in the process and without monitoring of early warning signs. In such contexts, pupils were largely deemed to be the main cause of disruption, which created a negative teacher-pupil relationship based on pupil-blaming.

In addition, staff sometimes regarded behaviour issues as separate from teaching and learning, and typically no holistic approach was taken. The typical intervention addressing misbehaviour would lead to temporary removal from the classroom. This caused poor lesson attendance and high amounts of lost learning time.

During the Behaviour Hubs programme, the schools included in the case study sample shifted their perspective on behaviour management and the content of their behaviour policy in the following ways:

- from punishing undesired behaviour to rewarding good behaviour

- from framing behaviour issues as separate from teaching and learning to adopting a holistic and restorative approach

- from reacting to misbehaviours once they occurred to taking a more proactive approach to preventing misbehaviour

- from placing responsibilities for mitigation and solving behaviour incidents on senior leadership teams and typically removing pupils from class, to engaging teachers more directly and encouraging de-escalation in class

The QCA survey confirmed most of these changes (Figure 6). In general, independently of reported change in pupil behaviour, participating schools mostly invested in creating behaviour standards (72% selected either 7 or 8/8 to assess the magnitude of this change, where 8 means that the use of a standardised approach to behaviour management had significantly increased), closely followed by increasing activities aimed at prevention (66% selected 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that focus on preventing misbehaviour had significantly increased); and increasing rewards (57%, where 8 means that rewarding good behaviour had significantly increased). The key changes are highlighted in bold in Figure 6.

The least investment was directed at increasing zero-tolerance approaches (18% selected 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the adoption of zero-tolerance measures had significantly increased) and SLT responsibility (31% selected 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that the responsibilities of the SLT had significantly increased).

For the most significantly improved schools, the largest behaviour management changes concerned increasing rewards and increasing responsibilities of teaching staff.

Figure 6: Behaviour management themes
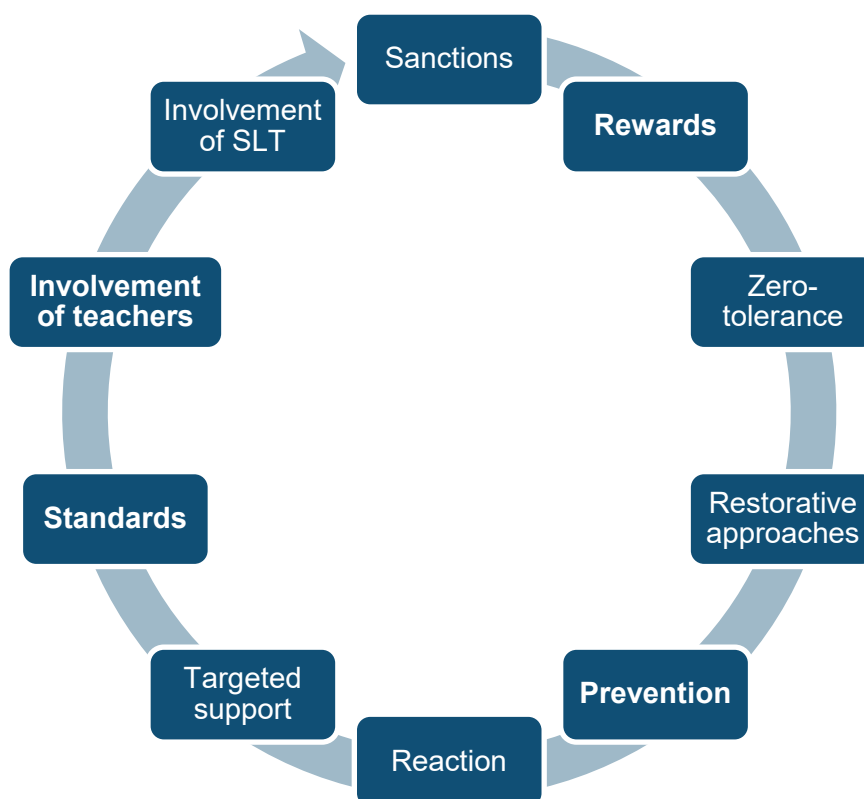
Rewarding positive behaviour

Schools reported an increased focus on rewarding positive behaviour rather than punishing undesirable behaviour (57% of respondent schools in the QCA survey selected either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that rewarding good behaviour has significantly increased). From the case study analysis, it was apparent that staff belief in the effectiveness of punishment weakened, and there was an increased emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour. Cross-sectional analysis of the staff survey showed that the proportion of staff who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "There is a culture of recognising and celebrating positive behaviour at our school" increased from 64% at the baseline survey to 70% at follow-up.

In practice, this meant that rewards for positive behaviour were created in schools that had no existing rewards structure. In schools that already had such a structure in place, increased efforts were made to ensure consistent implementation, increasing the quantity and type of positive behaviours that get rewarded and the number of pupils receiving rewards. The type of rewards given has also been diversified (positive reward points, star of the week, classroom praise, raffle tickets, recognition slips, achievement stickers, etc.). Some schools changed their approach to communicating behaviour to parents and reported that they now shared more information about positive behaviour. These changes were broadly confirmed in focus groups with pupils, most of whom could explain the positive rewards systems in place at their school.

The QCA survey showed that increasing rewards was the third most significant behaviour management change across all schools (57% selected either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that rewarding good behaviour had significantly increased), and even more widespread in extended support schools (64%) compared to core support schools (51%). It played a particularly important role for the most significantly improved large schools as well as the most significantly improved schools with a high pupil-teacher ratio.

Restorative practice and targeting

This increased focus on positive behaviour was often accompanied by a shift to restorative rather than zero tolerance behaviour management (52% of respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8 where 8 means the adoption of restorative practices and approaches has significantly increased). This is an approach to behaviour management that focuses on support and empathy instead of blaming pupils. For instance, as emerged during fieldwork, it may consist of having restorative conversations with pupils following a behaviour incident, as well as, or instead of, punishment. Some schools described how detention was reframed as an opportunity to give pupils time to reflect on their behaviour, in others the incidence or duration of suspensions were reduced to prevent pupils from missing out on learning opportunities. External circumstances, such as circumstances at home, were considered to understand the best way of dealing with

behaviour incidents. These changes were broadly confirmed in pupil focus groups, where most pupils described feeling more supported along their behaviour learning journey[18].

The QCA survey showed that, in general, adopting restorative approaches to behaviour management was more prevalent in primary schools (65% selected either 7 or 8/8 where 8 meant that the adoption of restorative practices and approaches had significantly increased) than in secondary schools (36%).

In some schools, new systems of differentiated sanctions were also put in place to take account of individual circumstances, informed by trauma-informed perspectives, rather than having the same system for all pupils (55% of respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8 to assess the extent of this change from before the programme, where 8 means the use of targeted support for specific pupils has significantly increased). To implement this, some schools reported benefiting from new data systems tracking pupil behaviour, which allowed staff to identify and support children exhibiting consistent negative behaviour (see also: continuous learning and data management in section 3.2.2).

More than half the schools across the QCA survey sample adopted a substantially more targeted approach after the programme (selecting 7 or 8/8, where 8 means the use of targeted support for specific pupils had significantly increased), but particularly schools in more deprived areas. Adopting a targeted approach was particularly important for the most significantly improved schools on core support, together with increasing staff responsibilities.

Proactively preventing misbehaviour

Following the Behaviour Hubs programme schools consistently reported adopting a proactive approach aimed at preventing poor behaviour, rather than merely reacting to incidents as they present themselves: 66% of QCA survey respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that the focus on preventing misbehaviour significantly increased. Schools introduced several measures to proactively prevent behaviour incidents, many intended to address incidents quickly, before they escalate to more serious behaviours. New routines were put in place, for example talking to parents early on or discussing behaviour with pupils in class weekly. Additionally, new systems of staggered sanctions were introduced, where low-level behaviours were dealt with immediately, rather than waiting until behaviour became more serious and inflicting heavier sanctions.

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[18] Pupils from a secondary school on extended support

Adopting preventative approaches was the second most selected choice across all schools in the behaviour management group of questions (66% of QCA survey respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the focus on preventing misbehaviour significantly increased), characterising extended support schools (71%) and small schools (70%) even more so than core support and large ones (both 61%).

Behaviour monitoring systems were often either strengthened or introduced to understand the causes of specific persistent behaviours and the contexts (e.g. classes and times of day) in which they arose. These systems also aimed to spot early warning signs and design tailored interventions or routines to prevent minor behaviour issues from escalating into serious incidents (see also: continued learning and data management in section 3.2.2).

Managing behaviour in classrooms

Staff from some of the case study partner schools reported a new willingness to solve behavioural issues and implement de-escalation strategies in class, rather than removing pupils from the classroom. This reduced the time pupils spent outside of the classroom and shifted the responsibility for tackling poor behaviour from senior leaders to classroom teachers (46% of QCA survey respondent schools assessed this change as 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the responsibilities of teaching staff in behaviour management have significantly increased). Moreover, for some of the staff engaged in the case studies, behaviour management was regarded with the same importance as teaching the curriculum. A more holistic approach was adopted, recognising the interconnectedness of teaching and learning and acknowledging that academic success could not be attained if poor behaviour persisted.

Some of the staff engaged in the case studies noted a shift from previous practices where only the SLT had the authority to remove pupils from classrooms. In some cases, where this shift occurred, pupils interacted with a 'reset manager' who prioritised principles of mental health and well-being over punishment and assisted the pupil in understanding what went wrong. The referral process, which required pupils to be taken out of the classroom by a member of staff, was reframed in some schools and was evident in new terminology. For example, in one school, the exclusion room was rebranded as the reset room.

Increasing teacher responsibilities in managing behaviour was much more frequently selected in the North (57% of QCA survey respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the responsibilities of teaching staff in managing behaviour had significantly increased) than in the South (33%). As for the schools reporting the most significant changes in pupil behaviour it appeared particularly beneficial for schools on core support and for large schools.

3.2.2 Implementation of behaviour policy

Key findings from the analysis of policy implementation

- The evaluation found that, during and after enrolling in the programme, schools:

    - simplified the language of their behaviour policy

    - improved the way they communicated the policy, particularly to staff and pupils, but also to parents

    - communicated the policy more frequently

    - applied the policy more consistently

    - made more frequent use of behaviour monitoring data

- Improving communication of the policy to staff and pupils appeared particularly effective for improving pupil behaviour

All schools included in the case study sample reported substantial changes in how they implemented their behaviour policy and explained why those changes had become possible. When first enrolled on the programme, most schools reported having at least some elements of a system in place for tackling and monitoring behaviour. For example, staff reported setting out expectations at the beginning of the year, or having tried approaches like Thrive[19], 123 Magic for Teachers[20], or the CPOMS[21] system to record behaviour related events. However, according to staff engaged in the case studies, these activities had not led to significant improvements in pupil behaviour for several reasons. These included:

- the lack of an agreed definition of good or poor behaviour, which made teacher judgments of good or poor behaviour subjective; and the absence of a scale measuring behaviour severity or desirability

- the lack of awareness of behaviour approaches in use, and poor communication of these approaches resulting in teachers and children's lack of understanding
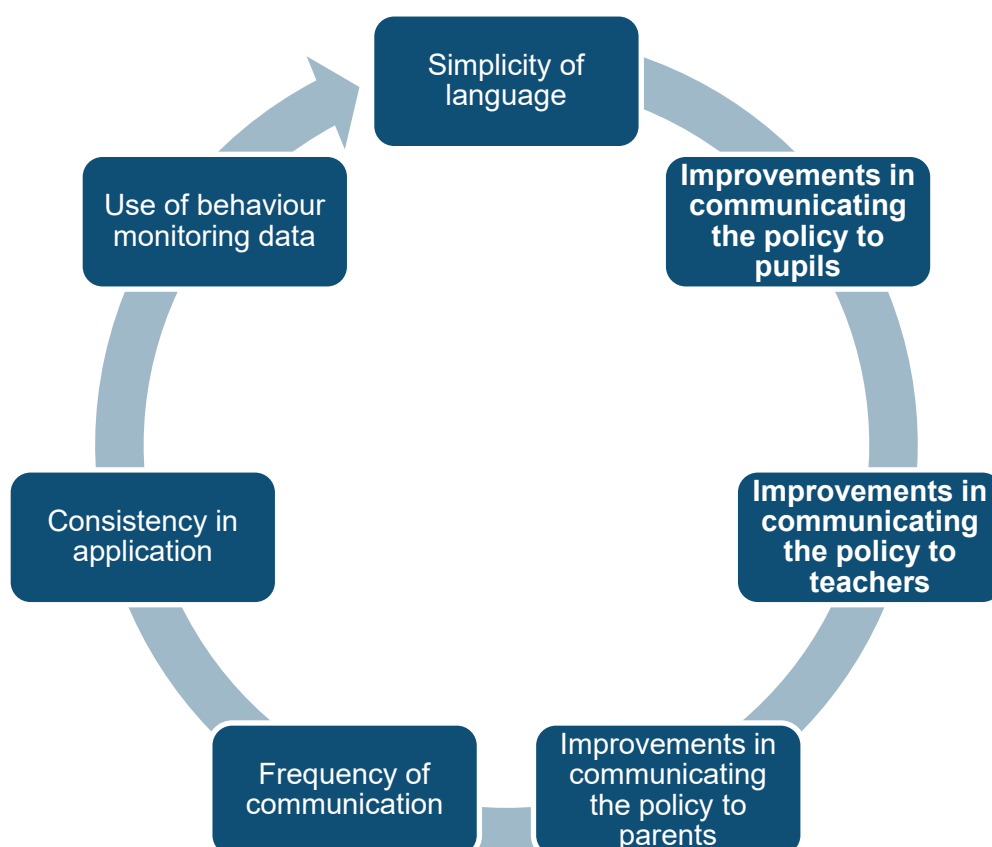
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[19] https://www.thriveapproach.com/
[20] https://www.123magic.com/positive-parenting-solutions/teachers
[21] https://www.cpoms.co.uk/

- differences in teachers' approaches to de-escalation and in severity of teachers' reactions to similar behaviour incidents, creating confusion and uncertainty (and hence anxiety) in children, distracting from learning

"Staff need constant reminding of the policies and the children need constant reminding of behavioural expectations" – *Partner school SLT, Primary school on core Support*

Figure 7: Behaviour policy implementation themes

Simplicity of language

Improvements in communicating the policy to pupils

Improvements in communicating the policy to teachers

Improvements in communicating the policy to parents

Frequency of communication

Consistency in application

Use of behaviour monitoring data

Many case study partner schools reported changes in policies to formalise their new approach to behaviour management. However, to contribute to positive change it was said that the policies needed to be systematically and consistently implemented. The emerging themes revolved around:

- improved clarity of behaviour policies

- improved communication with staff and pupils

- improved consistency in the application of the behaviour policy

The QCA survey showed that, in terms of policy implementation, schools invested most in improving how the behaviour policy was communicated to pupils and staff (~73% of respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8 where 8 was the behaviour policy was communicated significantly better to staff / pupils). This was true irrespective of the extent to which pupil behaviour improved. Figure 7 highlights these key changes in bold.

As for the schools who saw the largest improvements in pupil behaviour according to the QCA survey responses, the vast majority (91%) declared to have substantially improved the way the policy is communicated to pupils and to a lesser extent to staff (87%). Suggesting it is difficult to be successful in improving behaviour without improving communication to staff and pupils.

More generally, all the factors included in the policy implementation group (see Figure 7) appeared very relevant for the most significantly improved schools, particularly consistency, all types of communication, and communication frequency.

Improved clarity of behaviour policies

Before schools joined the programme, both staff and pupils engaged in the case studies often found the behaviour policy to be lacking clarity, frequently describing it as "complicated" or "unclear". They stressed that policies were ambiguous, didn't clearly set out behavioural expectations for pupils and were open to interpretation. The lack of clarity left the policy vulnerable to being inconsistently applied by staff and misunderstood by pupils. Pupils in some schools were unable to articulate the rules before the schools joined the programme.

Staff were able to provide several examples of how the clarity on the behaviour policy improved after the programme. In particular the new policies were more explicit in describing poor behaviour and associated consequences, as well as good behaviour and behaviour expectations. Behaviour expectations were reported to be more clearly outlined post-Behaviour Hubs, including types of behaviour that were missing from the previous policy. The policies often also included more prescriptive escalation systems detailing every step of the process. The revised policies were often accompanied by the delivery of a new "behaviour curriculum" to explicitly teach pupils what good behaviour looks like, rather than assume existing knowledge.

Staff described how the revised policies often used clearer and simpler language. This included the removal of jargon and symbols, replaced by descriptions in plain English. For example, in one school[22] detentions had been renamed "resolutions" because of their newly constructive nature; in another the C1 to C4 grading system was rebranded with associated plain English nouns "reminder, warning, consequence, assistance"; and in another a multitude of behaviour coding categories had been renamed uniformly as

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[22] Secondary school on core support

"disruption of learning"[23]. Pupils often described how the behaviour policy had been visualised through behaviour charts displayed around school, and referenced the clear language being used in them.

In the vast majority of schools visited, pupils were able to give several examples of positive and poor behaviour, and the associated consequences. Pupils often gave similar examples that aligned with the behaviour policy and management approach as described by staff.

> The QCA survey showed that substantial improvements in simplicity of language took place mostly in primary schools (65% selected either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the behaviour policy had become significantly easier to understand vs. 43% for secondary schools), schools on extended support (62% vs. 49%), schools in the North (60% vs. 48%), and to some extent in schools in more deprived areas (60% vs. 52%).
>
> Simplifying the policy's language played an important role for the most significantly improved primary schools (combined with increased consistency) and the most significantly improved schools in the South (combined with increased communication to staff).

Improved communication with staff and pupils

The case studies analysis highlighted that, after the Behaviour Hubs programme, many schools made improvements in the way rules were communicated to teachers, pupils and parents. The communication put particular emphasis on visualisation, simplicity of language, and repetition / reiteration / reinforcement.

> The QCA survey showed substantial improvements in how schools communicated the behaviour policy to staff (73% selected either 7 or 8/8 where 8 was "communicated significantly better"), pupils (74%) and parents (52%).

The case studies showed that the way in which the behaviour policy was communicated was closely linked to staff and pupils' perception of the clarity of the policy. Before the programme, knowledge of the behaviour policy was taken for granted in some schools and so it was not regularly communicated or discussed. Rules were often discussed only at the beginning of the academic year and not properly explained to allow staff and pupils to understand why the rules had been set in the way they had. In one school, the policy was said to be "passive", that the school didn't "live the policy": "it was just something put in a drawer, forgotten"[24].

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[23] Middle school on extended support
[24] Partner school SLT, Middle school on extended support

Among the schools responding to the QCA survey, substantial improvements in communicating the policy to staff were particularly observed in the most significantly improved primary schools, as well as the most significantly improved schools in the South.

Substantial improvements in communicating the policy to pupils was particularly common in the North. In the South, however, it seemed very important for improving behaviour as it was present in all the most important successful causal pathways looking at changes in policy implementation.

The case studies presented several examples of how, following the Behaviour Hubs programme, behaviour policies were communicated more frequently with staff. For example, all-staff CPID events (e.g., on INSET days, or "Training Tuesdays", "Focus Fridays"[25]) were organised to launch new behaviour policies, update the rules and practice behaviour scenarios. Beyond these ad-hoc events, behaviour was discussed more regularly such as in weekly staff meetings (e.g. "Friday morning briefings"[26]) and emails (e.g., "behaviour bulletins"[27] with links to behaviour policy and curriculum). In some schools, these regular communication channels were used as an opportunity to share behaviour data and targets and identify pupils who may need additional support. There was a view that "overcommunication" worked for both pupils and staff and encouraged consistency (see also section below on consistency)[28].

While frequency of communication had clearly improved in many schools compared to the pre-programme (56% of respondent schools assessed this change as either 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the behaviour policy has been communicated significantly more frequently), staff members in some schools believed it was not yet sufficient. Staff from one school noted that capacity constraints were preventing schools from more solidly embedding consistent behaviour management systems. Similarly, not all staff members felt that the "overcommunication" of the policy worked: one teaching assistant mentioned being overwhelmed by a high number of documents being sent that they were expected to read and sign in their own time.

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[25] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support
[26] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support
[27] Partner school staff member, Middle school on extended support
[28] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support

According to QCA survey respondents, substantial increased frequency with which the policy is communicated was observed a lot more frequently in primary (65% selected 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the behaviour policy was communicated significantly more frequently) than secondary schools (45%). Furthermore, this change seemed necessary to achieve the best behaviour change results in primary schools together with improved communication to staff. For the most significantly improved secondary schools, it was often combined with increased consistency.

According to staff engaged in the case studies, after the programme schools were using more varied and frequent methods to communicate the behaviour policy with pupils**.** Assemblies were an important way for schools to communicate the behaviour rules to pupils. In most case study schools, pupils were introduced to the sanctions and rewards systems at the start of year or start of term assembly. Some schools also reported creating special thematic assemblies every half term (one of these dubbed "Operation Reset"[29]) or incorporating behaviour into regular assembly agendas. Signage was also consistently used around schools to remind pupils of rules and the reward/sanction scales. Inside classrooms, teachers were said to model good behaviour in front of children to convey expectations as clearly as possible. The introduction of a behaviour curriculum in many schools was viewed as beneficial because it ensured that behaviour rules and expectations were taught consistently.

While improvements were clear, not just in terms of pupils understanding the rules but also why they had been set, some schools still felt that the new rules needed to be communicated even more consistently to pupils. In the focus groups, some pupils claimed to be disciplined without understanding why or what rule they had broken.

Finally, most schools tried to engage parents to communicate the policy, but success was mixed: some schools successfully operated a monthly newsletter for parents that they used to communicate behaviour-related information; others attempted to organise parents' events to introduce the new policy but registered low turnouts. Barely more than half of the QCA survey respondent schools denoted this change with 7 or 8/8 (52%, lowest percentage in the implementation policy group, where 8 means that the policy was communicated significantly better to parents).

Improved consistency in the application of the behaviour policy

Many SLT members engaged in the case studies reported that, at the start of their Behaviour Hubs journey, there was inconsistency in the application of the school's behaviour policy. This related to differences in teachers' approaches to de-escalation and in the severity of teachers' reactions to similar behaviour incidents. This inconsistency created confusion amongst pupils, worsening behaviour. Inconsistency would emerge,

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[29] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support

for example, in whether teachers would attempt to solve incidents in class or would call for support outside of class; in whether they logged the incidents into the information system or not; in how they used awards and sanctions (e.g. awarding different amount of points linked to similar behaviours, or in the numbers of warnings given before taking action), and in using different methods to attract pupils' attention in class. With different teachers applying their own sets of rules before the programme, and in some cases being granted different sanctioning powers, there were a lot of rules for pupils to learn. In some cases, this was exacerbated by high staff turnover.

Staff explained that clarity and communication were important to achieve consistency allowing teachers less room for interpretation and individual judgement. Consistent and clear expectations were reported to lead to less confrontation and negotiation with pupils, leaving teachers feeling more supported. Consistency was viewed by some staff as the key to attain good pupil behaviour and achieve improvements in terms of teaching and learning. Consistency was also important because some pupils, according to staff, exploited inconsistencies to create disruption. To improve consistency schools introduced new tools, ideas, processes, and procedures. Namely, they:

- created and disseminated new, agreed definitions of good and poor behaviour

- introduced and disseminated new scales to assess behaviour severity / desirability

In the longitudinal analysis of staff survey responses, the percentage of staff positively rating consistency and application of rules[30] improved 6 percentage points between baseline and follow-up (from 86% to 92%) (Figure 8). On comparison at baseline and follow-up[31] the proportion of staff agreeing or strongly agreeing that "Behaviour rewards and sanctions are used fairly and effectively with all pupils and classes" increased from 39% to 52% between baseline and follow-up. The largest positive changes were observed in schools with higher deprivation levels and in schools on extended support.

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[30] A composite variable was created by merging five staff questions regarding implementation of policy and application of rules.
[31] Unpaired samples

Figure 8: Percentage of staff reporting positively on the consistency and application of behaviour rules at baseline and follow-up
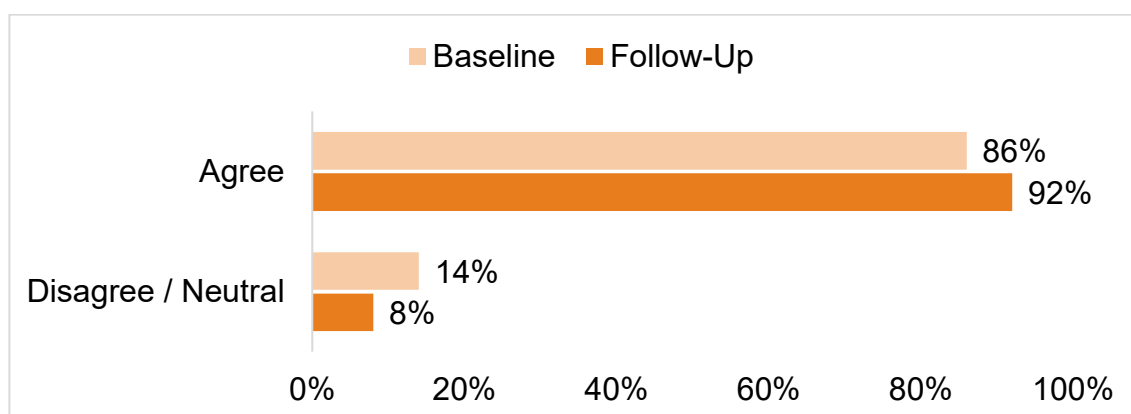
Improvements in consistency were reported by staff in virtually all case study partner schools. Staff in most schools reported a better understanding of the behaviour policy and how to apply the behaviour rules after the programme. As evidence of this improvement, participants in staff interviews and focus groups pointed to 1) the fact that the tracking system showed a balanced distribution of sanctions and rewards across different teachers (and across classes as well) and 2) staff were able to identify a limited number of areas that still need improvement, compared to a previous situation where problems were generalised. The presence of whole-school structure and routines were viewed as critical for ensuring consistency, for example the fact that the warnings / sanctions system was embedded across the whole school and used by all staff, including teaching assistants, facilities staff, pastoral staff, Learning Support Assistants, and permanent as well as visiting staff.

In the QCA survey, 59% of respondent schools selected either 7 or 8/8 (where 8 means the behaviour policy was applied significantly more consistently) to assess the magnitude of their positive change in consistency with which the policy is applied. Substantial increased consistency in how the policy was applied was observed particularly in more deprived areas (70% selected either 7 or 8/8).

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[32] Survey questions: (1) There is a clear vision of what is expected and meant by good behaviour. (2) The policy, rules and routines are easy to follow. (3) All staff apply the behaviour rules and procedures as set out in our vision and policy. (4) It is clear how I should apply the behaviour rules consistently and fairly across the school environment, including making reasonable adjustments. (5) Behaviour rewards and sanctions are used fairly and effectively with all pupils and classes. Responses were along a 5-point Likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The binary indicator was coded 1 if respondents agreed or strongly agreed with any of the statements, and 0 otherwise.

Some pupils also confirmed that consistency had improved, saying for example that all teachers gave feedback and the same type or number of rewards for good behaviour, follow the behaviour system, and were fair to everybody. However, pupils in every school included in the sample were still able to point to areas and situations of inconsistency in teachers' management. According to some pupils, teachers' management continued to be affected by teachers' individual personalities and judgements, the day's circumstances, and their role. They said some teachers were less patient than others, stricter than others or tended to shout more than others. Some responded to incidents immediately while others waited for the second complaint.

Similarly, pupils reported inconsistency in how teachers handled different age groups, their favourite pupils, or previous history of disruption, being less strict with younger and favourite pupils. Some teachers were described as stricter with pupils who were often disruptive and more lenient with those who rarely misbehaved, while others had lower expectations for the worst-behaved and were stricter with more well-behaved pupils. The consequences of behaviour were said to be inconsistent, for example some teachers giving out sweets instead of merits, positive reward points instead of team points or giving a warning before disciplining while others move to the latter directly. Pupils described instances where teachers missed several incidents of poor behaviour happening at once. As a result, they only punished the behaviour they saw, while other incidents went unnoticed. Finally, pupils described how some teachers interacted more with parents than others, and some consulted pupils before informing parents while others didn't.

Minor remaining areas of inconsistency also emerged from staff interviews and focus groups. These largely echoed the concerns raised by pupils regarding lack of flexibility in dealing with SEND pupils, individual teachers being particularly strict, and some roles applying policy less consistently (the non-teaching staff, support staff, and teaching assistants). It was remarked that non-teaching staff needed more time to learn the new rules and develop sufficient confidence to apply them. More generally, staff were said to have different abilities to form relationships with pupils, and some needed more support from the SLT than others.

In one case, inconsistency was considered desirable. Teachers were expected to adjust rules for pupils with additional needs, such as ADHD, and were reported to be too rigid and not flexible enough. Some teachers reported that parents of SEND pupils expressed concerns about a greater emphasis on standardisation. They feared that this approach might lack the flexibility and appropriateness required to address the additional needs of their children. Such concerns were appeased in time as parents witnessed the improvements in behaviour and school environment brought on by standardisation, and how such improvements eventually brought benefits to the entire pupil body, including their children.

Continuous learning and data management

In interviews and focus groups staff reflected on how monitoring and feedback systems changed after the programme. For example, some schools had started tracking how teachers responded to behaviour incidents. Before the programme, some schools had no formal system to record behaviour incidents or how they were being managed. More than half of QCA survey respondent schools (52%) rated this change as either 7 or 8/8 compared to before the programme (where 8 means that the use of behaviour monitoring data and feedback systems had significantly increased).

Senior Leaders reported using this data to both measure consistency and to intervene if they noticed anomalies or patterns regarding pupil behaviour or teacher responses. Some schools also kept records of pupil reflection forms, which prevented teachers from needing to write up all the details of the incident, saving them time and supporting their wellbeing and buy-in.

Schools reported different frequencies with which this data was reviewed and discussed, but the creation and use of such systems seemed common.

Changes in use and collection of behaviour monitoring data varied a lot depending on the context. Large schools (67%) reported substantial increases (7 or 8/8 where 8 means the use of behaviour monitoring data and feedback systems had significantly increased) much more often than small schools (36%); similarly to secondary schools (62%) vs. primary schools (42%) and to schools on extended support (60%) vs. schools on core support (46%).

This change seems to have made one of the biggest differences for large schools, as it featured prominently in the most significantly improved large schools.

3.2.3 Behaviour governance and relationships

Key findings from the analysis of governance and relationships

The evaluation found that, during and after enrolment in the programme:

- schools significantly increased involvement of SLT in designing, developing, and testing the behaviour policy

- involvement of teaching staff also increased albeit to a lesser extent

- substantially increased involvement of pupils and parents in designing, developing, and testing the behaviour policy was still rare

- substantially increasing allocation of specific behaviour tasks to (new or existing) staff made a significant difference for improving behaviour in secondary schools

Upon programme launch, some staff engaged in the case studies observed that responsibilities for behaviour rested predominantly with the SLT rather than being distributed across the school staffing structure. Additionally, teachers did not seem to engage in regular discussions about behaviour either among themselves or with pupils and parents. Teachers typically had minimal involvement in making decisions regarding behaviour policies, and, more broadly, pupils were not included in school governance processes at all.

Following the programme, many case study partner schools reframed their governance mechanisms and the way staff interacted with other staff, pupils, and parents regarding behaviour, by introducing the following changes:

- teachers gained more responsibility for managing behaviour in class, rather than delegating to SLT

- teachers were given more opportunities to discuss behaviour policy with the SLT and other teachers, and mentor other staff

- teachers were given opportunities to directly input into behaviour policy and pilot new ideas while the responsibilities of different staff profiles were clarified

- teachers engaged more proactively with parents, for example in communicating the new behaviour rules

For the governance theme, the QCA survey did not fully confirm the case study findings and found that, in general, independently of changes in pupil behaviour, schools made the most substantial behaviour policy governance changes in increasing involvement of SLT (52% indicated an increase of 7 or 8/8, where 8 means the SLT were involved significantly more frequently), followed by involvement of teaching staff (32%). The least frequent substantial changes concerned involvement of pupils (19%) and parents (11%).

Increased involvement of SLT or teaching staff in governance of the behaviour policy also strongly featured in the analysis of the most significantly improved schools.

Changes in responsibility for managing behaviour and developing the policy

Following the Behaviour Hubs programme staff engaged in the case studies described how the SLT had transitioned from a situation where they held sole and full responsibility for managing behaviour to a more convening role. SLT still retained key responsibilities, such as writing the policy itself (after taking multiple inputs into account) and being on hand to manage 'extreme' behaviours, but teachers (including teaching assistants) were empowered to deal with situations in class rather than delegating to the SLT. Teachers also reported feeling more comfortable about the fact that the increasingly detailed behaviour policy depersonalised their response to misbehaviour and prevented pupils from seeing it as a personal battle between teacher and pupil.

Substantially increased involvement of teaching staff (as assessed by 7 or 8/8 by respondent schools, where 8 means that teaching staff were involved significantly more frequently when it came to designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy) was one (32%) of the two most important factors overall in terms of governance changes recorded by the QCA survey, in all schools as well as in the most significantly improved ones.

It was particularly common in primary schools (44% vs. 19%), schools in more deprived areas (46% vs. 24%), in small schools (40% vs. 25%), in schools with a high pupil-teacher ratio (39% vs. 26%), and in the South (37% vs. 28%).

As for the most significantly improved schools, increased involvement of teaching staff was important for the most significantly improved primary schools, and large schools.

Some staff who engaged in the case studies claimed that the SLT was more responsive and supportive after the programme. In some cases, reportedly because the increased responsibility of teaching staff freed up time for SLT to engage in more complex cases. In others because of improvements in the communication systems used by teachers to request support. The new practices, such as using phones and / or the "TeamSOS" app to alert the SLT that a child might need removal from the classroom, allowed the SLT to quickly intervene.

The QCA survey showed that the SLT was still very much engaged after the programme: substantially increased involvement of SLT (52%) was the other most important factor overall in terms of governance changes, after increased involvement of teaching staff, including for the most significantly improved schools.

In general, the biggest changes in this sense were observed in the North (60% vs. 41%), while the change seemed very important for the most significantly improved schools in less deprived areas.

In order to address the demands of the new behaviour policy, some schools created new dedicated roles tasked with behaviour-related duties (for example, Behaviour Lead positions, particularly the MATs), or increased staff capacity to address behaviour in other ways. Many case study partner schools restructured senior leadership or pastoral teams, bringing in new staff (e.g. a new deputy head) or assigning new behaviour tasks to existing staff (for example, increasing the hours they work on behaviour-related activities). Some schools found that the middle leadership had a strong role to play in the transformation, as the MLT started to closely collaborate with the SLT, for example in strengthening consistency or disseminating messages.

Substantially increased allocation of specific behaviour tasks to (new or existing) staff (as assessed by 7 or 8/8, where 8 means the number of staff (FTE) with a dedicated behaviour role significantly increased) was selected by 25% of QCA survey respondent schools and was more prevalent in the North (32% vs. 17%), and in schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios (31% vs. 19%).

It was the single most important factor to make a difference for secondary schools in improving pupil behaviour (the one constant presence among high variation in successful pathways).

Discussing behaviour

In general, staff who engaged in case studies reported that there was more discussion around behaviour and exploration of what underpins pupil behaviour as a result of the programme. Staff reported being given more opportunities to express their opinions and share experiences and information about behaviour management. Specific examples included meeting regularly to discuss behaviour data, what is working well and less well, and to ensure everyone is up to date with the latest changes in the rewards / sanctions system.

Some schools also implemented additional support for new staff or staff needing support. More specifically, a buddying system was set up in one school to ensure consistent application of the behaviour policy, where teachers who were successfully implementing the new rules could support those who were not. Moreover, to ensure that staff turnover

did not undermine the progress made, behaviour training was embedded in the induction / onboarding process for new teachers.

Co-creating and trialling the behaviour policy

After the programme, staff were more involved in different stages of the behaviour policy design, implementation, and management. Staff described being engaged in various forms and types of consultations and being able to contribute ideas towards shaping and refining the behaviour policy. Staff believed it was important for them to be involved as it improved their understanding of the policy as well as developed buy-in. Some schools went as far as changing their performance management systems to include behaviour as one of the criteria that teaching staff were assessed against.

A number of events and processes were set up to collect input from staff: staff meetings, INSET days, weekly working lunches, surveys, working groups. Staff were asked for input on different aspects of the behaviour policy, such as what the major behaviour challenges were in the school, how to define 'levels' of good and poor behaviour and what school routines should look like.

In addition to being consulted on writing or rewriting the policy, staff were involved in testing the new policy, soft-launching it to see how it worked, which gradually enabled staff and pupils to adjust and get used to the new rules. Staff then fed back on what worked well and what didn't, and the feedback was used to revise the policy. For example, in one school, a new system of reward stickers was initiated by a headteacher and trialled by two teachers; the headteacher then proceeded to gather feedback from the teachers and pupils involved in the trial, with a view to rolling out the system to the whole school. Staff were also involved in a process of continuous improvement where they were regularly consulted on whether policies were working and invited to discuss behaviour monitoring data.

Generally, staff engaged in the case studies felt that there were increasing opportunities for them to feedback, that they could provide honest feedback and that their feedback was listened to and taken onboard. However, not all staff felt listened to to the same extent; for example, one teaching assistant felt that they did not have the opportunity to discuss the policy and that there was no one championing the policy to whom they could go with questions. They reported having received training on their first day but that there had been no follow up.

In addition, pupils in some schools reported that they had also been consulted and provided input into the new behaviour policy and its implementation. Some SLT members claimed to have worked closely with pupil working groups to collect feedback. For example, in one case the pupil council fed back that some year groups needed further training on the new corridor movement system, which the school then organised. In other

cases, pupils were allowed to make their own proposals for new rules and were consulted on the school values. Pupils unanimously thought it was fair that they, too, were consulted.

The QCA survey showed that substantially increased involvement of pupils was not widespread: only 19% of respondent schools reported it (selecting 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that pupils were significantly more frequently involved in designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy) and was observed mostly in small schools (24% vs. 14% in large schools). It was also observed substantially more in schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (29% vs. 9%) and areas with high deprivation (24% vs. 16%).

Involving pupils in the policy was very important for the most significantly improved schools on core support.

Engaging with parents

Staff not only started interacting more often with other staff on behaviour matters, but also with parents. Some SLT staff engaged in fieldwork claimed to have organised dedicated events or workshops to make parents aware of their new behaviour system, and of the language being used in school to describe and sanction behaviour. Expectations were thus not only clarified among teachers and pupils, but also with parents. In some schools, teachers reported that parents had begun adopting the same language as the behaviour policy, which improved pupils' understanding of the behaviour expectations. In other schools, parents were contacted at an earlier point about their child's behaviour, without waiting for matters to escalate into more serious incidents.

The case studies also revealed that some partner schools, however, struggled with engaging parents. In one case, consultations with parents were attempted (for example sending out questionnaires or setting up dedicated meetings) but deemed to have been only moderately successful, with limited parental engagement.

The QCA survey showed that substantially increased involvement of parents was rare (only 11% selected 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that parents were involved significantly more frequently in designing / developing / testing the policy) and was observed mostly in the North (15% vs. 7%), in primary schools (15% vs. 6%), in small schools (14% vs. 8%), and in schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (17% vs. 4%).

In the South, parents' involvement changed very little for the most significantly improved schools, while it was more important for the most significantly improved schools on core support.

4. Findings: Did the programme work?

This chapter addresses the extent to which the programme worked and the reasons why the changes described in the previous chapter took place. It investigates the contribution of the Behaviour Hubs programme and broader contextual conditions of the schools. It is organised in five main sections. The first assesses the extent to which the programme worked. The second explores the change mechanisms or explanations of why outcomes were achieved. The third describes the role played by the programme in triggering these change mechanisms. The fourth reflects on other internal and external factors influencing success. Finally, the fifth outlines the most typical pathways that schools have followed depending on their contexts.

The white boxes in this section include the QCA related findings. Where the findings refer to the "most significantly improved schools", this refers to schools that reported that behaviour had significantly improved on the QCA survey (those reporting either 7 or 8 on the 1-8 scale).

4.1 Extent to which the programme worked

Key findings on the extent to which the programme worked

There was strong evidence that pupil behaviour, and other key outcomes improved following the programme. There is also evidence that some of the observed changes were caused directly by the programme, for example:

- reframing the school's priorities due to the programme caused significant improvements in pupil behaviour, since the mechanism was not selected by the least successful schools

- individual motivation of staff was necessary to achieve significant behaviour improvements, since it was highly prevalent in the most significantly improved schools, and relatively uncommon in the least successful schools

- experiencing external challenges led to relatively poor results in behaviour improvement. None of the most significantly improved schools encountered substantial external challenges

The before/after comparison cannot be strictly considered evidence that nothing else has influenced changes outside of the programme. However, the evidence that pupil behaviour and other key outcomes improved after programme implementation was completed, as assessed by school staff, is overwhelming (see section 3). If behaviour

ratings had only been influenced by staff's biases, they would be more similar across different contexts, while differences among these, sometimes even substantial, were observed. Moreover, the QCA analysis compared the most successful with the least successful cases, which allowed the evaluator to build claims of causal necessity and causal sufficiency for some of the models tested. Moreover, the QCA results can be considered key ingredients of robust causal explanations covering 100+ partner schools. For example:

- whenever schools placed a strong emphasis on how the programme reframed their priorities, they also reported improvements in pupil behaviour. Consistent with this, this mechanism was not selected by the least successful schools, which means it was sufficient to achieve significant improvements

- individual motivation of staff appeared necessary for significant behaviour improvements, since it was highly prevalent in the most significantly improved schools

- the presence of external challenges was sufficient to achieve relatively poor results in behaviour improvement. None of the most significantly improved schools encountered substantial external challenges, which means this absence was necessary to achieve the greatest success

This corroborates the idea that these factors had real causal power and were able to demonstrably affect the outcome. Furthermore, schools who engaged in case study work often brought detailed, convincing examples of changes they had implemented as a direct consequence of participating in the programme (see section 4.3.1).

Having said this, the goal of this evaluation is not to precisely measure the extent to which the programme worked, but rather to explain how and why the programme worked, to understand what the key ingredients were that made it work, the conditions under which it worked, and to measure the prevalence of different pathways followed by different schools.

The rest of this chapter outlines what was learned on how and why the programme worked or not, where and for whom. The narrative is divided between discussions of the change mechanisms, the processes that triggered change, and the external factors that affected the outcome (as well as its sustainability).

4.2 Why the programme worked (or not): the change mechanisms

Key findings from the analysis of change mechanisms

- The evaluation identified three key mechanisms through which the programme brought benefits to schools:

  - partner schools were exposed to new possibilities in terms of behaviour change (discovery of the possible)

  - partner schools became aware of what was needed to improve behaviour and developed a detailed understanding of conditions needed to bring about behaviour change (greater awareness)

  - partner schools received confirmation and reassurance that new or existing plans were on the right track (increased confidence)

- Success in improving pupil behaviour was achieved in different ways. One important combination included challenging the school's thinking, reframing priorities, and providing guidance.

- Reframing priorities and providing inspiration were the two most decisive causal mechanisms for the most significantly improved schools. In particular, reframing priorities appeared sufficient for success as its absence was strongly linked to minor or negative changes in pupil behaviour after the programme.

The case studies provided evidence on the change mechanisms (how and why the programme has worked, and where). The QCA survey and related analysis added information on the prevalence of these patterns, and the contexts in which they were or were not triggered. Key findings on mechanisms from the QCA survey are reported in the box below.

- Across all schools who responded to the QCA survey, 80% found the programme very useful (rating this 7/8, where 8 means that the programme activities were extremely useful); and rated all the change mechanisms relatively highly.

- The most highly rated mechanism was inspiration (77% rated it 7 or 8/8, where 8 means that the school was extremely inspired by the programme activities), followed by guidance (75%, where 8 means that the programme activities provided extremely useful guidance), confidence (60%, with 8 meaning that the programme activities significantly increased the school's confidence in its pre-existing plans), challenging one's way of thinking (59%, with 8 meaning that the programme activities significantly challenged / changed the school's way of thinking), and finally reframing priorities (53%, with 8 meaning that the programme activities significantly changed the school's priorities).

- The analysis of the most significantly improved schools revealed that 89% of these have found the programme very helpful in general, and that 93% of them have found it greatly inspiring, which means it was quite difficult to achieve the best results with the programme without being strongly inspired by it. Receiving useful guidance was similarly necessary for success, as observed in 86% of the most significantly improved schools.

- The analysis showed that success in improving pupil behaviour can be achieved in many different ways, and one important combination included challenging the school's thinking, reframing priorities, and providing guidance.

- Reframing priorities, receiving inspiration, and having one's thinking challenged were independently decisive and had high success rates even as single conditions. In particular, reframing priorities appeared sufficient for success as its absence was strongly linked to minor or negative changes in pupil behaviour after the programme. This corroborates the idea that the identified mechanisms had real causal power and were able to demonstrably affect the outcome.

4.2.1 Discovery of the possible

Source of inspiration

Through contact with other schools, partner schools were exposed to new possibilities in terms of behaviour change. This included both how behaviour could be managed and the standards of behaviour that could be attained.

Beliefs and attitudes were changed in a particularly effective way during visits to the lead school, where partner schools saw what could be possible. Seeing behaviour policies in

action convinced the partner school that some aspirations were not unrealistic. Multiple schools saw where they could be at the end of the "journey" if the Behaviour Hubs programme succeeded.

The QCA survey showed that the vast majority of schools (77%) were highly inspired by the programme. This was particularly true of primary schools (83% rated this mechanism either 7 or 8/8 where 8 means the schools was extremely inspired by the programme activities vs. 70% for secondary schools), and schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios (83% vs. 70%).

For the most significantly improved schools, inspiration was more effective for schools with high pupil-teacher ratios and schools in less deprived areas.

Exposure to practical examples

Beyond inspiration, visits to other schools provided practical examples of policies that could be implemented in the visiting school's own settings. These ranged from the design of new movement systems for the school corridors, restructuring of pastoral support, and the introduction of new behaviour data management systems. Partner schools took these examples as sources of inspiration but then adapted them to fit their context.

More than half of QCA survey respondent schools (59%) indicated that the programme had substantially challenged their way of thinking, particularly schools on extended support (67% selected 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that the programme activities significantly challenged / changed the school's way of thinking, vs. 53% on core support) and schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios (64% vs. 53%).

This was also one of the most important mechanisms through which the programme influenced decisions taken by the most significantly improved schools.

4.2.2 Greater awareness

By interacting with lead schools, and partly also with other partner schools, the partner schools became aware of what was needed to improve behaviour, developing a detailed understanding of conditions needed to bring about behaviour change: overall approach, consistency and routine, timing and sequencing, and relationships with and among staff. Their interaction also helped partner schools prioritise areas of activity, recommended by the lead school to have the most impact. This accelerated partner schools' progress as they were able to skip the trial-and-error process that some lead schools had often been through.

Focus, awareness, priorities

Staff participants claimed that the programme influenced the level of importance they gave to specific aspects of the change process, affecting their order of priorities as well as their general focus on specific actions.

In terms of general focus, staff in some schools claimed that the programme focused the school's efforts and that it gave the school "direction and clarity"[33]. In addition, participants provided several examples of ways in which the programme changed their priorities, for example making them more aware of the need to have everyone's buy-in to ensure the behaviour policy is correctly and consistently applied, which resulted in the school making changes to the way their staff interact.[34]

In two cases, the schools already knew which issues were important prior to the programme but no action had been taken to address them because of lack of knowledge of how to do so. In such cases, the programme caused the school to re-focus on those key issues and implement measures.

More than half (53%) of QCA survey respondent schools selected 7 or 8/8 when assessing the relevance of this mechanism (redefining the school's priorities) to their school's success in improving pupil behaviour. It was more commonly reported in schools on extended support (64% selected 7 or 8/8 where 8 means the programme's activities significantly changed the school's priorities vs. 44% for schools on core support).

For the most significantly improved schools, reframing priorities was an important predictor of success: it was a key component of one of the most significantly improved "recipes" (together with guidance and thinking), observed equally across primary and secondary schools. In combination with useful guidance, the factor was equally effective in the North as in the South. Finally, this mechanism worked best in highly deprived areas.

The relevance of behaviour culture

According to staff engaged in fieldwork, interactions between lead and partner schools highlighted the importance of setting expectations. For instance, when one staff member in a partner school expressed concern that the children in their school would never be able to comply with a particular set of behaviour rules, one lead school staff member replied:

> "Well you're never going to if you don't expect them to and you don't teach them to" – *Staff from lead school paired with two special schools*

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[33] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support
[34] Primary school on core support

Another partner school learned the importance of having a school-wide approach, a whole behaviour 'culture' spanning all aspects of school activities and engaging all staff, which prompted them to allocate more working hours to the behaviour lead. Specifically, they realised the importance of having the same rules apply to everyone, including teachers and SLT, in all classes and environments in the school equally. This included, for instance, not being allowed to wear coats indoors. Equality and consistency in terms of meeting the needs of every single child was also mentioned.

The relevance of consistency and routines

The case studies showed that schools learned that more structure is preferable to more teacher autonomy in deciding sanctions, despite some schools being sceptical that this could be effective before they saw it in action. They also learned that it's dangerous to "think you've cracked it"[35] and learned to appreciate the need for monitoring and constant review, until all children expect the same behaviour and the same standards from teachers. The partner schools acquired new tools (or confirmation that their own tools were appropriate) and 'know-how' from lead schools to improve consistency and routines, such as the use of pictorial flow charts or scripts being displayed in classrooms and corridors.

Timing, pacing, and sequencing

Schools engaged in the case studies recognised the importance of establishing priorities in the change process, ensuring that goals are both realistic and attainable. They emphasised starting small and gradually scaling up, avoiding haste and over-ambition. Careful management of expectations was emphasised, and schools committed to taking action only when fully prepared. A preference was developed for completing previous actions before introducing new measures. They realised the importance of avoiding introducing innovations at critical times like the middle of a term or right after Christmas and the importance of involving staff first and pupils later. Schools also reported the need to avoid overextending themselves, by implementing too many changes at once.

Understanding how staff relationships needed to change

Some schools from the case studies understood that conversations with staff outside of the SLT were a fundamental part of the process of improving behaviour, with teachers expected to fully engage with it during the programme. Namely, it needed to be explained to staff why the changes discussed or implemented were needed, and why their input needed to be actively collected, rather than just asking them to implement changes. It was understood that explaining the purpose and benefit behind the new approach were particularly important for staff who were more reluctant to embrace the changes. In addition, it became clear to some schools how important it was to make teachers feel

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[35] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support

involved in the decision-making process. Examples included, having some of them trial out new initiatives and feedback on the experience, giving them the opportunity to innovate and lead change, before rolling initiatives out to the whole school.

4.2.3 Increased confidence

Guidance, direction, advice

The Behaviour Hubs programme provided a structure through which partner schools could incrementally embed systemic change to their behaviour policies and practice. Having opted into the programme, the Senior Leadership Team in case study partner schools had a desire to improve behaviour in their settings, but often lacked guidance, support and accountability to enact and embed change.

> "I think without [Behaviour Hubs] we would have ended up trying things blindly, not really knowing where to go and perhaps stumbled […] [the programme] has guided that process." – *Partner school SLT, Secondary school on extended support*

Another participant put it in similar terms:

> "The vehicle for the change is very much Behaviour Hubs because I think without that we wouldn't have really known what to do." – *Partner school SLT, Secondary school on extended support*

Other schools were softer on the amount of guidance taken and claimed the programme gave them "a starting point"[36], but still "direction on how to address issues when they didn't know why things weren't working"[37]. Some schools thought interacting with partner schools was even more helpful than with Lead schools at times, as it was easier to see the mistakes they had made along the way.

The vast majority of the QCA survey respondent schools (75%) found that the programme provided useful guidance. This factor was very important for the schools with the largest improvements in pupil behaviour (the most significantly improved schools) across all of England, and for the most significantly improved schools with high pupil-teacher ratios.

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[36] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support
[37] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support

Confidence in existing plans

Some case study partner schools felt they did not learn much that was new to them but appreciated being reassured that their plans made sense to the lead schools and receiving confirmation that they were on the right track.

> "The validation that you are trying to change the right things, and you are on the right journey. Even though it might be difficult to start off with, you are doing the right thing." – *Partner school SLT, Primary School on core support*

In such cases, the programme breathed life into old plans and gave new momentum to processes that had already been launched: the school felt they had gained enough confidence to press ahead with implementation.

Almost 60% of the QCA survey respondent schools found that the programme substantially increased their confidence in their pre-existing plans, particularly schools on extended support (71% selected 7 or 8/8 where 8 means that the programme activities significantly increased the school's confidence in its pre-existing plans vs. 51% on core support), schools in more deprived areas (76% vs. 50%), smaller schools (66% vs. 53%), and primary schools (65% vs. 53%).

4.3 Why the programme worked (or not): the processes that triggered change

Key findings from the analysis of what made the programme work

The most significantly improved schools did not encounter significant external challenges during the Behaviour Hubs programmes. For other schools, these external challenges were a key barrier to programme performance. Internal challenges included competing priorities within the school and scheduling conflicts.

Schools otherwise attributed their success to:

- individual motivation of staff, and trust and collaboration among staff

- visits to lead schools and other partner schools

- learning from other schools, their competence and willingness to help

- the programme's flexibility (e.g. the ability to tailor the programme to the school's needs)

This section focuses on the conditions and circumstances that allowed the mechanisms described in section 4.2 to be triggered (or not). These include programme factors, non-programme factors, factors internal to the school, and external factors.

4.3.1 Programme related factors

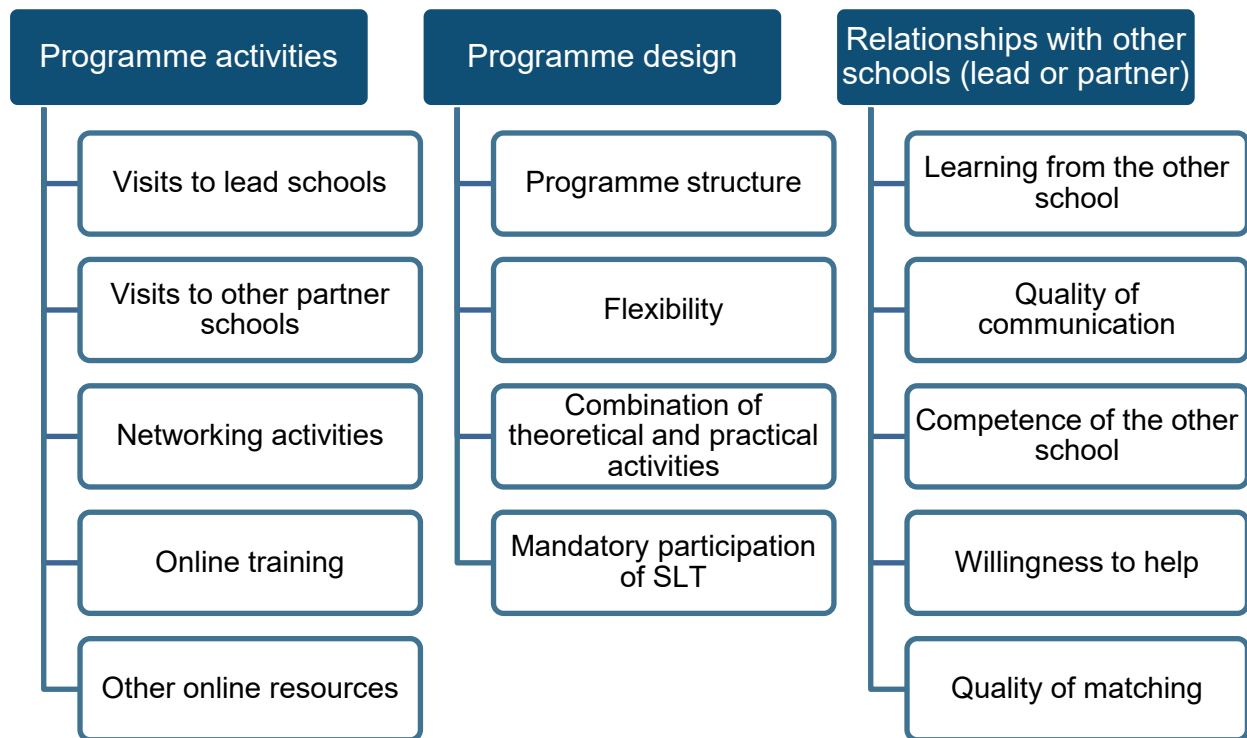**Key findings from the analysis of programme-related factors**

Schools appreciated the following programme opportunities and programme features the most:

- visits to lead schools and other partner schools

- the programme's flexibility (e.g. the ability to tailor the programme to their school's needs)

- the willingness and ability of other schools to help

Furthermore, schools who engaged in case study work often brought examples of changes they had implemented as a direct consequence of participating in the programme.

The case study analysis showed that a key factor triggering change was the relationship between the partner school and the lead school. In addition to this, the visits and networking opportunities, professional development and programme design were all identified as key factors which contributed to change. Most of these findings were confirmed by the QCA survey and are illustrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Breakdown of programme related factors investigated in the QCA survey

Programme activities	Programme design	Relationships with other schools (lead or partner)
Visits to lead schools	Programme structure	Learning from the other school
Visits to other partner schools	Flexibility	Quality of communication
Networking activities	Combination of theoretical and practical activities	Competence of the other school
Online training	Mandatory participation of SLT	Willingness to help
Other online resources		Quality of matching

Relationships with the Lead School and other partner schools

Partner and Lead schools developed strong and supportive relationships through the programme. The relationships developed through mutual school visits and online interaction. Every case study partner school described the relationship with the lead school in favourable terms such as positive, brilliant, open, honest and strong. In several cases, these relationships did not end with the programme and, at the time of data collection, were still ongoing.

Partner schools learnt a lot from lead schools. The learning was very wide-ranging: the design of behaviour policies and specific rules, but also about their feasibility and how to implement them in practice. For example, one school claimed to have learned that consistency was possible and feasible even with diverse (e.g. SEND) pupils. Staff offered several examples of specific ideas and ways of doing things they learned from their visits to lead schools.

This learning was facilitated through several aspects of the partner-lead relationship: communication, willingness and ability to help, and the opportunity to exchange visits. The contribution of the partner-lead matching was more complicated to assess. In most cases, partner schools were positive about their matched school and described how the matching facilitated change but in a small number of cases schools reported that the matching led to missed learning opportunities.

In addition to the relationships between lead schools and partner schools, the QCA survey investigated the relationship between partner schools. The white boxes in this section include the related findings.

In general, independently of pupil behaviour change, out of the 'relationship with the lead school' group of factors, schools responding to the QCA survey rated competence of the Lead school most highly (60% selected it as the first or second most important factor out of 5), closely followed by willingness to help (57%). The least appreciated aspect of the relationship was matching (only 16% of schools selected it as the first or second most helpful aspect of the relationship with the lead school).

The most significantly improved schools confirmed that competence and willingness to help were the most important factors in the relationship with the lead school, the former in particular (combined with either learning or communication).

In general, independently of pupil behaviour change, the most frequently selected options for relationships between partner schools were learning (55% selected it as either 1st or 2nd most important factor out of 5) and competence of the other partner school (54%), followed by willingness to help (40%).

For the most significantly improved schools, the key factor was willingness to help; in some cases, combined with learning, and in others with competence.

Communication between schools

Communication with the Lead School was often described as "open", "honest", and "non-judgemental". Lead schools were said to be approachable (knowledgeable but not intimidating) and in some cases, not hiding that they still had behaviour issues. In return, the partner schools felt comfortable discussing their own challenges, as well as reassured when lead schools assured them this kind of change was not an overnight fix, but a journey.

Quality of communication with lead schools was chosen by 33% of all QCA survey respondent schools as the most or second most important factor in the relationship with the lead school; particularly by large schools (51% vs. 16%, largest difference of all), secondary schools (47% vs. 21%), schools in the South (39% vs. 28%), and the most significantly improved secondary schools.

Quality of communication with other partner schools (chosen by 25% of all respondent schools) was most frequently appreciated by schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (31% vs. 19%).

Partner schools appreciated that lead schools were respectful: they did not impose their way of doing things on partner schools, but were collaborative, sharing their journey and

experience but working together to find the approach that would work best for the partner school.

Willingness and ability to help

Partner schools appreciated that lead schools were both supportive and experienced. Experienced because they had had similar problems, had developed expertise as a consequence, and were able to share good practices, but at the same time were responsive and willing to help. They were hands-on when needed but understood when they needed to take a step back. They were said to provide constructive feedback and play the role of "critical friend"[38] for partner schools.

In addition, partner schools appreciated receiving practical and realistic advice, learning about what an appropriate pace of change is, and were thankful to the lead schools for managing expectations.

Willingness of lead schools to help was selected by 57% of all respondent schools as the most or second most important aspect of the relationship with the Lead School; and most frequently by smaller schools (62% vs. 51%), the most significantly improved primary schools, the most significantly improved schools on extended support, and the most significantly improved schools in the South.

Willingness of other partner schools to help was selected by 40% of all respondent schools; and most frequently by secondary schools (47% vs. 35%), schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (47% vs. 35%), schools in more deprived areas (46% vs. 37%), and the most significantly improved primary schools, the most significantly improved schools on extended support, the most significantly improved schools in the North, the most significantly improved smaller schools, and the most significantly improved schools in less deprived areas.

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[38] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on extended support

Visits to other schools

The visits were said to be extremely helpful to source ideas and to observe what a behaviour policy looked like in practice. In some cases, staff from the partner school visited multiple times for different purposes (e.g., to observe in-depth different aspects of the policy such as redeveloping bases). At times, the visits would be coordinated so that the schools could discuss upcoming or recent Ofsted visits.

The visits would at times be followed by written feedback. More generally, partner schools claimed to have received considerable practical advice from lead schools. In some cases, the latter were said to be very hands-on, in other cases they would simply offer their tools and materials for the partner schools to use and adapt. They provided templates and resources but also reviewed partner school's draft documents, offering feedback and suggestions.

Partner schools stressed how important the ability to visit schools physically was, and how that could not be replaced by online interaction. The immersive experience provided the opportunity to see things with their own eyes, for in-depth conversation with staff, and learning things naturally and organically, for example on learning walks, guided by the headteacher[39]. They found the immersive experience to be empowering, inspiring, and insightful. In some cases, the visits provided reassurance that the partner schools were on the right track in their journey to improve behaviour. Many schools reflected that they would have liked to have the opportunity to visit, and learn from, more schools.

From the QCA survey, independently of pupil behaviour outcomes, the most highly rated programme activities were visits to the lead school (81% rated it either first or second) and visits to other partner schools (70%). The importance of these was confirmed by the analysis of the most significantly improved schools, with visits to the lead schools being slightly more important (in combination with either online training or networking).

The most significantly improved secondary schools, schools on extended support, large schools, schools with low pupil-teacher ratios, and schools in low-deprivation areas, aligned with the majority of schools, selecting both types of visits as the two most helpful opportunities offered by the programme; while the most significantly improved primary schools, smaller schools, schools in highly deprived areas, some schools on core support, some schools with high pupil-teacher ratios, as well as a small minority of schools on extended support, preferred visits to lead schools combined with online training.

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[39] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support

Matching with other schools

The programme paired partner schools with lead schools, so that each partner school was assigned one lead school and lead schools were assigned multiple partner schools.

Most case study partner schools claimed to have been well matched with their lead schools and were able to point to several similarities in terms of behaviour issues, type of pupils, type of school, type and size of buildings, demographics, previous journey, location, school size, and the area's level of deprivation. Some schools were thankful about the physical closeness and imagined that the process would have been difficult if the lead schools had been at a greater distance than they were.

However, several other schools claimed that sharing similarities on a high number of characteristics was not essential, if the lead school was adaptable and able to consider the partner school's specific circumstances. For example, participants in one school admitted that their lead school operated in a different local context (urban vs. rural), was a different school type, and a different size, but this was not considered a barrier. The lead school was able to direct the partner school towards other schools at networking events that had similar situations. Similarly, others did not find the difference in school type, or building type, or location, or demographics, much of a barrier, and were still able to describe their situation as a "perfect match"[40] based on similarity in behaviour issues or type of pupils.

A minority of the partner schools in the case study sample claimed that poor matching did affect the relationship, mostly because the lead school's location was not convenient for the partner school. They recommended that, in the future, the distance between schools is given more importance because it was too resource-intensive for schools to travel such long distances.

The QCA survey showed that matching was the least appreciated aspect of the relationship with lead schools: it was selected as 1st or 2nd by only 16% of respondent schools. It was most frequently appreciated by schools on extended support (24% vs. 11%), schools with a lower pupil-teacher ratio (21% vs. 12%), and schools in more deprived areas (24% vs. 11%).

As for matching with other partner schools, it fared better than its counterpart above, being selected by 26% of respondent schools (after quality of communication with 25%). It was most frequently appreciated by many more secondary (43%) than primary schools (12%), schools on extended support (31% vs. 23%), large schools (39% vs. 14%), and the most significantly improved schools in the South as well as the most significantly improved larger schools.

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[40] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support

Areas for improvement

Several case study partner schools did not raise one single complaint about their relationship with the lead school and claimed that there had been no challenges at all. Besides resourcing and capacity issues schools only had two other complaints.

The first was not having been able to visit the lead school more often or not having had more frequent interactions with them (for example to check on progress and impact). One school would have liked to see a regular end-of-programme visit from lead to partner integrated into the programme structure.

The second was about online seminars delivered by the lead school. One partner school did not find them helpful, another found them ineffective as their school did not need to know about additional research on theoretical aspects of behaviour.

Visits and networking events

From the QCA survey, independently of pupil behaviour outcomes, the most highly rated programme activities were visits to the lead school (81% rated it either first or second) and visits to other partner schools (70%). The importance of these was confirmed by the analysis of the most significantly improved schools, where visits to the lead schools were slightly more important (in combination with either online training or networking).

The most significantly improved secondary schools, schools on extended support, large schools, schools with low pupil-teacher ratios, and schools in low-deprivation areas, aligned with the majority of schools, selecting both types of visits as the two most helpful opportunities offered by the programme; while the most significantly improved primary schools, smaller schools, schools in highly deprived areas, some schools on core support, some schools with high pupil-teacher ratios, as well as a small minority of schools on extended support, preferred visits to lead schools combined with online training.

Beyond the relationship with lead schools, multiple schools from the case study sample claimed that other school visits and networking events had been the most important component of the Behaviour Hubs programme. These encounters enabled participating partner schools to make sense of concepts seen online or discussed in training (e.g. how the switch from a reactive to a preventative approach worked in practice) and provided schools with opportunity to ask for advice that "you couldn't get anywhere else"[41]. Schools also appreciated the openness with which these exchanges took place: for example, schools that were further ahead with their change process were said to be very

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[41] Partner school SLT, Middle school on extended support

open about their mistakes and lessons learned. This was in contrast to the attitude of schools not involved in the programme, who were perceived to be more insular.

Staff from multiple schools claimed that, rather than a vast amount of learning from one source, they learned a high number of small bits of knowledge or advice from different schools, which they then proceeded to adapt to their own context.

Professional development

Staff engaged in the case studies appreciated the opportunities for professional development provided by the programme, including online resources, training, and contact with field specialists.

Participants from one school explained why the online resources were beneficial: "it felt like they'd done all the research for you, and it just really focused your mind on it"[42]. This participant later added that they got the idea for introducing the behaviour curriculum from these resources. They claimed the programme did a good job of "summarising and disseminating what was out there" in terms of relevant literature. The material on supporting pupils with SEND was particularly appreciated, along with staff and pupil surveys which helped identify areas for improvement.

Training courses also received positive feedback from staff who explained how accessible it was, providing new ideas and enabling staff to learn. Webinars and videos, however, received more mixed feedback. Furthermore, schools appreciated having indirect contact with programme advisers (such Tom Bennett) during seminars and podcasts and claimed it helped secure buy-in particularly amongst more experienced members of staff.

Programme design

During fieldwork, some features of programme design were said to be important for the programme to work, namely its structure, pace, flexibility, and requirements in terms of staff participation. It was particularly appreciated that the programme had a series of structured routines, deadlines, and milestones that encouraged accountability (not just making changes but also collecting evidence of those changes) and structured self-evaluation. It was also valued that different aspects of the programme complemented each other, for example the combination of theoretical and practical learning, as well as the opportunity to discuss the content of training or online resources with other schools during visits or networking days. Finally, it made sense to participants that many features of the programme were mandatory, rather than voluntary.

Despite some features being mandatory, it was appreciated that the programme showed flexibility in how it expected schools to use their learnings, allowing them to adapt and

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[42] Partner school SLT, Secondary School on extended support

adjust to meet the requirements of their particular context. Flexibility in the pace of learning and implementing changes was appreciated.

> In the QCA survey, from a list of four programme design features (structure, flexibility, combination of theory and practice, and mandatory participation of SLT), schools rated flexibility most highly (75% of schools selected "the ability to tailor the programme to your school's needs" as either the 1st or 2nd most important feature of the programme), followed by the combination of theory and practice (46%), and programme structure (43%, or "defined timelines and planning requirements"). The least appreciated was mandatory participation of SLT (36%).
>
> The most significantly improved schools pointed to the importance of flexibility as a key success factor: the pathways representing the highest proportion of successful cases all see flexibility selected either as first or second most important factor. The low importance of mandatory SLT participation is also confirmed by the analysis of the most significantly improved cases.
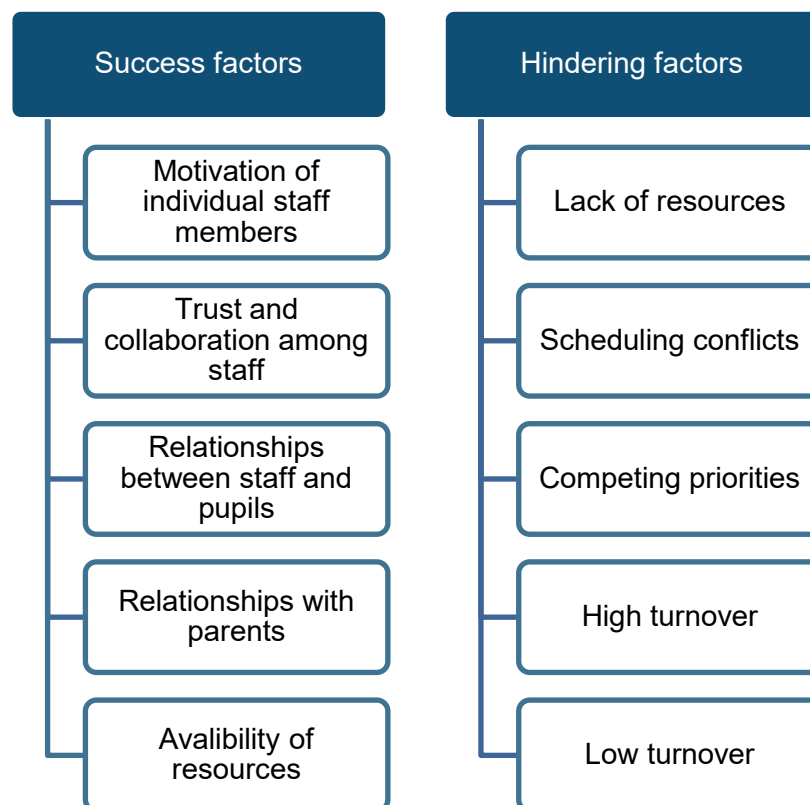
4.4 Why the programme worked (or not): factors external to the programme

Key findings from the analysis of factors unrelated to the programme

- Schools pointed to individual motivation of staff as the most important factor for success, followed by trust and collaboration among staff. Specifically, individual motivation of staff was shown to be necessary to significantly improve behaviour.

- Schools claimed competing priorities and scheduling conflicts were key barriers.

- More than a third of respondent schools (36%) claimed to have encountered substantial external challenges in implementing the programme. This was particularly apparent in high-deprivation areas (41%), schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (39%), secondary schools (39%), and small schools (38%).

- The most significantly improved schools did not encounter significant external challenges.

- High staff turnover was selected by a small minority of (small primary) schools which did not observe large improvements in pupil behaviour.

Staff engaged in the case studies identified a series of factors external to the programme that nonetheless helped the programme achieve its goals. These are outlined here, grouped by whether they are positive or negative, and internal or external to the school. The QCA survey tested five success factors and asked respondent schools to rank their importance: individual motivation, trust and collaboration, relationship with pupils, available resources, and relationships with parents. It also tested five hindering factors: competing priorities and scheduling conflicts; external challenges; capacity and resourcing; high staff turnover; and low staff turnover. These are illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Breakdown of relevant factors external to the programme

Success factors	Hindering factors
Motivation of individual staff members	Lack of resources
Trust and collaboration among staff	Scheduling conflicts
Relationships between staff and pupils	Competing priorities
Relationships with parents	High turnover
Avalibility of resources	Low turnover

In general, independently of changes in pupil behaviour, respondent schools scored individual motivation the highest (71% selected it as either 1st or 2nd most important factor that made it easier for the programme to work), followed by trust and collaboration among staff (61%). The most significantly improved schools made the same choices: individual motivation in particular seems to have been a key ingredient for success, as confirmed by the analysis of the least significantly improved schools, which do not present it, while continuing to present "trust and collaboration" (as well as "resource availability").

4.4.1 Positive factors internal to the school

During fieldwork, staff claimed that the individual motivation of staff involved in the programme was a key factor for achieving the programme goals. In one school the SLT's desire to make the programme work made them overcome issues, such as time constraints[43]. In at least one case[44], it helped that the person previously leading on behaviour left the school. This staff member was particularly averse to change so this transition came at a convenient time. In another case where the school had a bad reputation for pupil behaviour in the community, it was important that the leadership was determined to turn that around[45].

The QCA survey confirmed individual motivation to be the most important success factor overall (71% of respondent schools selected it as either first or second among factors that made it easier for the programme to work) but was particularly prevalent in schools on extended support (77% vs. 67%), schools in the North (77% vs. 63%), large schools (78% vs. 64%), and schools in less deprived areas (74% vs. 65%).

It was a key factor for the most significantly improved large schools, the most significantly improved schools with low pupil-teacher ratios, the most significantly improved secondary schools (together with trust and collaboration), the most significantly improved schools on extended support (in combination with resource availability) and the most significantly improved schools on core support (in combination with relationships with pupils).

Establishing mutual trust among stakeholders was also said to be important, allowing time and opportunities for staff members to get to know each other and for them to get to know the new leader / headteacher. Focus groups with pupils were also praised, as a tool for staff to understand the needs of pupils exhibiting poor behaviour as well as the specific needs of SEND pupils.

Trust and collaboration was the second most important success factor overall (61% of respondent schools selected it as either first or second among factors that made it easier for the programme to work), and it was also a key factor for the most significantly improved secondary schools (in combination with individual motivation).

Resourcing in school was also a significant factor. This was partly about staff having dedicated time to engage with the programme activities (e.g., visits and events): "you certainly couldn't go into it if you didn't have [adequate] time to do it"[46]. But it was also about teaching staff having dedicated time to read the new policy and provide feedback. Schools also stressed the importance of physical resources, like previously existing

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[43] Secondary school on core support
[44] Secondary school on core support
[45] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on extended support
[46] Partner school SLT, Primary school on core support

management information systems that were eventually changed to gather improved behaviour data or fencing on the school grounds to stop children from hiding.

'Capacity and resourcing' was selected by 39% of respondent schools as 1st or 2nd most important factor that made it easier for the programme to work and was held in particularly high regard by primary schools (46% vs. 32%) and by the most significantly improved schools in less deprived areas (in combination with individual motivation).

4.4.2 Positive factors outside of school control

Several external factors were credited by staff engaged in fieldwork with helping schools achieve their behaviour goals. These included:

- the positive attitude of parents

- the fact that the Ofsted inspection was upcoming (encouraged reflection)

- targeted support from the Academy Trust (identified behaviour challenges and encouraged reflection during a visit before school joined the programme)

- increasing numbers of pupils enrolling in the school (helped focus school on the importance of consistency)

- the fact that the school had a negative reputation in the local community (and was known for its poor record of behaviour and permanent exclusions)

- timing: it allowed the school to start before the summer, concentrate efforts during the summer, and launch the new policy at the start of the academic year

- participating to the Attendance Hubs programme and visiting / learning from schools through that programme

4.4.3 Challenges and setbacks: internal hindering factors and barriers

In general, independently of pupil behaviour change, QCA survey respondent schools ranked most highly, respectively, competing priorities (66% selected it as 1st or 2nd), scheduling conflicts (62%), and lack of resources (58%). However, the latter was not an issue for the most significantly improved schools, the most prevalent group among which pointed to scheduling conflicts and competing priorities. The next most lamented factor by the most significantly improved schools was low staff turnover. By contrast, the least significantly improved schools pointed to lack of resources and high staff turnover.

The QCA survey asked schools to rank a series of five hindering factors by order of importance (lack of capacity and resourcing, scheduling conflicts, competing priorities, high turnover, and low turnover).

This list had been obtained from the analysis of case studies. A key challenge to programme outcomes to emerge from the latter, indeed, was capacity within schools. Schools did not always find it easy to enable staff to be absent for the required length of time due to competing priorities. This was particularly relevant when schools were geographically distant, considering that travel was a requirement. Broadly speaking, capacity issues were linked to resourcing, which, some schools claimed, was not always adequate, particularly in relation to school size. It was recognised that such systemic changes require time, and this was not always available, not just for visits but for programme-related meetings in general.

Lack of capacity and resourcing (58%) was one of the three most important factors in the challenges group from the QCA survey. It was pointed at particularly by schools on core support (63% vs. 50%), schools in less deprived areas (63% vs. 49%), and schools in the South (65% vs. 51%). The same applied to the most significantly improved schools.

Scheduling conflicts (62%), one of the three most important factors, was singled out by schools in more deprived areas (70%) rather than less (57%), and in large schools (67% vs. 56%).

Some schools claimed to be torn between competing priorities in terms of professional development: while the effectiveness of teaching and learning hinged on good behaviour, it was important that their professional development also included teaching and learning goals, as emphasised by recent Ofsted recommendations (which they claimed needed to be taken onboard even in case of disagreement).

Some schools were also struggling with staff retention, which was considered a risk for embedding the new behaviour policy and achieving consistency and was particularly detrimental to high-need pupils or pupils with high-level behaviour issues, who needed stability more than others.

Somewhat surprisingly, high staff turnover was selected as 1st or 2nd by a very small minority of schools responding to the QCA survey (5%), all small (none of them was large) and all primary (none of them was secondary). Low turnover was a bit more popular, being selected as 1st or 2nd by 10% of respondent schools: mostly on extended support (19% vs. 4%). The qualitative case studies demonstrated how, for some schools, low staff turnover was hindering factor because introducing major changes to behaviour policy was easier with new staff who were not accustomed to existing practices. In other schools high staff turnover was a challenge, citing difficulties in maintaining consistency and embedding new approaches.

Some staff members engaged in the case studies claimed that too many changes at the same time risked weakening engagement, citing barriers to parental support and preventing the changes from being embedded, disappointing staff and pupils alike as expectations were not being met. The situation was worsened when schools were coming off a period of intense change of a different nature (e.g. linked to the RISE process), and staff were sceptical that more change could be actioned due to change fatigue.

In terms of more technical aspects of programme design and management, there were complaints that the online training was concentrated all in the first term rather than being termly as originally thought, which prevented the school from booking it correctly (this was put down to miscommunication). Secondly, while videos and online training were considered helpful, a strong preference was declared for in-person learning. Finally, the Behaviour Hubs website was said to be not always easy to navigate.

On a positive note, several schools claimed no challenge was encountered during the programme.

4.4.4 Challenges and setbacks: external hindering factors and barriers

Staff pointed to a series of external challenges, most of which were systemic and national. The one closest to the school was the relationship with parents, some of whom were said to be unsupportive of changes in the behaviour system and confronted the school, for example, on sanctions given to their child. Other parents were said to be challenging but for opposite reasons, such as wanting the changes to be pressed through quicker than they were happening. Overall, staff engaged in fieldwork claimed that a very small number of parents were unsupportive and that their lack of support had not had a major hindering effect.

Extending the outlook to the wider landscape, most schools noted post-Covid increases in pupil needs concerning mental health and growing incidents of truancy and poor attendance. Among the challenges, a higher number of SEND children was also mentioned. Participants claimed to be addressing these issues with trial and error and that this complicated the implementation of programmes such as Behaviour Hubs.

Concerning SEND children specifically, some schools complained of a lack of SEND and PRU provision within the borough, with extremely long waiting times for spots, while the school had pupils who should have been in specialist provision. These pupils absorbed more resources on average than non-SEND pupils. Even if staff felt that pupils' needs could be better supported in specialist provision, staff claimed to feel compelled to keep them at the school for long periods because they had nowhere else to go. Despite adjustments made for these pupils, some staff claimed they continued to not be coping well in mainstream schools.

Clearly, some external contexts proved more challenging than others for programme success (rated by change in pupil behaviour): first and foremost pupil-teacher ratio (average rating for high 6.34 vs. low 6.63), deprivation levels (average rating 6.36 for more deprived areas vs. 6.56 for less deprived areas), followed by school type and size, with small schools (6.38) and primary schools (6.48) encountering more challenges than large schools (6.57) and secondary schools (6.53).

More than a third of QCA survey respondent schools (36%) claimed to have encountered substantial external challenges (either 7 or 8/8) in implementing the programme. The highest % was observed in high-deprivation areas (41%) followed by schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (39%), secondary schools (39%), and small schools (38%). The lowest ratings were observed for schools in less deprived areas (34%) and with low pupil-teacher ratios (34%) as well as primary schools (35%) and large schools (35%).

The most significantly improved schools were largely those who did not encounter significant external challenges, as confirmed by several different types of analysis.

4.5 Why the programme worked (or not): a diverse set of successful pathways from different contexts

Key findings from the context analysis

- Improvements in pupil behaviour were higher for schools with low pupil-teacher ratios and schools enrolled in the last three cohorts of the programme

- To a lesser extent, low deprivation, being on extended support, and being a large school were also linked with higher behaviour improvements

This section lays out a series of causal pathways followed by the most significantly improved schools according to their context. By causal pathway, we mean a causal process or "package" including some of the key reasons why schools achieved outcomes. In this section, only external factors are addressed (see introduction for the meaning of 'background context'), that is factors outside the programme's sphere of influence. The programme could not exert influence on most of them, either because they were historical and difficult to change or because they preceded the programme launch.

The interim report (Befani, et al., 2024) lays out four such factors: type of support (core, extended); type of school (primary, secondary, special, AP), school size, and school deprivation levels. The qualitative case studies returned one additional factor mentioned by participants: the mental capacity and energy of staff (a senior leadership team member noted that, at the time of interview, there had been an improvement that they

attributed to the staff having recently had a break over the half-term[47]). In addition to the above, this final report considers geographical region and pupil-teacher ratio. Data was not systematically collected on capacity, so six factors are investigated in detail: school type, type of support, region, school size (number of pupils), pupil-teacher ratio, and deprivation levels. Table 6 illustrates the significance of each factor in affecting improvements in pupil behaviour by context.

> When asked to rate behaviour change between before and after the programme on a scale of 1 to 8, the respondents from 105 schools of the 2025 survey averaged 6.48 / 8. Such positive change was higher[48] for the last three cohorts, schools on extended support (6.56), large schools (6.57), schools with lower pupil-teacher ratios (6.63), and schools situated in less deprived areas (6.56). All of these contextual factors affected the extent to which the programme worked.

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[47] Partner school SLT, Secondary school on core support
[48] One-tailed T-tests showed that the two means are different with: 90%+ probability for cohort and pupil-teacher ratio; 80%+ probability for deprivation level and school size, and 70%+ probability for type of support. See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.

Table 5: Key success pathways by context

Context	Improved communication to staff	Dedicated behaviour staff	Targeted approach	Increased involvement of SLT	Involvement of teachers in policy	Improved communication to pupils	Increased use of behaviour monitoring data	Increased teacher responsibility	Simplicity of language
Primary schools	x				x				x
Secondary schools	x	x				x			x
Schools on core support			x					x	
Southern schools	x					x			x
Large schools							x	x	
Schools in low deprivation				x	x				x

4.5.1 School type

For the most significantly improved schools, reframing priorities was an important predictor of success: it was a key component of one of the most significantly improved "recipes" (together with guidance and thinking), equally observed across primary and secondary schools.

What made primary schools significantly improve pupil behaviour?

The largest changes in pupil behaviour for primary schools were associated with a list of specific other changes. For example, changes in other behaviour outcomes such as substantial improvements in simplicity of language for the behaviour policy (combined with increased consistency), in communicating the policy to staff, and in the frequency with which the policy was communicated (which seemed necessary to achieve the best behaviour change results in primary schools together with improved communication to staff). From the governance group, substantial improvements in involving teaching staff stood out for primary schools.

In terms of factors facilitating or hindering success more widely, the most significantly improved primary schools identified visits to lead schools combined with online training, willingness of Lead schools to help, and willingness of other partner schools to help.

What made secondary schools significantly improve pupil behaviour?

The largest changes in pupil behaviour for secondary schools were associated with a list of specific other changes. Substantially increased allocation of specific behaviour tasks to (new or existing) staff was the single most important factor to make a difference for secondary schools (the one constant presence among high variation in successful pathways). Moreover, substantial improvements in simplicity of language, communication of the policy to staff, pupils, and parents, as well as frequency of such communications. Substantial increased frequency with which the policy is communicated was often combined with increased consistency for secondary schools.

In terms of factors facilitating or hindering success more widely, the most important for secondary schools were both types of school visits (to lead and other partner schools), as well individual motivation, and trust and collaboration.

4.5.2 Type of Support

What made schools on core support significantly improve pupil behaviour?

Adopting a targeted approach to behaviour management was particularly important for the most significantly improved schools on core support, together with increasing staff responsibilities. Increasing teacher responsibilities in behaviour management in particular appeared beneficial, as well as increasingly involving pupils and parents.

In terms of factors facilitating or hindering success more widely, some schools on core support benefited from visits to lead schools combined with online training and pointed to individual motivation of staff as the key success factor (in combination with relationships with pupils).

What made schools on extended support significantly improve pupil behaviour?

Schools on extended support reported one of the largest differences in terms of behaviour change compared to their counterpart (6.56 against 6.48 for core support schools)[49]. Visits to both lead and other partner schools, willingness of other schools to help and individual motivation of staff (in combination with resource availability) were identified as factors contributing to this change.

4.5.3 Region

For the most significantly improved schools, reframing priorities was an important predictor of success, in combination with useful guidance. This factor was equally effective in the North as in the South.

What made Southern schools significantly improve pupil behaviour?

The most significantly improved schools in the South saw substantial improvements in the simplicity of language of the behaviour policy (combined with increased communication to staff). Substantial improvements in communicating the policy to pupils also seemed extremely important for success as they were present in all the most important successful causal pathways looking at changes in policy implementation.

In terms of factors facilitating or hindering success more widely, the most significantly improved schools in the South selected willingness of Lead schools to help and matching with other partner schools.

What made Northern schools significantly improve pupil behaviour?

Location affected the extent to which schools made changes to policy implementation: almost all types of implementation change were scored more highly by schools in the North. In terms of factors making the difference for success, however, only willingness of other partner schools to help was identified.

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[49] However, the probability that this difference is not due random reasons is not the highest (73%). See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.

4.5.4 School size

School size, like location, seemed to significantly affect changes in behaviour policy implementation, with large differences in how schools rated the magnitude of these changes by school size.

What made smaller schools significantly improve pupil behaviour (or not)?

Smaller schools found the programme more useful than larger ones (86% vs. 74%) and scored almost all the change mechanisms (especially inspiration and confidence) more highly (only exception was guidance). All success factors were also given more importance by smaller schools, except individual motivation (more often appreciated in larger schools).

In terms of success factors selected by the most significantly improved small schools, however, visits to lead schools combined with online training and willingness of other partner schools to help was observed. In terms of hindering factors, the most significantly improved smaller schools selected scheduling conflicts and lack of resources.

What made larger schools significantly improve pupil behaviour (or not)?

Larger schools were more successful in terms of achieving improvements in pupil behaviour (6.57) compared to smaller schools (6.48)[50]. The single most important factor for this change was increased use and collection of behaviour monitoring data. However, the most significantly improved large schools also increased rewards for good behaviour, teacher responsibilities, and involvement of teaching staff in the policy governance.

In terms of factors facilitating or hindering success more widely, the most significantly improved large schools selected both types of visits (to lead and other partner schools) as the two most helpful opportunities offered by the programme; willingness of lead schools to help as the most helpful aspect of their relationship with lead schools, and matching as the most important aspect of their relationship with other partner schools. They also pointed to individual motivation of staff as the key success factor, and to scheduling conflicts and competing priorities as the key hindering factors.

4.5.5 Pupil-teacher ratio

What made schools with lower pupil-teacher ratios significantly improve pupil behaviour?

Having a low pupil-teacher ratio made a large difference for one of the key outcomes of the Behaviour Hubs programme, improving pupil behaviour. The average rating for this

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[50] One-paired T-tests returned an 82% p-value for this difference. See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.

group (6.63) was much higher than the average rating for its counterpart (6.48 for schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios)[51].

The most significantly improved schools with low pupil-teacher ratios selected both types of school visits as the two most helpful opportunities offered by the programme. The individual motivation of staff was selected as the key success factor for the programme, and scheduling conflicts and lack of resources as the two key barriers for schools.

What made schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios significantly improve pupil behaviour?

Despite schools with higher-pupil teacher ratios not improving pupil behaviour to the same extent as their counterparts, schools with higher pupil-teacher ratios reported finding the programme more useful (87% vs. 72% for schools with low pupil-teacher ratios). These schools also scored most change mechanisms more highly (particularly inspiration and thinking) with the exception of reframing priorities and confidence.

Both inspiration and guidance were the key change mechanisms for the most significantly improved schools with high pupil-teacher ratios, who also increased rewards more significantly than their counterparts. In terms of wider factors facilitating or hindering success, schools with high pupil-teacher ratios selected visits to lead schools and online training as the key success factors, and low staff turnover as the key hindering factor.

4.5.6 Deprivation levels

Deprivation levels did not greatly affect behaviour policy implementation, except for consistency, which changed significantly more in schools in more deprived areas. In regard to behaviour management, schools in more deprived areas rated their changes in reaction, targeting, and standardisation consistently lower (40%, 50%, and 66%) than schools in less deprived areas (54%, 62%, and 81%).

What made schools significantly improve pupil behaviour in less deprived areas?

Schools in less deprived areas achieved higher levels of success in improving pupil behaviour (6.56) compared to their counterparts in more deprived areas (6.48)[52]. Substantially increased involvement of SLT seems to have been very important for this group, along with simplicity of language improvements. The most effective change mechanism was inspiration.

In terms of broader factors facilitating or hindering success, schools in less deprived areas selected both types of visits as the two most helpful opportunities offered by the

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[51] One paired T-tests returned a 91% significance value for this difference (the highest across the six factors). See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.
[52] T-Test was 82% significant. See page 26 (Analysis) for more details.

programme and the willingness of the lead and other partner schools to help as the most important aspect these relationships. The availability of resources and individual motivation were considered the most important success factors overall. Low staff turnover along with lack of resources were considered the most relevant hindering factors.

What made schools significantly improve pupil behaviour in more deprived areas?

Reframing priorities was the most important change mechanism for schools in more deprived areas. This group of schools selected visits to lead schools combined with online training as the most helpful programme activities and selected competing priorities and scheduling conflicts as the key hindering factors.

5. Conclusions

For a phenomenon that is very difficult to measure like pupil behaviour in schools, the evaluation was able to collect evidence of systemic, sustainable changes that were either accelerated, made possible, or improved by the programme. This concluding chapter includes a summary of the findings, overall lessons learned, and recommendations for future programmes.

5.1 Summary of findings

The vast majority of participating schools found the programme very useful, particularly smaller schools, and the most significantly improved schools. After the programme concluded, staff observed substantial improvements in pupil behaviour compared to the period prior to its implementation, particularly:

- schools with lower pupil-teacher ratios

- schools included in the last three cohorts.

The schools that most significantly improved pupil behaviour can be divided into four typologies (Figure 11):

- small[53] primary schools with a low pupil-teacher ratio

- small primary schools on extended support

- large[54] secondary schools with a low pupil-teacher ratio, and

- large secondary schools on extended support

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[53] 'Small' here is to be intended as schools with pupil numbers <= 530
[54] 'Large' is to be intended as schools with pupil numbers > 530

Figure 11: Pathways to behaviour improvement
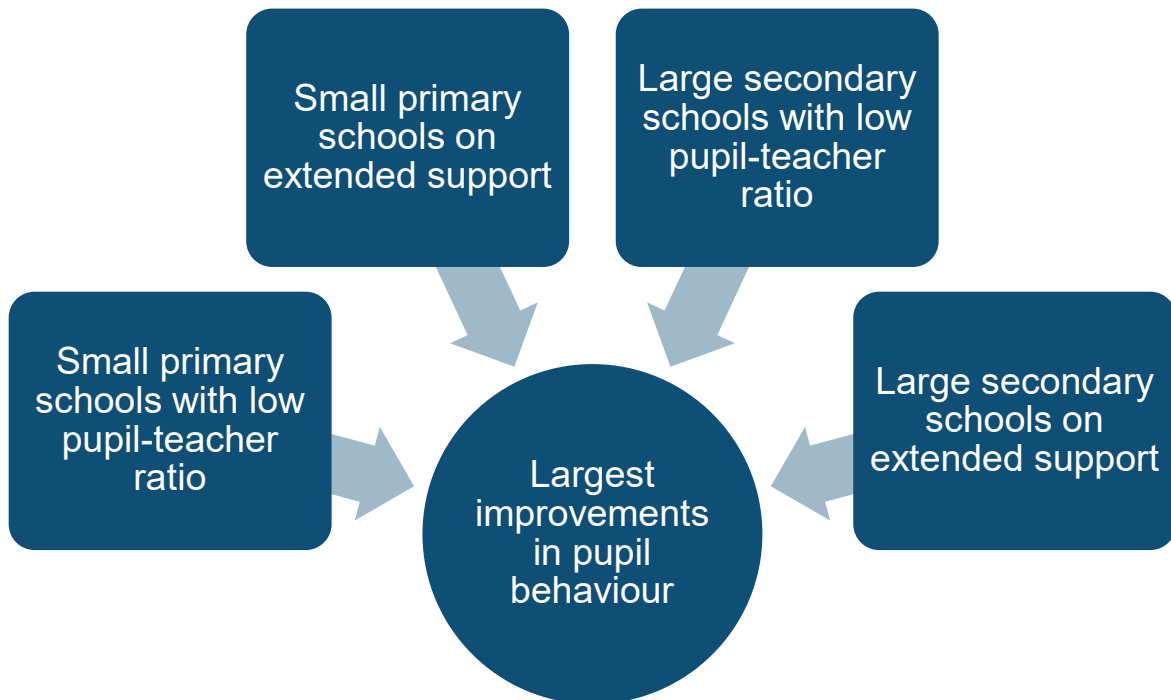
The evaluation indicates that the programme was particularly effective in small primary schools and large secondary schools. To achieve improvements in pupil behaviour, schools implemented a range of changes during and after the programme—including enhancements to behaviour management practices, more consistent and effective implementation of behaviour policies, and strengthened governance structures for behaviour policy.

Regarding behaviour management, participating schools primarily focussed their efforts on:

- creating new or strengthening existing behaviour standards

- increasing activities aimed at preventing poor behaviour, and

- increasing activities aimed at rewarding good behaviour

By contrast, schools paid least attention to strengthening zero-tolerance approaches and increasing SLT responsibility in behaviour management.

Change in use and collection of behaviour monitoring data to inform behaviour management varied depending on the context (e.g. type of school, region, type of support, etc.), however where this change occurred, the evaluation evidence suggests this was particularly beneficial for large schools.

Among schools that demonstrated the most significant behaviour improvements, the most substantial changes in behaviour management focussed on:

- increasing rewards for good behaviour and

- increasing behaviour management responsibilities of teaching staff

In terms of behaviour policy implementation, participating schools reported the following key developments:

- substantial improvements in communicating the policy to staff and pupils, but also parents, along with

- substantial improvements in consistency and frequency of communication, and simplicity of language

Changes in policy governance primarily involved greater involvement of SLT and teaching staff in the design, development, and testing of behaviour policies.

Substantially increasing the allocation of specific behaviour tasks to (new or existing) staff was the single most important factor in improving pupil behaviour for secondary schools (Section 4.5).

The next sections address change mechanisms, success factors, and hindering factors (Figure 12).

5.1.1 Change mechanisms

Understanding which aspects of the Behaviour Hubs programme were most valued, and which mechanisms produced meaningful change, is essential for interpreting its overall impact and sustainability. The programme succeeded in improving pupil behaviour in several ways:

- inspiring schools to enact changes

- providing useful guidance to schools

- reframing the schools' priorities

- challenging the schools' way of thinking

- increasing the schools' confidence about pre-existing plans

Out of the above options, the most highly rated change mechanism was inspiration, followed by receiving useful guidance, increased confidence in previous plans, challenging the school's way of thinking, and reframing one's priorities.

Reframing priorities in particular was sufficient for the greatest success, as its absence was strongly associated with minor positive or negative change in pupil behaviour.

5.1.2 Success factors

The evaluation identified success factors both internal to the programme (relationship with the lead school and other partner schools, programme activities, programme design) and external to it (that is, outside of the programme's sphere of influence).

Internal success factors

- Overall, the most important internal success factor selected by schools was relationships with other schools, both the lead and other partner schools.

- In particular schools appreciated the competence of the lead school and their willingness to help, along with the learning from and competence of other partner schools.

  - Quality of communication with lead schools was rated particularly highly as a success factor by large schools and secondary schools.

  - For the most significantly improved schools, one key success factor was the willingness of other partner schools to help.

- As for programme activities, the most highly rated factors were visits to the lead school and visits to other partner schools, particularly the former. These were also the most important factors for the most significantly improved schools.

- In terms of programme design, the key feature preferred by schools was the programme's flexibility (the possibility to tailor it to suit the school's needs). This was rated particularly highly by the most significantly improved schools. The other feature highly rated was the programme's combination of theory and practice.

External success factors

- Respondent schools scored the individual motivation of staff the most important external success factor, followed by trust and collaboration among staff.

- Individual motivation was causally necessary for the greatest success as it was observed in virtually all the most significantly improved schools.

- Availability of resources was a particular important factor for primary schools and for the most significantly improved schools in less deprived areas (in combination with individual motivation).

Figure 12: Success factors and barriers to behaviour improvement

Success factors

External:
- Absence of external challenges
- Individual motivation of staff
- Trust and collaboration among staff

Internal:
- Visits to other schools
- Programme flexibility

External:
- External challenges in general
- Lack of resources
- High staff turnover (according to the least successful schools)
- Low staff turnover (according to the most successful schools)
- Competing priorities, scheduling conflicts

Barriers

5.1.3 Hindering factors and challenges

This section presents the key findings on challenges encountered by partner schools, and which factors were a barrier to progress, preventing some schools from making the most out of the programme.

- More than a third of respondent schools claimed to have encountered substantial external challenges in implementing the programme. Particularly, schools in highly deprived areas, schools with high pupil-teacher ratios, secondary schools, and small schools. Schools in these categories did not achieve the most significant improvements.

- Schools that faced substantial external challenges achieved the least positive outcomes, while those demonstrating the most significant improvements generally did not experience major external barriers. This suggests that the absence of external challenges was necessary for the most significant improvements.

- Schools pointed to competing priorities, scheduling conflicts, and lack of capacity / resourcing as the three most important types of challenges external to the programme.

    - Lack of capacity / resourcing was selected more frequently by schools on core support and in less deprived areas, compared to schools on extended support and in more deprived areas.

- While not specifically indicated as a challenge, matching with other schools (both lead and partner schools) was the least appreciated aspect of the relationship with other schools, particularly matching with the lead school.

- Similarly, while not specifically identified as a challenge, the mandatory participation of the SLT was considered the least helpful feature of programme design.

5.2 Lessons learned: are the outcomes sustainable?

A critical consideration for any school improvement initiative is whether the positive changes achieved can be maintained over time. Key insights on the sustainability of the Behaviour Hubs programme's outcomes can be drawn from staff perceptions and evidence of ongoing collaboration and adaptation after the programme's conclusion.

Most of the staff involved in case study data collection believed changes were internally sustainable and would be maintained in the future, although they recognised that work would need to continue to ensure this. For example, they suggested that their behaviour policy would have to be continuously evaluated and adjusted as cohorts of pupils change over time.

Almost all (98%) schools participating in the QCA survey rated sustainability either 6, 7, or 8 (out of 8). This is particularly significant because it can be assumed that this outcome was less subject to respondent bias than perceptions of changes in pupil behaviour. Sustainability ratings were particularly high for schools on extended support and schools with low pupil-teacher ratios (both 100%); and lowest for schools with high pupil-teacher ratios (96.2%) and schools on core support (96.5%). The most highly rated sustainability factors were continued engagement of SLT, followed by continued engagement of staff, and continued adaptation of the behaviour policy and approach.

In terms of sustainability, encouraging evidence emerged concerning the continued collaboration and engagement among schools after the programme. For example, learnings were shared across different schools in the same academy trust, and lead-partner relationships often continued after the programme.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the following recommendations are advised for the design and implementation of any future programme of this kind.

- That the relational qualities of the programme are preserved, that it continues to act as a catalyst to encourage interaction, particularly in person and through school visits. Future programmes would ideally allocate additional funding to facilitate greater interaction between schools and / or interaction with more schools.

  - This is because visits to other schools was the most highly appreciated opportunity offered by the programme and the relationship with other schools the most important programme factor that contributed to programme success. Schools engaged in fieldwork also regretted not having the opportunity to interact with more schools.

- That future programmes encourage the use of behaviour monitoring data and allocation of specific behaviour tasks to existing or newly hired staff.

  - The former was found to have been particularly decisive for large schools and the latter particularly decisive for secondary schools.

- That future programmes enable flexibility, allowing schools to tailor the programme to their own needs, while preserving a programme structure and defined milestones. Ideally this would include removing the mandatory double SLT participation.

  - This is based on responses to the schools' preferred programme features and key internal success factors.

- That future programmes continue to actively engage and involve teaching staff and SLT in periodic revision and adaptation of the behaviour policy.

  - The engagement of these stakeholders was shown to be a key factor in both the programme's immediate success and the sustainability of outcomes.

Annex 1: QCA survey questions

The section "approach to pupil behaviour management" included 9 questions, all investigating changes undergone by the school compared to the pre-programme period. The first question investigated changes in sanctioning misbehaviour (specifically whether sanctions had become weaker or stronger); the second question focused on changes in rewarding good behaviour, specifically the extent to which this had increased or decreased; the third question was about zero-tolerance measures and the extent to which they had increased or decreased; the fourth focused on adoption of restorative[55] actions and approaches in managing misbehaviour, again the extent to which it increased or decreased. The final six questions all concerned increase or decrease in a series of behaviour management practices: the fifth question enquired on changes in the prevention of misbehaviour, the sixth on approaches and practices aimed at reacting to misbehaviour, the seventh on targeted support[56,] the eighth on standardisation[57,] and the ninth on the responsibilities of teaching staff.

The section "implementation of pupil behaviour policy" included 7 questions, again all investigating changes undergone by the school compared to the pre-programme period. The first question referred to changes in the level of complexity of the policy, with school staff being asked the extent to which the policy was easier or harder to understand. The next three questions focused on the extent to which the policy had been communicated better or worse to three groups of stakeholders (teaching staff, pupils, and parents respectively). The fifth question concerned the overall frequency with which the behaviour policy was being communicated (increase or decrease). The sixth question focused on the consistency with which the policy was being applied (increase or decrease), and the seventh question enquired about the extent to which the school was using behaviour monitoring data and feedback systems to track pupil behaviour and make related decisions based on evidence (increase or decrease).

The section "governance of pupil behaviour policy" included 5 questions, also on changes undergone by the school compared to the pre-programme period. The first four questions related to how often four groups of stakeholders were or had been involved in designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy (more or less frequently compared to the pre-programme period). The first concerned teaching staff, the second the SLT, the third pupils, and the fourth parents. The fifth question was about tasks of existing or new staff, and the extent to which the schools had increased or decreased the number of staff

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[55] By restorative actions, we meant strategies that focus on repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than simply punishing individuals for their actions.
[56] By targeted support, we meant specific, tailored interventions designed to help individual pupils or groups improve their behaviour based on their needs.
[57] By a standardised approach to behaviour, we meant a consistent set of expectations, rules, and responses that are applied across the whole school to manage pupil behaviour consistently.

with a dedicated behaviour role (including changes in job descriptions of existing staff and FTE, not merely changes in headcount).

The section "role of the Behaviour Hubs programme" included 6 questions in total, the first on the extent to which schools had found the programme useful overall, and the last 5 questions about the specific change mechanisms triggered by it. The second question focused on the extent to which the programme had been a source of inspiration for schools in managing pupil behaviour. The third enquired on the extent to which the activities funded by programme challenged / changed the school's way of thinking concerning pupil behaviour or behaviour management. The fourth asked about the extent to which the same activities provided useful guidance, the fifth about the extent to which they changed the school's order of priorities in managing behaviour[58], and the sixth about the extent to which they increased or decreased the school's confidence in its pre-existing behaviour management plans.

The section on "characteristics of the BHs programme" included four questions where the respondents were asked to rank a series of options based on importance. The first question asked the participants to rank 5 programme activities based on how helpful they were for their school. The activities in question were: visits to the lead school, visits to other partner schools, networking events, online training modules, and other online resources. The second questions asked the participants to rank a series of aspects of programme design, based on how helpful they had been for their school. The 4 options were: defined timelines and planning requirements (such as, for example, the Action Plan), the ability to tailor the programme to the school's needs, the combination of theoretical and practical learning, and mandatory participation of two SLT members. The third question asked participants to rank characteristics of the programme based on how much they had contributed to the programme's success (made it easier for the programme to work). The 5 options were: individual motivation of staff (SLT or teaching staff), trust and collaboration among staff, trust between pupils and staff, available time / additional funding that could be allocated to the programme, and parental attitudes. Finally, the fourth questions concerned factors that had made the programme difficult to implement, such as lack of capacity / resourcing, scheduling conflicts with the school's existing calendar of events and activities, competing priorities, high staff turnover, and low staff turnover.

The second-to-last section investigated relationships between the respondent partner school and other schools. The respondent was asked to rank aspects of their school's relationship with the other school, based how positive they were for their school. The 5 options are: amount of learning from the other school, quality of communication with the other school, competence of the other school, availability and willingness to help, and

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[58] For example, if they made the school give importance or focus on things they were not prioritising or focusing on before the programme.

quality of matching (how much they had in common with the other school). The first questions focused on the lead school, and the second question on other (non-lead) schools (these are typically other partner schools they met during networking events.

Finally, the last section focused on sustainability and external challenges and included 3 questions. The first was about the extent to which the school encountered challenges, outside of the confines of the programme, that prevented it from making the most out of the programme. The second asked the respondent to indicate the extent to which the changes facilitated by the programme will be sustained in their school. Finally, the third question asked the participant to rank sustainability factors based on the extent to which they will impact the sustainability of post-programme changes. The 7 options were: continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement (for example to new pupil cohorts), continuous engagement / buy-in of staff, pupils, and parents, continuous engagement / buy-in of leadership / SLT, time the policy is in place (experience, demographic evolution), training / support for staff, pupil behaviour kept high on the political agenda nationwide, and available funding / reversal of austerity.

Annex 2: Conditions included in tested QCA models

- OUTCOME: behaviour management model = prevalence of sanctions, rewards, zero-tolerance, restorative approaches, prevention, reaction, targeted support, standards, and involvement of teachers and SLT

- OUTCOME: behaviour policy implementation model: simplicity of language, improvements in communicating the policy to pupils, teachers, and parents; frequency of communication, consistency in application, and use of behaviour monitoring data

- OUTCOME: governance model: involvement of teachers, SLT, pupils, parents, and dedicated staff

- OUTCOME: change mechanisms model: programme usefulness and mechanisms through which the programme had been effective: inspiration, challenging one's way of thinking, providing useful guidance, reframing priorities, or increasing confidence on pre-existing plans

- OUTCOME: programme activities model: visits to lead schools, partner schools, networking activities, online training, and other online resources

- OUTCOME: programme design model: programme structure, flexibility, combination of theoretical and practical activities, and mandatory participation of SLT

- OUTCOME: success factors model: motivation of individual staff members, trust and collaboration among staff members, relationship between staff and pupils, availability of resources, and relationship with parents

- OUTCOME: hindering factors model: lack of capacity and resources, scheduling conflicts, competing priorities, high turnover, and low turnover

- OUTCOME: relationship with lead school model: learning from the lead school, quality of communication, competence of the lead school, willingness to help, and quality of matching

- OUTCOME: relationship with other schools model: learning from the other partner school, quality of communication, competence of the other partner school, willingness to help, and quality of matching

Annex 3: QCA survey questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Welcome, and thank you for taking part in this Behaviour Hubs programme evaluation survey.

This isn't a typical questionnaire. We've designed it to dig a little deeper—so you won't find any neutral options here. Most questions use an **8-point scale without a middle point**, which means you'll be asked to take a position, even if only slightly. This helps us to conduct a particular type of evaluation analysis, allowing the results to be more meaningful. This may feel difficult in places, and it may be helpful to just go with your initial feeling.

Please note: **we ask for only one response per school**. The answers should reflect the **overall sentiment of your school**, rather than just one individual's perspective. We encourage you to consult with colleagues or gather input where needed whilst completing the survey.

SECTION ZERO: School information

Please indicate the name of your school:

Please indicate the postcode of your school:

Please indicate the local authority in which your school is located:

SECTION ONE: Programme status

1. Did your school complete the Behaviour Hubs programme? (yes, we completed / no, we withdrew)

    a) If yes:
      i. Did you receive an extension to complete the programme?
        1. No [go to main section]
        2. [If yes] Why did you ask for an extension? Feel free to select multiple reasons.
          a. We needed more time to reflect on the programme's content
          b. We required additional time to coordinate the programme with the school's existing calendar of events and activities, to avoid scheduling conflicts
          c. We needed more time to find appropriate resource
          d. For another reason

b) If not and your school withdrew, why did your school withdraw? Feel free to select multiple reasons.
   i. We asked for an extension and it wasn't granted, which forced us to withdraw
   ii. There was a change of leadership and the new leadership did not think the Behaviour Hubs programme was the best fit for our school
   iii. After enrolling, we had second thoughts about the Behaviour Hubs programme being the best fit for our school
   iv. The relationship with the Lead School did not work
   v. Our school lacked capacity to complete the Behaviour Hubs programme
   vi. Our school did not see expected results
   vii. The Behaviour Hubs programme structure and / or expectations did not suit our school
   viii. Other

SECTION TWO: Pupil behaviour

This next section is about how behaviour in your school may have changed since completing the Behaviour Hubs programme. We're interested in the difference between before and after the programme.

You'll be using an 8-point scale, where:

- 1 means behaviour has become significantly worse, and
- 8 means behaviour has significantly improved.

To help guide your responses:

- 1 to 4 reflect a negative change, and
- 5 to 8 reflect a positive change.

There's no neutral option— we're asking you to lean one way or the other, even if only slightly.

2. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which behaviour has changed in your school compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

SECTION THREE: Behaviour management

In this section, we're focusing on any changes in the **management of pupil behaviour** since your school took part in the Behaviour Hubs programme. We're interested in how things may have shifted — for better or worse — compared to before the programme began.

You'll be using a similar **8-point scale** as above. There's no neutral option — we're asking you to lean one way or the other, even if only slightly.

3. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **strengthened or weakened its focus on sanctioning misbehaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, **1** means the **focus on sanctions** has become *significantly weaker and* **8** means it has *significantly strengthened*.

4. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased or decreased rewarding of good behaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, **1** means **rewarding** good behaviour has *significantly decreased and* **8** means it has *significantly increased*.

5. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school **has increased or decreased adoption of zero-tolerance measures in managing misbehaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme. By zero-tolerance measures we mean the strict enforcement of rules, often with immediate consequences for even minor infractions.

For this question, **1** means the adoption of **zero-tolerance** measures has *significantly decreased and* **8** means it has *significantly increased*.

6. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school **has increased or decreased adoption of restorative actions and approaches in managing misbehaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme. By **restorative** actions, we mean strategies that focus on repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than simply punishing individuals for their actions.

For this question, **1** means the adoption of **restorative** actions and approaches has *significantly decreased and* **8** means it has *significantly increased*.

7. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased or decreased the focus on preventing misbehaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme

For this question, **1** means the focus on **preventing** misbehaviour has *significantly decreased and* **8** means it has *significantly increased*.

8. Based on a scale of 1-8 , please indicate the extent to which your school has **strengthened or weakened its approach and practices aimed at reacting to misbehaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the approaches and practices aimed at **reacting** to misbehaviour has *significantly weakened* and 8 means it has *significantly strengthened*.

9. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased or decreased targeted support for specific pupils in handling behaviour incidents** compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme. By **targeted support**, we mean specific, tailored interventions designed to help individual students or groups improve their behaviour based on their needs.

For this question, 1 means the use of **targeted support** for specific pupils has *significantly decreased* and 8 means it has *significantly increased*.

10. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **standardised its approach to handling behaviour** compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme. By a **standardised** approach to behaviour, we mean a consistent set of expectations, rules, and responses that are applied across the whole school to manage pupil behaviour consistently.

For this question, 1 means the use of a **standardised** approach to behaviour has *significantly decreased* and 8 means it has *significantly increased*.

Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased the responsibilities of the SLT in managing behaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the **responsibilities of the SLT** has *significantly decreased* and 8 means it has *significantly increased*.

11. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased the responsibilities of teaching staff in managing behaviour**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the **responsibilities of teaching staff** has *significantly decreased* and 8 means it has *significantly increased*.

SECTION FOUR: Behaviour policy implementation

In this section, we're exploring any changes in how clearly the behaviour policy is communicated to staff, pupils, and parents — and how consistently it's being implemented across your school — since taking part in the Behaviour Hubs programme.

You'll be using a similar **8-point scale**, where:

- **1 to 4** reflect a **negative change**,

- **5 to 8** reflect a **positive change**.

There's no neutral option— we're asking you to lean one way or the other, even if only slightly.

12. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school's behaviour policy has been **simplified or made more complicated** / complex, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has become *significantly harder to understand* and 8 means it has become *significantly easier to understand*.

13. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school's behaviour policy has been **communicated better or worse to teaching staff**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has been **communicated** *significantly worse* and 8 means it has been communicated *significantly better*.

14. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school's behaviour policy has been **communicated better or worse to pupils**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has been **communicated** *significantly worse* and 8 means it has been communicated *significantly better*.

15. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school's behaviour policy has been **communicated better or worse to parents**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has been **communicated** *significantly worse* and 8 means it has been communicated *significantly better*.

16. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the **frequency with which your school's behaviour policy is communicated overall**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has been **communicated** *significantly less frequently* and 8 means it has been communicated *significantly more frequently*.

17. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the level of **consistency with which staff in your school apply the behaviour policy** has increased or decreased, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the behaviour policy has been applied *significantly less consistently* and 8 means it has been applied *significantly more consistently*.

18. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which **your school's use of behaviour monitoring data and feedback systems** to track pupil behaviour and make related decisions based on evidence, has increased or decreased compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the **use of behaviour monitoring data and feedback systems** has *significantly decreased* and 8 means it has *significantly increased*.

SECTION FIVE: Governance

This section explores any changes in your school's governance and relationships since taking part in the Behaviour Hubs programme.

You'll be using a similar 8-point scale. There's no neutral option— we're asking you to lean one way or the other, even if only slightly.

19. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate **how often teaching staff are involved when it comes to designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means the **teaching staff are involved** *significantly less frequently* and 8 means they are involved *significantly more frequently*.

20. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which **the SLT are involved in designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means **the SLT are involved** *significantly less frequently* and 8 means they are involved *significantly more frequently*.

21. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which **pupils are involved in designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means pupils are involved *significantly less frequently* and 8 means they are involved *significantly more frequently*.

22. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which **parents are involved in designing / developing / testing the behaviour policy**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme.

For this question, 1 means **parents are involved** *significantly less frequently* and 8 means they are involved *significantly more frequently*.

23. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which your school has **increased or decreased the number of staff who have a dedicated behaviour role**, compared to the period before the Behaviour Hubs programme. This can include changes in job descriptions of existing staff and FTE, not merely changes in head-count.

For this question, 1 means the **number of staff with a dedicated behaviour role** has *significantly decreased* and 8 means the number of staff with a dedicated behaviour role has *significantly increased*.

SECTION SIX: Role of the programme

In this section, we're asking you to reflect on how much the Behaviour Hubs programme contributed to the changes you've described so far — whether in behaviour, policy, relationships, or school culture.

You'll be using a similar **8-point scale**, where:

- **1** means the programme had *no positive impact at all*,

- **8** means it played a *major role in driving positive change*.

Just to recap:

- **1 to 4** reflect **negative or limited impact**,

- **5 to 8** reflect a **moderate to strong positive impact**.

There's no neutral option— we're asking you to lean one way or the other, even if only slightly

24. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme were **useful** for your school, **generally speaking**.

For this question, 1 means the activities *were not useful at all* and 8 means *they were extremely useful*.

25. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme served as **inspiration for your school's approach to managing behaviour.**

For this question, 1 means your school *was not at all inspired by the activities*, and 8 means your school *was extremely inspired by them*.

26. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme **challenged / changed your school's way of thinking concerning pupil behaviour or behaviour management**.

For this question, 1 means the activities *did not challenge / change your school's way of thinking at all*, and 1 means the activities *significantly challenged / changed your school's way of thinking*

27. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme provided **useful guidance**.

For this question, 1 means the activities *did not provide useful guidance at all*, and 8 means the activities *provided extremely useful guidance*

28. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme changed your **order of priorities in managing behaviour** (e.g. made you give importance or focus on things you were not prioritising or focusing on before the programme).

For this question, 1 means the activities *did not change your school's priorities at all*, and 8 means the activities *significantly changed your school's priorities*

29. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the activities funded by the Behaviour Hubs programme **increased or decreased your school's confidence in its pre-existing behaviour management plans**.

For this question, 1 means the activities *significantly decreased your school's confidence in its pre-existing plans*, and 8 means the activities *significantly increased your school's confidence in its pre-existing plans*

SECTION SEVEN: Programme activities

In this section, we're asking you to reflect on the different elements of the Behaviour Hubs programme — what helped the most, what helped the least, and what influenced the overall success in your school.

You'll be asked to rank a list of factors, with 1 being the most important. This will help us understand which aspects had the greatest impact and where improvements could be made.

There are no right or wrong answers — just your honest view on what made the biggest difference.

30. Please rank the following **programme activities** in order of importance based on **how helpful they were for your school**, with 1 being the most important
    a. Visits to the lead school
    b. Visits to other partner schools
    c. Networking events
    d. Online training modules
    e. Other online resources

31. Please rank the following aspects of **programme design** in order of importance based on **how helpful they were for your school**, with 1 being the most important
    a. Defined timelines and planning requirements (such as, for example, the Action Plan)
    b. The ability to tailor the programme to your school's needs
    c. The combination of theoretical and practical learning
    d. Mandatory participation of two SLT members

32. Please rank the following factors in order of importance, based on the extent to which they **made it easier for the programme to work**, with 1 being the most important
    a. Individual motivation of staff (SLT or teaching staff)
    b. Trust and collaboration among staff
    c. Trust between pupils and staff
    d. Available time / additional funding that could be allocated to the programme
    e. Parental attitudes

33. Please rank the following factors in order of importance based on the extent to which they **made the programme more difficult to implement**, with 1 being the most important
    a. Lack of capacity / resourcing
    b. Scheduling conflicts with the school's existing calendar of events and activities.
    c. Competing priorities
    d. High staff turnover
    e. Low staff turnover

SECTION EIGHT: Relationship with lead school and other schools

In this section, we're asking you to reflect on the relationships you formed as part of the Behaviour Hubs programme — what helped the most, what helped the least, and what influenced the overall success in your school.

You'll be asked to rank a list of factors, with 1 being the most positive. This will help us understand which aspects had the greatest impact and where improvements could be made.

There are no right or wrong answers — just your honest view on what made the biggest difference.

34. Please rank the following aspects of your **relationship with the lead school** in order of importance, based on how positive they were for your school, with 1 being the most positive
    a) Amount of learning from lead school
    b) Quality of communication with lead school

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c) Competence of lead school
d) Availability and willingness to help
e) Quality of matching (how much you had in common with the lead school)

35. Please rank the following aspects of your **relationship with other (non-lead) schools** in order of importance, based on how positive they were for your school, with 1 being the most positive
a) Amount of learning from those schools
b) Quality of communication with those schools
c) Competence of those schools
d) Availability and willingness to help
e) Quality of matching (how much you had in common with those schools)

SECTION NINE: Sustainability, external factors and challenges

In this section, we're exploring how sustainable the changes brought about by the Behaviour Hubs programme feel in your school — and what challenges may be standing in the way of long-term impact.

36. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which you **encountered challenges, outside of the confines of the programme**, that prevented you from making the most out of the Behaviour Hubs programme.

    You'll be using a similar 8-point scale, where:

    • 1 to 4 reflect limited challenges,

    • 5 to 8 reflect considerable challenges.

For this question, 1 means *you encountered no challenges* and 8 means *you encountered significant challenges*.

37. Based on a scale of 1-8, please indicate the extent to which the **changes facilitated by the Behaviour Hubs programme will be sustained in your school**.

    You'll be using a similar 8-point scale, where:

    • 1 to 4 reflect limited sustainability,
    • 5 to 8 reflect strong sustainability.

For this question, 1 means *changes will not be sustained* at all and 8 means *changes will certainly be sustained*.

38. Please rank the following factors in order of importance, based on how much you think they will impact sustainability of post-programme changes, with 1 being the most important

1. Continuous learning, adaptation, and improvement (for example to new pupil cohorts)
2. Continuous engagement / buy-in of staff, pupils, and parents
3. Continuous engagement / buy-in of leadership / SLT
4. Time the policy is in place (experience, demographic evolution)
5. Training / support for staff
6. Pupil behaviour kept high on the political agenda nationwide
7. Available funding / reversal of austerity

FINAL SECTION

Thank you for sharing your school's experience with us. In this last section, we'd like to know a bit more about the person completing the survey and the people consulted to agree on responses. These final questions are just for the individual submitting the response and will help us understand the context behind the answers provided. This information will be kept confidential and used only for analysis purposes.

Please indicate your job title:

Please indicate how long you have been in your current position:

Please indicate how many staff members were involved in agreeing answers to this survey: [number]

END

Annex 4: Topic guides

This section includes the topic guides used during fieldwork. The first was used in individual interviews with lead school staff members; the second in individual interviews with partner schools' SLT; the third in teacher focus groups; the fourth in focus groups with year 9 pupils, and the fifth in focus groups with year 6 pupils.

Interview with lead school's SLT

Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs programme

Topic guide for Lead School SLT members

Aim of the interview:
The aims of interviews with lead school SLT that have had a direct role in the programme are to explore experiences and reflections of the Behaviour Hubs programme, intended benefits, as well as wider impacts for partner schools and the sustainability of these.

The interview will cover:
- Context of the school
- Relationships with partner schools
- Changes/progress made in partner school behaviour policy / management / en-force-ment
- Sustainability of activities / policies implemented
- (Other) outcomes or impacts of the programme

The topic guide:
This guide sets out topics to cover during interviews. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why,' 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the interview. Researchers should ask a general question about the bolded topic before moving onto the more detailed indented bullets. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

The interview will last 60 minutes in total. If participant has less time available researchers should focus on changes sections 2&3.

Before the interview: Review transcripts from partner school interviews and focus groups. Pay particular attention to the sections about the relationship with the Lead school and the changes made in their behaviour policy/ management /enforcement.

Introduction [3 mins]
- Introduce yourself and NatCen Social Research: independent social research or-ganisation.

- o Introduce the evaluation of Behaviour Hubs programme.The Department for Education (DfE) has commissioned NatCen to evaluate the Behaviour Hubs programme.

- As part of our case study research, we are conducting interviews with Lead and Partner schools. We have already spoken to [one/two] of your Partner schools

- The interview will cover:

  - o Background and context

  - o Your relationship with Partner schools

  - o Changes to behaviour policies and processes at Partner schools

  - o Outcomes of the Behaviour Hubs programme

  - o Views of the Behaviour Hubs programme

- There are no right or wrong answers, this is not a test of your knowledge rather we are focused on learning about changes in the behaviour policy in Partner schools and whether or not they are linked with the programme.

- Participation is voluntary – you can choose to have a break at any time or not to discuss any topic.

- Digital recording – We will be audio-recording the interview, so we have an accurate record of what is said. Only the research team and McGowan, a specialist transcription service, will have access to the recordings. We only do this to preserve accuracy re: what is being said. **Check, OK?**

- Data protection – Data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.

- How we will report findings – we will not mention your name, the name of your school, or any names of people or places you mention in the report.

- We will write a report based on what everyone tells us and documents we collect from schools. This report will be published by DfE. Again, the summarised data will be anonymous.

- Disclosure – everything you tell us will be confidential. If you tell us something which suggests you, or someone else, is at serious risk of harm, we will have to report it to the NatCen Disclosure board, who will decide if an authority should be informed.

- Reminder of interview length - will last 60 minutes. **Check OK?**

- Any questions/concerns?

- Permission to start recording? **START RECORDING**

Now that we are recording, for the purpose of recording consent can you once again confirm you are happy to take part in this interview?

1. Background and context [15 min]

Aim: To gather background information on the participant, school, role within Behaviour Hubs, stage of progress and relationship with partner schools.

Personal background

- Role and length of time in role at school

Involvement with programme

- Role and responsibilities e.g., delivering training, activities, open days, support, webinars

- Assigned or volunteered for role, motivation to engage in role

School behaviour and culture in the partner schools they are familiar with before the programme

- Overview of situation around pupil behaviour

- Overall approach to handling behaviour

- Overall state and characteristics of behaviour policy (and where that came from, e.g., leadership ideology, evidence, experience of individuals, etc)

Relationship with Partner schools [VERY IMPORTANT]

- Overview of the relationship

- How it worked, what was done together, if anything

- What made it work

- Challenges in the relationship

- Learning from Partner schools

- What could have been better

- Their perception of how the partner schools benefited

2. Changes to behaviour policies and processes [25 min]

Aim: To explore the partner schools' journeys on the programme - changes to policies and processes made as a result of Behaviour Hubs, and facilitators/barriers to making change.

Changes in approach to behaviour management

- General changes in behaviour management

- *Extent of shift, if any:*

    o From emphasis on punishment to rewarding good behaviour

    o From removal from classroom to solving incidents in classrooms

- o From a reactive to a preventative approach
- o From responsibility for tackling behaviour being on SLT to teachers

Changes in behaviour policy and its implementation

- General changes in behaviour policy and implementation

- Changes in policy clarity and communication

- Changes in clarity of behaviour expectations for pupils and staff

  - o *E.g., Were expectations realistic and detailed; Were expectations understood by pupils / staff / parents; Existence of a widespread, commonly understood 'school culture'*

- Consistency

  - o Difference between formal policy and implementation

  - o Fairness and inclusivity in application

  - o Measurement of consistency

  - o Responsibility for ensuring consistency / compliance

Changes in school governance and staff support

- Changes in school governance

  - o Teacher involvement in creating / testing / disseminating policies and rules

  - o Processes for drafting and testing (innovative features of) policy

- Changes in staff engagement with and commitment to behaviour policy

- Changes in staff interaction and support

  - o Support between leadership and staff

  - o Peer-to-peer support among staff

  - o Processes for supporting and training new or reluctant staff in behaviour management

- Frequency and format of staff meetings to discuss behaviour

- Frequency and format of parent meetings to discuss behaviour

Any other changes?

3. Outcomes from programme participation [10 min]

Aim: To gain a clearer understanding of linkages between the above changes and the programme, exploring the degree of certainty with which they can be attributed to the programme, and if there are documents showing it e.g. new behaviour policy, new staff training materials, minutes / agendas from staff meetings, etc.

***[if unclear:]* Links between these changes and the Behaviour Hubs programme**

- *E.g., Staff briefings; Training; Mentoring; Developing policy*

Factors within the programme that helped or hindered change

- *E.g.: relationship with lead school (and other schools); events organised by the programme; other resources made available by the programme (e.g., behaviour advisers, training); timings of changes (e.g., staged approach).*

Factors outside the programme that helped or hindered change

- *E.g.: interaction with schools not involved in BHs, resourcing and staff time in school, staff buy-in, which roles are most directly involved and whose time is most needed*

Sustainability of outcomes over time

- Degree to which outcomes are expected to be sustained over time – are the mentioned changes short-lived or long-term?
  - *Probe in particular for those changes where there is less clarity on sustainability*
- Likelihood of sustainability
- Enablers and barriers to sustainability

4. Final thoughts [5 min]

Aim: To explore participants' overall reflections on taking parts in Behaviour Hubs, including its effectiveness, likes/dislikes and anything that could be improved

Summary reflections on:

- What was most useful / important for improving behaviour
- What was least useful / important for improving behaviour

Any other comments and thoughts

- Overview of lead school experience on programme and any changes as a result of their participation

INTERVIEWER: **STOP RECORDING**

- Thank them for time and helpful discussion.
- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity. **Check whether there is anything which they would not like included in the write up of the findings.**

Interview with partner school's SLT

Evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs programme

Topic guide for Partner schools SLT members

Aim of the interviews with SLT members:
To explore experiences and reflections of the Behaviour Hubs programme, intended benefits, wider impacts of programme involvement for the school and impact sustainability.

(Each school that joined the programme put forward the names of three members of SLT staff. This might include the headteacher/principal, deputy head, a head of year or department, or another senior member of staff. Engagement with the programme may have been shared amongst these three members of the SLT).

The interview will cover:
- Context: school behaviour pre-programme.
- Engagement with the programme.
- Relationship, learning, and activities with Lead school.
- Changes in overall approach to behaviour
- Changes / progress made in Behaviour policy / management / enforcement.
- Changes in how the school is led / governed.
- (Other) outcomes or impacts of programme.
- Factors that have facilitated or hindered achievement of outcomes / impacts.
- Sustainability of activities/policies implemented.

The topic guide:
This guide sets out topics to cover during interviews. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why,' 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the interview. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

The interview will last 60 minutes in total. If participant has less time available researchers should focus on changes sections 2&3.

Before the interview: REVIEW publicly available data (as well as the monitoring data) for that school: size, type, current Ofsted rating, diversity of student population including SEND need and support levels; demographics of local area, deprivation levels [% pupils eligible for FSMs].

Introduction [3 mins]

- Introduce yourself and NatCen Social Research

- Introduce the evaluation of Behaviour Hubs programme.

    - DfE has commissioned NatCen to independently evaluate the Behaviour Hubs programme.

- As part of our case study research, we are conducting interviews with Lead and Partner schools. Interviews do not cover the programme directly, but more changes that have occurred at the school after [end date].
  - We will also be speaking to XXXX at your school, and at a later stage with your Lead school.
- The interview will cover:
  - Background and context
  - Changes to behaviour culture, policies and processes
  - Causes of these changes
- There are no right or wrong answers, this is not a test of your knowledge rather we are focused on learning about changes in behaviour and / or behaviour policy in your school, whether or not they are linked with the programme.
- Participation is voluntary – you can choose to have a break at any time or not to discuss any topic.
- Digital recording – We will be audio-recording the interview, so we have an accurate record of what is said. Only the research team and McGowan, a specialist transcription service, will have access to the recordings. We only do this to preserve accuracy re: what is being said. **Check, OK?**
- Data protection – Data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.
- How we will report findings – we will not mention your name, name of school, or any names of people or places you mention in report.
- We will write a report based on what everyone tells us and documents we collect from schools. This report will be published by DfE. Again, the synthesised data will be anonymous.
- Disclosure – everything you tell us will be confidential. However, if you tell us something which suggests you, or someone else, is at serious risk of harm, we will have to report it to the NatCen Disclosure board, who would decide if an authority should be informed.
- Reminder of interview length - will last up to 60 minutes. **Check OK?**
- Any questions/concerns?
- Permission to start recording?

START RECORDING

Now that we are recording, for the purpose of recording consent can you once again confirm you are happy to take part in this interview?

1. Background and context [20 min]

Aim: To gather background information on participant, school, in relation to both the pre-programme and the post-programme phase (request supporting documents to evidence their answers to key questions, either during or at end of interview); motivation for enrolling on the programme, engagement with programme (and stage of progress for Cohort 9 schools).

RESEARCHER GUIDANCE: Ask a general question about the bolded topic before moving onto the more detailed indented bullets

Personal background

- Current role and responsibilities at school
- Time in role at school, previous roles at school or in other schools

Involvement with programme

- Role & responsibilities
- Assigned or volunteered for role
- Nature of involvement e.g., training, activities, open days, support, webinars

Motivation for school signing up to the programme.

- Why/when signed up to the programme.
- School involvement in other improvement/behaviour interventions

School behaviour and culture pre-programme

- Overview of situation around pupil behaviour
- What was considered acceptable, normal and aspirational behaviour
- Type and frequency of behavioural issues
- Wider challenges e.*g. Staff morale, retention and recruitment; Post-Covid; Mental health; SEND; Suspension & exclusion rates*

Behaviour management approach pre-programme

- Overall approach to handling behaviour
- Punishment vs. rewarding good behaviour
- Solving incidents in classrooms vs. removal from classroom
- Preventative vs. reactive approach
- Teacher responsibility vs. SLT responsibility

Behaviour policy and its implementation pre-programme

- Overall state and characteristics of the policy
- Formal vs. informal

- Consistency of policy communication and application amongst the teaching body and across pupils (inc. different year groups, SEND etc)

- Responsibility for establishing / enforcing / monitoring the policy

- Modes of embedding the policy *e.g., Assemblies; Parent communication; Inset days; Staff training*

Relationship with Lead School and other schools [VERY IMPORTANT]

- Overview of the relationship

- How it worked, what was done together

- What made it work

- Challenges in the relationship

- Learnings from Lead school and other schools

- What could have been better

2. Changes to overall approach to behaviour, policies, and processes [20 min]

Aim: To explore the school's journey during and after the programme period - changes to overall approach to behaviour, policies, processes, and governance, and facilitators/barriers to change. Request supporting documents.

RESEARCHER GUIDANCE: Ask general question on bolded title before moving onto indented bullets.

Changes in pupil behaviour during and after *[programme dates]*

- Overview of changes in pupil behaviour

Changes in behaviour management

- General changes in behaviour management

- *Extent of shift, if any:*

    o From emphasis on punishment to rewarding good behaviour

    o From removal from classroom to solving incidents in classrooms

    o From a reactive to a preventative approach

    o From responsibility for tackling behaviour being on SLT to teachers

Changes in behaviour policy and its implementation

- General – Did the behaviour policy change during and after [programme dates]?

- Changes in policy clarity and communication

- Consistency

- o Difference between formal policy and implementation

- o Fairness and inclusivity in application

- o Measurement of consistency

- o Responsibility for ensuring consistency / compliance

- Changes in clarity of behaviour expectations for pupils and staff

  - o *E.g., Were expectations realistic and detailed; Were expectations understood by pupils / staff / parents; Existence of a widespread, commonly understood 'school culture'*

School governance and staff support

- Changes in school governance

  - o Teacher involvement in creating / testing / disseminating policies and rules

  - o Processes for drafting and testing (innovative features of) policy

- Changes in staff engagement with and commitment to behaviour policy

- Changes in staff interaction and support

  - o Support between leadership and staff

  - o Peer-to-peer support among staff

  - o Processes for supporting and training new or reluctant staff in behaviour management

- Frequency and format of staff meetings to discuss behaviour

- Frequency and format of parent meetings to discuss behaviour

Any other changes?

Why do you think these changes have taken place?

3. Outcomes and causal factors [10 min]

Aim: To gain a clearer understanding of linkages between the above changes and the programme, exploring the degree of certainty with which they can be attributed to the programme, and if there are documents showing it e.g. new behaviour policy, new staff training materials, minutes / agendas from staff meetings, etc

[if unclear:] **Links between these changes and the Behaviour Hubs programme**

- *E.g., Staff briefings; Training; Mentoring; Developing policy*

Factors within the programme that helped or hindered change

- *E.g.: relationship with lead school (and other schools); events organised by the programme; other resources made available by the programme (e.g., behaviour advisers, training); timings of changes (e.g., staged approach).*

Factors outside the programme that helped or hindered change

- *E.g.: resourcing and staff time in school, which roles are most directly involved and whose time is most needed*

Sustainability of outcomes over time

- Degree to which outcomes are expected to be sustained over time – are the mentioned changes short-lived or long-term?
    - *Probe in particular for those changes where there is less clarity on sustainability*

- Likelihood of sustainability

- Enablers and barriers to sustainability

4. Final thoughts [5 min]

Summary reflections on:

- What was most useful / important for improving behaviour

- What was least useful / important for improving behaviour

Any other comments and thoughts

INTERVIEWER: **STOP RECORDING**

- Thank them for time and helpful discussion.

- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity. **Check whether there is anything which they would not like included in the write up of the findings**.

Focus group with teachers

Evaluation of Behaviour Hubs

Topic Guide for Teacher Focus Groups

Aim of the focus groups:

To learn about experiences and reflections about their school's participation in the Behaviour Hubs programme and impact on behaviour culture in practice. Teachers may not be aware of their school's participation; however, this topic guide covers detection of potential areas of change in approaches to behaviour management - such as policies and practices - and changes to overall behaviour culture. The topic guide will be tailored to the specific details of each partner school e.g. time periods on programme.

Case study researchers will need to complete prep prior to the focus group from available documents e.g. website, review: Ofsted reports, Behaviour Policy (and date updated), identify pre-/post-Behaviour Hubs dates to signpost focus group participants.

Focus groups will cover:
- Context / school behaviour pre-programme.
- Awareness of the programme.
- Changes in overall approach to behaviour.
- Changes to Behaviour policy/management and practices/enforcement.
- (Other) outcomes or impacts of programme.
- Factors that have facilitated or hindered achievement of outcomes / impacts.

The topic guide:
This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during focus groups. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, and examples/evidence sought. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

The focus group will last up to 1 hour.

Introduction [3 mins]

Aim: to introduce teachers to the evaluation, provide information as to purpose and format of group, and clarify any questions.

- Introduce yourself and NatCen Social Research: independent social research organisation.

- Introduce the evaluation of the Behaviour Hubs programme.

    o DfE has commissioned NatCen to independently evaluate the Behaviour Hubs programme.

- As part of our case study research, we are conducting focus groups with teachers, alongside interviews with SLT members at your school, and a focus group with pupils from year 6/9.
- We are interested in changes more generally, not exclusively in relation to the Behaviour Hubs programme.

- This discussion will cover:
    - Context / school behaviour pre-programme.
    - Awareness of the programme.
    - Changes in overall approach to behaviour (linked or unlinked to the programme).
    - Changes to Behaviour policy/management and practices/enforcement (linked or unlinked).
    - Changes in school governance and in the way staff interacts with other staff (linked or unlinked)
    - (Other) changes (linked or unlinked).
    - Factors that have facilitated or hindered these changes.

- No right or wrong answers, and not a test of knowledge about the programme. In fact there is no expectation that you are aware of the programme or that the programme has any impact at all – awareness is not necessary to participate in the group.

- Participation is completely voluntary – you are under no obligation to take part and can withdraw if you wish. You can choose to have a break at any time or not contribute to the discussion if you are uncomfortable doing so.

- Digital recording – We will be audio-recording the interview, so we have an accurate record of what is said. Only the research team and McGowan, a specialist transcription service, will have access to the recordings. **Check, OK?**

- Data protection – Data kept securely in accordance with GDPR.

- How we will report findings – we will not mention your name, the name of your school, or any names of people or places you mention in the report.

- We will write a report based on what everyone tells us and documents we collect from schools. This report will be published by DfE. The synthesised data will be anonymous.

- Disclosure – everything you tell us will be confidential. However, if you tell us something which suggests you, or someone else, is at serious risk of harm, we will have to report it to the NatCen Disclosure board, who will decide if an authority should be informed.

- Reminder of focus group length - will last about an hour. **Check OK?**

- Any questions/concerns?

- Permission to start recording? **START RECORDING**

Now that we are recording, for the purpose of recording consent can you once again confirm you are happy to take part in this interview?

1. Background and context [10-15 min]

Aim: To gather background information on the participants role at school, school position pre-programme phase; knowledge of the school's engagement with Behaviour Hubs; pre-programme behaviour policy and culture.

Facilitator note:

- When introducing this section make clear that the focus should be on the position of the school before the programme took place.

- Explain that for us to understand the changes that may or may not have taken place over the course of the Behaviour Hubs programme, it's important that we understand what the school was like before the programme.

- Explain that [colleague name] will explore changes and the current situation of the school in the next section.

Background

- Name, role, length of time at school

School behaviour and culture pre-programme

- Overview of situation around pupil behaviour

- What was considered acceptable, normal and aspirational behaviour

- Type and frequency of behavioural issues

- Wider challenges e.*g., Staff morale, retention and recruitment; Post-Covid; Mental health; SEND; Suspension & exclusion rates*

Behaviour management pre-programme

- Overall approach to handling behaviour

- Punishment vs rewarding good behaviour

- Solving incidents in classrooms vs. removal from classroom

- Preventative vs. reactive approach

- Teacher responsibility vs. SLT responsibility

Behaviour policy and its implementation pre-programme

- Overall state and characteristics of the policy

- Formal vs. informal

- Consistency of communication and implementation amongst teachers and across pupils (inc. different year groups, SEND etc)

- Responsibility for establishing / enforcing / monitoring the policy

- Modes of embedding the policy *e.g., Assemblies; Parent communication; Inset days; Staff training*

2. Changes in the school during the period [start-end] [20-25 min]

Aim: To explore school's journey on the programme - changes to overall approach to behaviour, policies, processes, and governance, seemingly made as a result of the programme, and facilitators/barriers to change.

Changes in pupil behaviour during and after [programme dates]

- Overview of changes in pupil behaviour

Changes in behaviour management

- General changes in behaviour management

- *Extent of shift, if any:*
    - From emphasis on punishment to rewarding good behaviour
    - From removal from classroom to solving incidents in classrooms
    - From a reactive to a preventative approach
    - From responsibility for tackling behaviour being on SLT to teachers

Changes in behaviour policy and its implementation

- General - Did the behaviour policy change during and after [programme dates]?

- Changes in policy clarity and communication

- Difference between formal policy and implementation

- Consistency of communication and implementation amongst teachers and across pupils (inc. different year groups, SEND etc.)

School governance and staff support

- Changes in school governance
    - Responsibility for amending and redesigning behaviour policy
    - Responsibility for implementing behaviour policy
    - Responsibility for monitoring behaviour policy
    - Teacher involvement in creating / testing / disseminating policies and rules
    - Processes for drafting and testing (innovative features of) policy

- Changes in staff engagement with and commitment to behaviour policy

- Changes in staff interaction and support
    - Support between leadership and staff

- o Peer-to-peer support among staff
  - o Processes for supporting and training new or reluctant staff in behaviour management
- Frequency and format of staff meetings to discuss behaviour
- Frequency and format of parent meetings to discuss behaviour

Any other changes?

Why do you think these changes have taken place?

3. Outcomes and sustainability of outcomes [10 min]

Aim: To gain a more in-depth understanding of the programme's link to the changes mentioned above.

[if unclear:] **Links between these changes and the Behaviour Hubs programme**

- *E.g., Staff briefings; Training; Mentoring; Developing policy*

[if programme link still unclear:] **Factors that have contributed to change**

Sustainability of outcomes over time

- Degree to which outcomes are expected to be sustained over time – are the mentioned changes short-term or long-lived?
- Likelihood of sustainability
- Enablers and barriers to sustainability

4. Final thoughts [5 min]

Can everyone clarify their involvement and/or knowledge of Behaviour Hubs

- How Behaviour Hubs information was cascaded to staff
- How active / passive was their role / engagement.

INTERVIEWER: **STOP RECORDING**

Thank the group for their time and helpful discussion.

Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity.

Acknowledge that participants may have found topic upsetting and signpost to local support networks & mental health organisations.

Focus group with year 9 pupils

Evaluation of Behaviour Hubs

Topic Guide for pupil discussion group (Secondary Year 9)

Aim of the group discussion:

To explore:

- participants' experiences and reflections of their school's behavioural ap-proach and perception of school culture

- how the behaviour policy operates in practice

- the perceived effectiveness of their school's approach to managing behaviour.

- Perceptions of whether, and if so how, their schools' approach to behaviour management has changed (over the Bhubs programme duration)

- suggestions for improving their school's approach to managing behaviour

The topic guide:

This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the group discussion. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the interview. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, behaviours and experiences have arisen.

Researcher prep:

Please be very rigorous in timekeeping, the two central sections are very important.

The group discussion will last up to 60 minutes.

Introduction [3 minutes]

- Introduce yourself and NatCen.

  - My name is [NAME]. I'm a researcher.

  - I work at The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). We carry out research in different policy areas, including education. We're independent, which means we are not part of Government or any other organisation.

- Introduce the study and the group discussion:

  - We're talking to pupils in primary and secondary schools across England about what they think of their school's approach to managing behaviour.

  - We have/will also be speaking to some teachers about their experiences and thoughts, including some at your school, but we will not share the con-tent of this discussion with any of the teachers nor anyone else outside of our core research team.

- At the end of the research, we'll write a report about what we've found out, but we will not mention you or your school by name.
- We'll talk for up to 60 minutes.

- Go over ground rules and expectations:
  - This is not a test. We are simply interested in what you all have to say. There are no right or wrong answers.
  - Taking part is voluntary. It's really important that you all know that it's up to you if you take part today. That means that you can skip any of the questions or stop taking part at any point.
  - To make sure everybody feels comfortable sharing their ideas, please don't repeat anything that's said during our conversation outside the room.
  - Please try not to speak over each other and let everyone have a chance to contribute -It's ok to have different opinions but really important to be respectful of everyone in the room and listen to what others have to say.

- I won't share what we talk about today with anyone outside of the team. The only reason I might have to tell someone is if you say something that makes me worried about your or someone else's safety.

- I'd like to use an audio recorder just to help me remember what we talked about.
  - The recording will not be shared outside of the team and the professional transcription service we have confidentiality agreements with. It will be deleted once we've written the research report.
  - Is it OK if I use the recorder?

- Does all of that sound OK to you? Have you got any questions before we start?

- Ask for permission to start recording. **START RECORDING**

INTERVIEWER: Turn on recorder and obtain verbal consent on recording to participate

1. Background and icebreaker [8 min]

Aim: To ease participants into the group discussion and gather background information on them.

INTERVIEWER: Give participants 2 minutes to ask the person sat next to them a) their name b) one thing they have enjoyed in the last week. Then go around the room asking each participant to introduce their partner.

2. Behaviour policies, culture and change [25 min]

Aim: To explore participants' experiences and reflections about behaviour culture at their school now, and reflect on how this has changed (over BHubs programme duration; try

not to mention the programme directly, but have in mind its start and end date for the school)

[Hand out scenario sheets]

INTERVIEWER (verbatim): *I'd like us to think about what behaviour looks like at your school and how that is managed. In small groups I'd like you to think of examples of "good"' and "poor" behaviour and how your school would respond to this behaviour. For example, what would be the consequences to behaving this way and how would your teacher or another member of staff react? I've got a couple of examples you can use, or you can come up with your own.*

[After 8-10 minutes: Ask pupils to explain the different situations they've discussed. If you have a whiteboard or flipchart, write down the situations that pupils have drawn or written about, under a 'good' behaviour list and a 'poor' behaviour list.]

Probes on communication and consistency (pick 2-3 of above situations):

- How do you know that this is good/poor behaviour? How was it communicated to you? *E.g., school rules*

- Do you think all teachers and staff would react in the same way to this behaviour?

- Which staff/teacher would deal with this situation if it happened?

- *[If pupils disagree, probe on differences between teachers and/or levels of staff]*

Changes to behaviour rules and management:

- Have there been any changes in behaviour rules and the ways your teachers deal with behaviour, or has it always been the same?

- [*If yes:*]

  - What changed? When?

  - Why do you think it changed?

  - How did you find out things changed?

  - Do you think the changes are better, worse or the same for the school alto-gether?

  - Do you think the changes are better, worse or the same for you individu-ally?

3. Behaviour management in practice and perceived effectiveness (25 min)

Aim: To explore how behaviour management operates in practice and pupils' views on perceived effectiveness

[Hand out agree/disagree cards]

INTERVIEWER (verbatim): *I'm now going to read out some statements about school behaviour. For each of these I'd like to know whether you agree or disagree with them. If you agree, hold up the green card, and if you disagree, hold up the red card. If you're in-between, or not sure, hold up the yellow card. It's completely okay if you all have different opinions and hold up different cards. Then, after everyone's held up their cards, I'll ask you <u>why</u> you agree or disagree. Does that sound okay?*

Probe responses for each statement (explore reasons why and timeframe)

- Explore links to pupils' previous comments on behaviour management to identify inconsistencies
- If their views on these statements have changed over the last [agree timeframe]
- Differences between teachers
- Differences between 'good' and 'poor' behaviour
- Experiences and examples

STATEMENTS:

1) The staff in my school apply the rules in the same way for all pupils
2) I know how my school expects me to behave
3) My school makes sure pupils follow the school rules
4) I know what will happen if I break the school rules
5) My school tells parents about pupils' behaviour
6) My school rewards pupils for good behaviour
7) My school supports pupils to improve their behaviour
8) My school manages/deals with behaviour well

4. Final thoughts [2 min]

Aim: To gather final reflections

- Anything they think school has done well and not so well in managing behaviour at school
- Anything they think their school should focus on now to improve behaviour

<u>TURN OFF RECORDER</u>

- Thank them for their time and for the helpful discussion. Stress the value of discussion in helping to inform our research.

- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity.

- If they have any questions about the research, they can also ask Mr/Ms [key adult] to get in touch with us or contact us directly. The contact details are also on the information sheet they have received.

- Wish them a good rest of Year 9!

Focus group with year 6 pupils

Evaluation of Behaviour Hubs

Topic Guide for pupil discussion group (Primary Year 6)

Aim of the group discussion:
The aims of the group discussion with pupils are to explore:
- participants' experiences and reflections of their school's behavioural ap-proach and perception of school culture
- how the behaviour policy operates in practice
- the perceived effectiveness of their school's approach to managing behaviour.
- Perceptions of whether, and if so how, their schools' approach to behaviour man-agement has changed (over the Bhubs programme duration)
- suggestions for improving their school's approach to managing behaviour

The topic guide:
This guide sets out topics and questions to cover during the group discussion. The guide does not contain follow-up probes and questions like 'why', 'when', and 'how', etc., as participants' contributions will be explored in this way, as far as is feasible, during the in-terview. Researchers will use prompts and probes to understand how and why views, be-haviours and experiences have arisen.

Researcher prep:
Please be very rigorous in timekeeping. The central sections are very important.
The group discussion will last 60 minutes.

Introduction [3 minutes]

- Introduce yourself and NatCen.
  - o My name is [NAME]. I'm a researcher.
  - o I work at The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). We carry out re-search on different subjects, including schools. We're independent, which means we are not part of Government or any other organisation.
- Introduce the study and the group discussion:
  - o We're talking to pupils in primary and secondary schools across England about what they think of their school's approach to managing behaviour.
  - o We have/will also be speaking to some teachers about their experiences and thoughts on how the school handles behaviour issues. Not about your behav-iour! But the general policy, the general approach.
  - o At the end of the research, we'll write a report about what we've found out, but we will not mention you or your school by its name.
  - o We'll talk for up to about 45 minutes *[depending on time allocated]*.
- Go over ground rules and expectations:

- o This is not a test. We are interested in what **you all have to say**. There are no right or wrong answers.

- o Taking part is voluntary. It's really important that you all know that it's up to you if you take part today. That means that you can skip any of the questions or stop taking part at any point

- o To make sure everybody feels comfortable sharing their ideas, please don't repeat anything that's said during our conversation outside the room.

- o **If you have something to say, please raise your hand. It's ok to have different opinions but really important to be respectful of everyone in the room and listen to what others have to say.**

- I won't share what we talk about today with anyone outside of the team. This means that I won't tell your teacher or your parents what you say. The only reason I might have to tell someone is if you say something that makes me worried about your or someone else's safety.

- I'd like to use an audio recorder just to help me remember what we talked about.

  - o I won't share the recording with your teachers or anyone else, other than our research team, and another organisation that will listen to the recording and then write up what was said and send it back to us, just to help us remember everything we've talked about. We'll delete it once we've talked to all the pupils and written the report.

  - o Is it OK if I use the recorder?

- Does all of that sound OK to you? Have you got any questions before we start?

- Ask for permission to start recording. **START RECORDING**

FACILITATOR: Turn on recorder and obtain verbal consent on recording to participate

I'll go round the group and if you could just say 'yes I agree to you recording' please.

1. Background and icebreaker [8 min]

Aim: To ease pupils into the group discussion format, turn taking.

INTERVIEWER: Give participants 2 minutes to ask the person sat next to them a) their name b) one thing they have enjoyed today. Then go around the room taking it in turns to introduce their partner.

2. Behaviour policies, culture and change [25 min]

Aim: To explore participants' experiences and reflections about behaviour culture at their school now, and reflect on how this may have changed (over BH programme duration but without mentioning it directly; keep programme duration clear in mind).

[Hand out storyboard sheets]

INTERVIEWER (verbatim): *I'd like us to think about what good and poor behaviour looks like at your school and how that is dealt with. Let's spend 10 minutes drawing or writing about what you think good and poor behaviour looks like, and how your school would respond to this behaviour. For example, what would be the consequences to behaving this way and how would your teacher or another member of staff react?*

[After 8-10 minutes: Ask pupils to explain what they have drawn or written. If you have a whiteboard or flipchart, write down the situations that pupils have drawn or written about, under a 'good' behaviour list and a 'poor' behaviour list.]

Probes on communication and consistency (pick 2-3 of above situations):

- How do you know that this is good/poor behaviour? How was it communicated to you? *E.g., school rules*

- Do you think all teachers and staff would react in the same way to this behaviour?

- Which staff/teacher would deal with this situation if it happened?

- *[If pupils disagree, probe on differences between teachers and/or levels of staff]*

Changes to behaviour rules and management:

- Have there been any changes in behaviour rules and the ways your teachers deal with behaviour, or has it always been the same?

- [*If yes:*]

    o What changed? When?

    o Why do you think it changed?

    o How did you find out things changed?

    o Do you think the changes are better, worse or the same for the school altogether?

    o Do you think the changes are better, worse or the same for you individually?

3. Behaviour management in practice and perceived effectiveness (25 min)

Aim: To explore how behaviour management operates in practice and pupils' views on perceived effectiveness

INTERVIEWER (verbatim): *I'm now going to read out some statements about school behaviour. For each of these I'd like to know whether you agree or disagree with them. If you agree, hold up the green card, and if you disagree, hold up the red card. If you're in-between, or not sure, hold up the yellow card. It's completely okay if you all have different opinions and hold up different cards. Then, after everyone's held up their cards, I'll ask you <u>why</u> you agree or disagree. Does that sound okay?*

Probe responses for each statement (explore reasons why and timeframe)

- Explore links to pupils' previous comments on behaviour management to identify inconsistencies

- If their views on these statements have changed over the last [agree timeframe]

- Differences between teachers

- Differences between 'good' and 'poor' behaviour

- Experiences and examples

STATEMENTS:

1) The staff in my school apply the rules in the same way for all pupils

2) I know how my school expects me to behave

3) My school makes sure pupils follow the school rules

4) I know what will happen if I break the school rules

5) My school tells parents about pupils' behaviour

6) My school rewards pupils for good behaviour

7) My school supports pupils to improve their behaviour

8) My school manages/deals with behaviour well

4. Final thoughts [2 min]

Aim: To gather final reflections

- Anything they think their school has done well / not so well in managing/dealing with behaviour at school

- Anything they think their school should focus on now to improve behaviour

TURN OFF RECORDER

- Thank them for their time and for the helpful discussion. Stress the value of discussion in helping to inform our research.

- Reiterate confidentiality and anonymity.

- If you have any questions about the research, you can also ask your teacher, Mr/Ms [key adult] to get in touch with us or contact us directly. The contact details are also on the information sheet they have received.

- Wish them a good rest of Year 6!

Annex 5: Accessible version of the Theory of Change

Situation	Good behaviour in school is crucial if children are to learn and reach their full potential. Misbehaviour is a significant challenge for many schools, negatively impacting performance and wellbeing for teachers and pupils. Evidence suggests that standards of behaviour can be improved. Leadership is key to embedding positive behaviour cultures in schools, and high-quality training and support has the potential to empower school leaders to improve behaviour culture.
Aims	The Behaviour Hubs programme is a whole school approach seeking to improve and sustain a school's behaviour culture and practice to help create and maintain a calm, safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning.

Inputs	• £10m DfE funding (2019-2025)
	• DfE-appointed team of behaviour advisers and school partnership leads (SPLs) to:
	    ○ Oversee and quality assure the programme.
	    ○ Deliver training & resources.
	• DfE-appointed Delivery Centre to:
	    ○ Provide administrative and grant management services.
	    ○ Select and match schools
	• DfE-appointed lead schools

Activities	• Partner schools/MATs access adviser-led training, hub networking events, lead school open day events, online resources and SPL coaching calls
	• In addition, partner schools/MATs access 1 of 3 types of support from their lead MAT /school:
	    ○ Core support: access to 2hr action planning surgery at lead school.
	    ○ Extended support: Bespoke one-to-one 8-12 days of support from a lead school to support diagnosis, action planning, implementation and monitoring.
	    ○ Multi-school support: Executive team in partner MAT is supported to launch MAT-wide approaches to behaviour. In addition, a school within partner MAT receives extended support.
	• Lead schools / MATs access SPL coaching calls, trouble-shooting support from delivery agent, induction and refresher training and networking events with SPL and other leads.
	• Delivery Centre works with DfE and evaluator to support evaluation activity.
	• Emerging learning used to refine activities.

Outputs	Change mechanism	Outcomes	Impacts
Adviser-led training events. Online resources including good practice examples and behaviour management tools. Staff and pupil partner school survey reports to inform action planning by schools. Action Plan (a living document) developed by school / MAT in term 1 as a guide to journey on the programme. Updated in term complete the programme to be a guide to ongoing sustainability and continuous improvement. Delivered training sessions. New / updated behaviour policies and approaches in partner schools. School partnerships and hubs for leaders and teachers to share good behaviour management practices, support & information. Increased access to CPD (information,	Beliefs, cognitive resources: Discovery of what is possible and realistic. Increased awareness of requirements, particularly on the relevance of - behaviour culture - consistency and routines - timing - changing staff relationships Increased confidence in already existing processes and plans.	**Short term** **Pupils, Parents and Workforce** Increased understanding of, effective implementation and adherence to behaviour policy. Increased interaction and discussion of behaviour data and policy (teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, SLT-teacher) Belief in the benefits of the school's behaviour policy for pupils and school, colleagues and self. Increased confidence in effectively managing behaviour and in leadership support. **School-wide** Clear and consistent overall approach to BP, new approach to teacher-pupil relationship. **Medium term** **Pupils** Improved behaviour; fewer incidents of low-level disruption and bullying.	Sustained improvements to partner schools and MATs (post 2 years) **Pupils** Improved attendance, truancy and punctuality. Improved attainment and outcomes. **Workforce** Sustained behaviour management practices. Improved staff wellbeing. **School / MAT wide** Improved Ofsted ratings Sustained positive behaviour cultures. Increased 1st place preference in school applications.

Outputs	Change mechanism	Outcomes	Impacts
support and tools) to inform behaviour management practice. Access to advice of experienced schools who had successfully navigated similar challenges. In-person visits to schools and 'immersive' experiences into a similar reality to the one they were aspiring to create. Tailored feedback on policies and plans.		Increased perceptions of safety, belonging, enjoyment of school, and sense of wellbeing. Positive attitudes to learning. Improved attendance, less truancy and increased punctuality. **Workforce** Less teaching / learning time lost to low-level disruption. **School / MAT wide** Clear and consistent whole-school approaches to behaviour management with reasonable adjustments.	

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