



CASE STUDY REPORT

Behaviour and attendance: The role of the senior leadership team (SLT) in leading and managing improvement

Una Simpson

This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to improve attendance and behaviour in the mathematics department, and to develop a whole-school approach to behaviour and attendance, resulting in improved classroom climate and access to learning.

Aims: The main aim is to improve behaviour and attendance in the mathematics department, leading to improved classroom climate and increased access to learning.

Methods: The participants in this case study are the National Strategies consultant, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Head Teacher, the Deputy Head, the Attendance Lead, and the B&A consultant. Methods used to improve pupil learning included lesson observations, data comparison of cohorts, test results, CPD approaches, CPD materials, support from senior management, and interventions.

Findings: The main findings are that the mathematics department achieved its target of 30% grade C+ at GCSE, CVA improved, attendance improved, exclusions reduced, and the school environment is calmer with increased clarity regarding expected behaviours.

Implications: The findings suggest that improved attendance and behaviour can lead to improved learning outcomes, such as increased CVA scores and GCSE results. Additionally, increased ownership of the behaviour and attendance agenda by middle leaders and subject departments can lead to a calmer school environment and increased access to learning.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Secondary education; Behaviour and attendance

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

In March 2007 I was allocated time to support the mathematics department as part of a coordinated package of support from Regional Advisers and a local authority (LA) consultant. The target pupil group consisted of 70 Year 11 pupils who needed to achieve grade 'C+' to support the overall number of pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A*-C.

Poor pupil behaviour high absence from lessons were significant issues across this department.

As well as focusing support at the 70 pupils I encouraged the senior leadership team (SLT) to implement a series of strategies to secure attendance at Key Stage 3 Tests.

Positive outcomes led to agreement between National Strategies, LA and Head Teacher that I would offer support to the Senior Leadership team regarding issues related to behaviour and attendance in the academic year 2007-08. SLT welcomed this initiative.

Watch the Teachers TV video of this case study:

Who might find this case study useful?

- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Behaviour and attendance

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

The intention was to secure improved attendance of target Year 11 pupils in mathematics lessons and to work with the B&A consultant and Regional Adviser (mathematics) to create an improved classroom climate to support learning.

When I realised there was a vulnerability regarding attendance during Key Stage 3 Tests week this became an additional focus of my support.

The intention of the second phase of support was to secure a whole-school approach to behaviour and attendance by offering direct support to the senior leadership team. As a consequence there would be a rise in attendance, a reduction in exclusions and improvements in the climate for teaching and learning.

What were your success criteria?

March to June 2007

- Target year 11 pupils attending a majority of mathematics lessons.
- A reduction in the number of incidents disrupting Year 11 lessons.
- A majority of Year 9 pupils attending Key Stage 3 Tests.

September 2007 onwards

- The development of whole-school systems and structures to support a reducing trend in the number of exclusions and to promote regular attendance.
- To secure an approach where every level of the escalation process provides a supportive route back whilst maintaining pupil learning as a core priority.

- The establishment of regular analysis of a range of data to inform intervention programmes and to support monitoring of impact.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Data comparison of cohorts
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Target Year 11 pupil in mathematics

Lesson observations and leadership enquiry were part of a modelling exercise to support the school strategy manager and head of department in finding solutions.

Lesson observations supported the collation of behaviour and punctuality data which was then correlated with individual pupil attainment data to give improved pupil profiles.

Outcomes subsequently informed next steps in terms of the reorganisation of groups, lesson content, in-class support and the role of the attendance team.

Improving behaviour and attendance

Half termly touch base meetings give SLT time to:

- reflect on the current status of behaviour and attendance
- be informed of national agendas
- discuss and evidence the impact of interventions and reach agreement on next steps.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

The B&A consultant is allocated a high percentage of time in the school to support staff CPD. The contributions to date have been well received and there is a confidence from SLT and staff that the support is making a difference.

Materials to support include:

- the behaviour self-review developed by the B&A programme
- resources from the local authority attendance strategy 'Wise-up.'

Who provided you with support?

- Senior management

How were you supported?

The Head Teacher recognised the task required to secure stepped changes in behaviour and attendance and valued the input from an external resource to offer support and challenge to key members of the senior team.

The Deputy Head and Attendance lead understand the vision and take a very proactive role in developing relevant systems and structures to support.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

The mathematics department succeeded in meeting its target of 30% grade C+ at GCSE. CVA for KS2-KS4 and KS3-KS4 improved. Unfortunately some of the target group to get 5+ Grade A*-C did not achieve grade C+.

The KS3 Tests attendance strategy was deemed a success because attendance improved on the previous year and there were real concerns the turn out would be poor.

The overall attendance strategy has been refined and improved over the last term and there is a confidence attendance will break the 90% boundary. The number of pupils approaching the persistent absence category is reducing.

The school environment is calmer and there is increased clarity regarding expected behaviours through positive reinforcement. The number of on-calls are reducing signalling a reduction in classroom disruption and as a consequence increased access to learning.

Fixed period exclusions have significantly reduced and a range of intervention programmes are in place to support the most vulnerable pupils.

The school now has the capacity to take on new initiatives for example 'you can do it' and Healthy Schools.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Giving increased ownership to middle leaders and subject departments of the behaviour and attendance agenda through a phased process is supporting change at a pace which is informed by staff capacity. As confidence and skill level increases this is directly impacting on classroom climate and as a consequence improves teaching and learning.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- CVA data
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

2007 Mathematics GCSE results = 30%

CVA (KS2-4) = 998.0 - (1.4 points up on 2006)

CVA (KS3-4) = 1000.8 -(1.3 points up on 2006)

- 2007 En 92%, Ma 95%, Sc 93%
- 2006 En x, Ma 91%, Sc 90%

- 2005-06 88.1%
- 2006-07 87.3%
- 2007-08 to date 89.5%

- 2005-6 12
- 2006-7 2
- 2007-08 to date 0

Fixed period exclusions autumn 07 shows a reduction of 50% on autumn 06

School Standards Assistants are beginning to impact on the number of on-calls for disruptive behaviour: show a reducing trend

School Standards Assistants are beginning to impact on the number of pupils issued with school detention

What has been the impact on teaching?

The Head Teacher reports a growing strength in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Two departments remain a cause for concern but interventions programmes are in place.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Formal classroom observation data supports the Head Teacher's perceptions.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

School leadership is a growing strength at all levels. Monitoring the impact of interventions and robust data scrutiny is beginning to be seen as a key part of the school improvement cycle.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Several middle leaders have an increased role in the decision making process.

A range of data is included on the agenda when behaviour and attendance are reviewed. Group and cohort data is beginning to inform targeted interventions alongside individual pupil data.

Staff have increased understanding of their role in supporting and promoting positive behaviour and regular attendance and this has improved both classroom and school climates.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

An enthusiastic leadership team empowered by the Head Teacher to drive the change process and an understanding and acceptance that external support would offer appropriate challenge and support to the team.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Attending meetings of the mathematics team and School strategy manager to model:

- processes required to establish the underlying issues
- data collation and analysis to inform next steps in terms of interventions.

The open dialogue with individual members of SLT.

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Review the attendance strategy and secure roles and responsibilities of all staff.
- Raise the profile of attendance so it is a priority agenda. Visual displays, praise and rewards should be evident.
- Make the links between attendance and attainment explicit to pupils, staff and parents.

- Develop a robust data set that tracks attendance and alerts key staff when issues are emerging.
- Ensure target pupils have agreed action plans and are linked to assigned staff who hold regular reviews.
- Utilise parenting contracts, parenting orders and penalty notices as part of a continuum of support.
- Audit current behaviour both in and out of lessons by using qualitative and quantitative data.
- Review the behaviour policy securing whole school sign up.
- Make explicit the relationship between effective teaching and learning and pupil engagementEnsure the escalation process is framed round an agreed priority to provide targeted interventions at every stage to support reintegration.
- CPD to focus on staff skills to de-escalate situations and to promote positive behaviours.Build capacity through a coaching model.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

Support will continue to be offered to the Senior Leadership Team until attendance is consistently over the 90% boundary and poor pupil behaviour is seen as exceptional.

About Camtree

Camtree: the Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange is a global platform for close-to-practice research in education. Based at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, Camtree draws on high-quality research from around the world to support educators to reflect on their practice and carry out inquiries to improve learning in their own classrooms and organisations. You can find out more about Camtree and its digital library at www.camtree.org.

About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

Licence

This edited version of this case study is published by Camtree as a derivative work of the original under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence (CC-BY-NC 4.0). The structured abstract that accompanies it was generated by Camtree in 2023 using the OpenAI GPT-3.5-Turbo Large Language Model.