Reducing exclusions and improving attainment – how can that be?

Evidence of improvements in learner outcomes from a United Kingdom secondary school.
Implications for New Zealand
Introduction

This paper presents discussion and exploration of the nature, extent and characteristics of a disciplinary Inclusion Room (IR), from the perspectives of students and staff in a secondary school in the South West (SW) of United Kingdom (UK).

Consider some implications for New Zealand
Background

The school part of an overall Education Improvement project called Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Behaviour Improvement Partnerships (BIP).
Over the past five years,

- this school significantly reduced fixed term exclusions (stand-down) from 20% of student population to less than 0.01% and
- significantly improved school attainment (from 49% to 68% or from 12% below LA to 4% below LA for 5 A*-C) and against UK averages.
- Significantly improved attendance to LA averages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 GCSE A* - C</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
<td>68.6%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership average</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA average</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National average</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
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Table 1: Attainment for the research school.
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005/06</th>
<th>2006/07</th>
<th>2007/08</th>
<th>2008/09</th>
<th>2009/10</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No of</td>
<td>n/1000</td>
<td>No of</td>
<td>n/1000</td>
<td>No of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed term exclusion the</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>105.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for Behaviour</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Learning partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total for LA</td>
<td>2538</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>1853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In 2007/08 the indicator changed from a per 1000 pupil ratio to a per 100 pupil ratio. Percentages are rounded. Data taken from LA records.

Table 2: Fixed Term exclusions 2005-2010.
A Schools & Multi-agency partnership

- Aspects targeted at improving staff capacity and teaching quality within the school.
- Multi-agency working for inclusion.
A note of caution

Inclusion process and outcomes mediated by power, the tools, rules & community

• The relationship between reduced exclusions and improved attainment was not a single, simple, causal ‘model’. Biesta (2005, p.21)

• The project outcomes and evidence were achieved in context.
So what about reducing exclusion then?

Inclusionary practice was the purpose & means for promoting the educational outcomes.

- Traditional research into disciplinary provision, withdrawal rooms, detentions, contract rooms dominated by systems of control. **Slee, (1995, p. 68)** notes the beneficiaries of these managerial approaches provides increased potential for

  Compliance, *provide less disruption for the organisational tranquility of the school by removing pedagogy, curriculum and organisation from the field of therapeutic vision. Control remains myopic’*

- Challenge reductionist accounts of discipline that indicate disruption/exclusion/inclusion is a matter of changing students
So what was the disciplinary IR?

- Titled the Inclusion room (IR). Part of the overall school strategy for inclusion. Conceptually linked to formal fixed-term exclusion processes with parental involvement, behaviour type monitoring & post event management.
- IR periods typically not lengthy nor repeated.
- Different from detention, pastoral and Learning Support systems.
- Flexible. Some students tried to ‘get in there’ or staff regarded some students as likely to fail and other methods of discipline were used.
- Regarded by students, staff, parents and the community as a serious disciplinary strategy.
The IR students
Yr 8/9
10% sample who had ‘attended’ the IR in summer 2008.

• 8 boys and 1 girl (proportion who attended the room)
• Their overall attainment matched the year 8/9 cohort.
• Their overall school attendance similar to overall cohort
• Students with SEN were slightly over-represented in proportion to their SEN register.
• Free School meals (FSM; proxy poverty measure) – proportionate or slightly less than overall school eligibility.
• Reasons for being in the IR included; racism, fighting and some incidents where detentions had not been an effective discipline measure.
• Maximum days in IR were 3.
So is this an inclusive school?
Student’s views. Quantitative data

Questions, on inclusive policy, practice and culture adapted from Booth and Ainscow *Index for Inclusion* and completed by 47% of year 8/9 students.

When administered to the 9 students (10% of the possible sample) who been directly involved in the IR that Autumn 2009, showed no significant differences with the bigger group (or staff).

I had thought they would be a more dissatisfied group.
So is this an inclusive school?
Staff views: Quantitative data

30% sample of all staff; teaching and pastoral included in proportion to overall numbers.
- Of a total of 43 dimensions in the *Inclusion Index*, only three had less than a third of staff disagreeing with concepts.
- Disagreement were on matters of all student access to extended services & use of community services
- Like the students they questioned the value of homework!
Interviews with students (9%) & staff & staff (10%)

CHAT methodology; participation, rules, community, division of labour

• All the students felt the incidents and IR were ‘fair enough’
• Several talk about it ‘teach a lesson so you don’t do it again’
• They noted the school had done their best to ‘stop them being stupid’
• Lewis, noted how it served to show him how much work he could do there.
Staff interviews (10% sample)

Staff triangulated these observations both for particular students.

- Staff and students recognised the contradictory nature of the provision, they were excluded from contact with classes for a particular period of time, but remained within the lens of the school.
- Headteacher recognised that staff attitudes prior to the IR were exclusionary
- Staff agreed that sending students home as a punishment was less successful than this IR process.
UK Summary

Students remain in the school for disciplinary inclusion purposes.

1. A wider community, including fellow students, other staff, and in some cases parents, contribute to this engagement from a social justice lens.

2. Discipline in this school ‘complements the process of education’ as proposed by (Slee, R., 1995, p.28).

3. I suggest a recognition that this transformation occurs as a result of collective and eclectic process whereby the IR rules, power and community intersects with and complement the overall purposes of the school.
In simple terms

• The IR was focused, serious and reflective time that kept the students engaged in disciplinary learning within the lens of the school
• Where other pastoral issues were identified this occurred afterwards as part a formal and informal plan
• Examples of where teachers were challenged (and then supported) where issues of unfairness were identified. Wasn’t just student focused.
Implications for NZ

Re-examination of the purposes of suspension and stand-downs in school and policy contexts.

• Examine the potential, within the Behaviour for Learning initiative (PBfL), of further partnership working, to critically understand the nature and purpose of learning within a discourse of stand-down and suspension.

• Take on board Macfarlane’s (2005) challenge to incorporate culturally relevant and appropriate interventions that address whole school systems and organisational change.
My own background

My 22 years in education is somewhat broad in a number of different primary, secondary and tertiary roles.

Currently, a senior tutor in the School of curriculum and pedagogy with an emphasis on Inclusion and Special Education.

In summary primary, secondary and tertiary teaching and school improvement
References