

## **Learning Behaviour: Sir Alan Steer's review of behaviour standards and practices in our schools**

### **Summary**

This report provides a summary of Sir Alan Steer's report 'Learning Behaviour: A review of behaviour standards and practices in our schools' published in April.

### **Recommendations**

The Board is invited to note Sir Alan's report and highlight any areas for LGA lobbying activity in the context of the Board's three key objectives.

### **Action**

To be determined by the Board.

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## Learning Behaviour: Sir Alan Steer's review of behaviour standards and practices in our schools

### Background

1. On 15 April 2009 Sir Alan Steer published his final report 'Learning Behaviour: A review of behaviour standards and practice in our schools'. This report was produced at the request of the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. The report includes 47 recommendations under three themes:
  - Legal powers and duties;
  - Supporting the development of good behaviour; and
  - Raising Standards Higher.
2. In response to the report, the Secretary of State committed to consult with stakeholders, including local government, regarding how the report is taken forward, with a commitment to publish a detailed implementation plan in June.

### The Report

3. With regard to **Legal powers and duties**, the report finds no evidence of a need or desire for schools to be given wider powers. The report does identify a need for a dissemination strategy to raise awareness and understanding of the powers that already exist. This would include the power to exercise discipline beyond the school gates which schools should work with wider partners, such as the police, to deliver. Clearly, in respect of this and a number of other matters raised by the report, there is a vital role for Children's Trust Boards in joining up agencies. The Trust must be the central point for coordination.
4. The report recommends reviewing the proposed wider legal power to search pupils within three years of it coming into force, to assess its use and evaluate if it is properly understood. This is to be welcomed given that the LGA has previously expressed concern about the impact such a power might have on the school workforce if adequate training and support is not in place around the power.
5. On exclusions, the report is clear that it is vital that independent appeals panels are retained, in the interests of natural justice and to stop schools becoming embroiled in legal processes.
6. The report makes a key recommendation that all schools should be required to produce a written policy on learning and teaching, in order to ensure consistent high standards in the classroom and to support pupils and teachers. However, somewhat at odds with that recommendation, the report also recommends a review of the range of policy documents that schools are asked to produce. The

# 2 3 4

key must be a review such as this must seek to ensure duplication is avoided and requirements on schools are meaningful.

## **Conclusions: Good behaviour**

7. The report considers what works in schools particularly in terms of supporting the development of good behaviour and conclusions are set out below:
8. **Schools and school staff** – highlights the importance of early intervention including a recommendation that DCSF's review of the Dedicated Schools Grant should consider how this can be funded; of initial teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD); of Training Schools; and of the DCSF and professional associations working together on disseminating good practice advice to schools. Early intervention activity will need to be coordinated at the Children's Trust level to ensure that strategies across the Trust area are complementary and maximise the benefit to children and families.
9. The report recommends giving a greater emphasis to behaviour management training within the Training Schools programme and promoting greater involvement in the programme of schools for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and Pupil Referral Units.
10. **Pupils** – the report recommends how schools can ensure appropriate engagement of and support for pupils and also recommends that an assessment is undertaken of the potential of nurture groups and other additional provision to support good pupil behaviour.
11. **Parents** – the report identifies the potential to use and build on a range of existing initiatives, including Parent Support Advisers, Family Intervention Projects, on-line reporting and Family SEAL to support and strengthen the engagement of parents. In terms of implementation, the LGA would reiterate the earlier message that early intervention strategies across the Trust area should be complementary and maximise the benefit to children and families
12. **Behaviour and attendance partnerships** – the report specifies the key characteristics that should be seen in all partnerships.

## **Conclusions: Raising standards**

13. Where the report deals with Raising Standards Higher, it sets out a number of conclusions relating to the matters that follow.
14. **Schools** – a significant recommendation in this part of the report is about the Local Authority not only prioritising support for schools with unsatisfactory behaviour but also the Local Authority seeing an Ofsted judgement of satisfactory behaviour as a trigger for additional support. The report also recommends that the most recent Ofsted inspection grade for behaviour should

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be included on the school report card as well as making recommendations about how to ensure good quality Day 6 provision for excluded pupils.

15. **Pupils** – focuses on the need for effective early intervention when pupils misbehave and guidelines for when it is necessary to withdraw pupils from the classroom. The report argues that withdrawal should be for the minimum time necessary to assess need and to effect a change in behaviour, and recommends that DCSF should define best practice for all forms of out of classroom provision.
16. **Parents** – advises a more consistent use of parenting contracts and dissemination of a chart which DCSF has produced with the teacher professional associations and other stakeholders summarising the rights and responsibilities of schools, parents and pupils for school discipline.
17. **Local Authorities and Children’s Trusts** – a key recommendation is that behaviour and attendance partnerships should provide an annual report to their local Children’s Trust. Trusts, in turn, need to improve access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAHMS). DCSF should consider how to support and challenge Local Authorities with disproportionately high exclusions and DCSF guidance should particularly address the issue of repeat fixed-period of exclusions. The emphasis here must be on support, but there is a tension between the principle of school autonomy, which LGA supports, and the focus on the local authority when concerns are raised about exclusion rates, and this needs teasing out through further discussion. The proposal for behaviour and attendance partnerships to report annually to Trusts is potentially a bureaucratic reaction to the undoubted need for local authorities, Trusts and schools to work in effective partnership together across a whole range of matters for the benefit of children and young people, including on behaviour.
18. The report goes on to offer support for the right of schools to exclude, but argues that where a school keeps excluding the same child then it is clear that strategies are not working.
19. The report states that councils must meet their obligation to provide education from day 6 for permanently excluded pupils and ensure that schools do the same for those excluded for a fixed term.

## **Financial Implications**

20. There are no direct financial implications for councils. However, local authorities must be engaged closely in the development of the implementation plan.

## **Implications for Wales**

21. Sir Alan’s report relates to schools in England only.